



BUDGET COMMITTEE
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MINUTES OF THE BUDGET COMMITTEE HEARING

Monday, December 01, 2021 – 6:30 p.m. – Town Hall Conference Room

Members Present: Mike Bilodeau, Todd Cadle, Mark Connelly, Frank Hansler, Bob Krasko, Sharon Hussey-McLaughlin, Don Miller, Paul Sanderson, Jamie Connelly – Selectmen’s Rep

Members Absent: Zack Pike, Pat Walsh – School Board Rep

Present: Department Heads; Matt Scruton – Town Administrator; Steve Smith – Chairman, Board of Selectmen; Constance Cousins – Library Director; Marcia McLaughlin – Library Trustees Chairperson; Library Trustees; Laura Byergo – Conservation Commission Chairperson; Michele Kaulback – Cemetery Trustees Chairperson; Liz Cummings – Financial Director

B. Krasko opened the Budget Committee meeting at 6:30 p.m. A roll call was taken; B. Krasko announced a quorum was present and the meeting was being recorded. The purpose of this meeting was to review the Town budget.

Town Budget Review

Budget Committee members received several documents to aid them in the budget process. At the request of B. Krasko, P. Sanderson explained how the information in those documents could be used as tools. The MS-1 and a tax rate impact worksheet were also included.

General Government – Matt Scruton, Town Administrator: TA Scruton stated that the Board of Selectmen had submitted a default budget with a 3% wage increase, which he supported. Any line items that need adjustment in 2022 can be made by the Board of Selectmen, it was a bottom-line budget. TA Scruton noted the Town was under budget and thought that would continue for the remainder of the year. The Town was on track to return money to the fund balance. P. Walsh clarified that ‘default budget’ was a flat budget plus a 3% wage increase. TA Scruton stated that he included contractual obligations and it was not a true flat-line budget. It mirrors a default budget up to the point of the wage increase.

Current and future road maintenance was discussed. P. Sanderson suggested reducing the appropriation for next year because the Selectmen had the ability to access such a large Capital Reserve Fund. He asked if the Selectmen could cut down the appropriation because program objectives could be met next year by using funding in hand. P. Sanderson stated that guidance from Altus Engineering and a cost estimate would be helpful. Underwood Engineering did a road maintenance schedule many years ago and needs to be updated; Altus Engineering is working on the update of road conditions.

The Town’s Unreserved Fund Balance is currently \$2,017,030.

DRAFT: SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Cemetery Trustees – Michele Kaulback, Chairman: Supplies should be reduced by \$2,000 and Contracted Services increased by \$2,000. They are getting bids for mowing for next season.

Conservation Commission – Laura Byergo, Chairman: The Conservation Commission budget is \$1,000. L. Byergo noted she has not requested an increase in the last three years. Her original submission included a substantial increase. Over the last several years, \$1,000 has been used from the Conservation Commission warrant article to pay for the intern who monitors the conservation easements; L. Byergo would like that moved to the Conservation Commission budget. She would like the Conservation Commission annual budget increased to \$1,975. L. Byergo clarified that the intern is paid \$15 per hour and is a graduating UNH wildlife biologist.

Recreation Committee – Sharon Hussey-McLaughlin, Director: S. Hussey-McLaughlin recommended decreasing the Equipment Permanent line by \$4,000 and increasing Groundskeeping by that amount. The fields have not been used as much due to COVID. M. Bilodeau clarified that Equipment will be \$2,000 rather than \$6,000 and increase Groundskeeping (Krasko Field, Caswell Field and Maloney Field) to \$10,500. F. Hansler questioned the Recreation Revolving Fund, which has a balance of approximately \$63,000. S. Hussey-McLaughlin explained how the fund is spent and future plans. There was a discussion about Maloney Field being cemetery land or Town land. P. Sanderson also explained how a revolving fund worked. It is not a Capital Reserve Fund. S. Hussey-McLaughlin noted that some of the money was donations made when the Rec Department planned to expand the field. P. Sanderson explained that donations should have gone into a Trust; the Revolving Fund is used for fees. L. Cummings stated there was a warrant article that specified the land was to be used for the cemetery until other land was located. It was suggested that the Town Attorney review the warrant article and deed. Discussing the dugouts, S. Hussey-McLaughlin agreed the cost of any dugout work could be taken from the Revolving Fund but it would be a Rec Committee decision. Responding to a question from F. Hansler, S. Hussey-McLaughlin stated there is an enormous interest in a multi-purpose field at Maloney Field, adding it is one of the greatest drained fields in the area. There was further discussion about the Recreation budget. M. Connelly felt it was important that the money was spent the way it was voted on by the Town. TA Scruton commented if the Budget Committee tried to cut from the proposed budget, they may be tying the Selectmen's hands to relocate funds as needed going into 2022.

Weeks Public Library – Candace Cousins, Director: Christine Peters, Library Trustee, read a statement to the Budget Committee. C. Cousins, working with the budget prepared by the Interim Director, updated the Library budget. They would like to increase the part-time librarian to full-time and have removed that position from the budget. They were able to decrease the cost of cleaning services. F. Hansler recommended there be a relationship between the School and Weeks Library to maximize the educational benefit for children and adults. F. Hansler questioned if the Library considered connecting to the School's technology line. M. McLaughlin responded it has been discussed. C. Cousins clarified that the Library's multi-media budget was audiobooks, DVD's, entertainment other than books. Snow removal was discussed.

The Library has decided to do a warrant to increase the part-time librarian to full-time. J. Connelly questioned if salary and benefits would be included; they will be included in the warrant article. P. Sanderson commented the Library needed to look at staff costs and benefits again. J. Connelly noted that the salary and benefits would be a \$0.10 impact on the tax rate for one position. TA Scruton added that if the warrant article was through the Unreserved Fund Balance, the tax impact would show as zero this year. It would also reduce the amount of money in the Unreserved Fund Balance that could be used to reduce taxes. It was noted that the \$198,000 from the fund balance last year to the Library limited the Board of Selectmen's ability to reduce taxes this year. J. Connelly reminded members that the tax impact would be deferred a year.

DRAFT: SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Retainage recommended by DRA was discussed. TA Scruton stated the recommended retainage is between 5% and 17%. The Town traditionally tries to maintain 10%. The Town's fund balance is at 10.88%. J. Connelly noted that there will be another property valuation in 2023 and that will have an impact on taxes.

The Unreserved Fund Balance is approximately \$2 million. There are still bills that have not been paid and some funds may be encumbered. TA Scruton, responding to a question from D. Miller, stated the Town would be returning money; the amount would not be determined until the end of the year. S. Smith noted that warrant articles have not been discussed by the Selectmen. Some of the Unreserved Fund Balance may be directed to warrant articles. M. Connelly questioned warrant articles using the Unreserved Fund Balance that indicated 'no tax impact' and felt it was misleading; there may be a tax impact the next year. Z. Pike stated that the language regarding the tax impact would have to be very clear for residents. P. Walsh cautioned against using the Unreserved Fund Balance for staff and suggested using it for large items (example: road maintenance). P. Sanderson noted that in the past funding has come from the Unreserved Fund Balance and put into a Capital Reserve Fund. He suggested looking carefully at the Capital Reserve Fund balances to fund projects.

B. Krasko discussed the available dates to review the Town budget. D. Miller did not feel there was enough information to review the budget. Departments to be further reviewed include the Library. The School budget will be reviewed on Thursday, December 09, 2021.

Adjournment

MOTION: J. Connelly moved to adjourn at 8:15 p.m. Second – Z. Pike; all in favor. MOTION CARRIED

NEXT MEETING

TENTATIVE: Thursday, December 09, 2021 - 6:30 p.m., Town Hall Conference Room

Submitted By: Charlotte Hussey, Administrative Assistant