

Selectboard Minutes 11/12/2019

Members Present: Bard Hill, Katie Mather, Christy Witters, Roger Brown

Absent: David Sander

Others Present: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Kathy Daub-Stearns, Admin. Assist.; Larry Muldoon, Police Chief; Connie Bona, Financial Dir.; Rebecca Mueller, Library Dir.; Dennis Gile, Fire Chief; Gerald Levesque, Assist. Fire Chief; and Ruth Miller was present to videotape the meeting for MMCTV Channel 15, also attending -Brandon Yeates and Eric Wood.

Called to Order: 7:00 PM

1. David welcomed everyone to the meeting, there was no public comment.

2. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

Review and discussion of the FY21 Budget for all departments:

1. Discussion began with Josh providing information that the budget worked on with Dept. Heads put the budget at on over 7% increase and that it was attributable to increasing hours for the Admin. Assistant position, healthcare, wants and needs of departments.

2. Discussion moved to switching employees over to MVP from BCBS as a means for flat lining healthcare avoiding a 14.4% increase. Connie let everyone know that enrollment is this week and it won't be known how the numbers come out until it's known the plan and number of persons each employee is signing up for but that it appeared the majority were signing up for the Platinum Plan as opposed to the High Deductible Plan. Roger would like to look at the benefits issue earlier next year. His concern surrounded information dissemination and an obligation to the residents of the Town to ensure good decisions were being made. Bard noted that we are in the middle of the enrollment period with no significant increase and that this discussion had been had several times previously. Having the consultant that was hired create an insurance primer would be helpful moving forward. This budget year the decision has been made.

Josh advised that there wouldn't be any adjustment made to the existing grand list value after speaking to Lisa. Bard asked if there was property ready to move onto grand list, the response from Josh was, not this year. Josh reported that the somewhat unavoidable increases such as pay, insurance, other costs, loans, fire protection; election services; assoc. dues, police health insurance, health insurance for all other employees, the opt out option and more were looked at then the numbers were run flat-lining everything else. The flat-line scenario kept spending down to a 0.78% increase in the tax rate. Bard asked about the OCCC appropriations request, it had been flat-lined along with all other appropriation requests. Connie noted that NEMRC would increase \$1.5K. Katie wondered about using restricted highway funds for making repairs to the highway building, Connie said she would not advise it due to decreases already made as well as

the Dugway Rd. situation. FEMA would reimburse most of it but it could take 2 years to see the money. Bard stated he would like to take everyone's ideas and ask what to sacrifice rather than start with the flat-line scenario and add to it. Roger raised a question about how the 2% max was decided. Bard stated it had already been discussed and he was reluctant to go backwards but that the 2% came from the cost of living index for the northeast. After noting the discussions so far had taken 45 minutes Bard decided to move on to the next budget item.

3. Discussion turned to appropriations. There was much discussion about the OCCC request for approximately \$20K up from \$800 last year as well the need to fund requests that were impacting the majority of the residents such as Richmond Rescue, MMCVT, CUSI and Front Porch Forum. In the end it was decided to take appropriations not listed above to ballot on Town Meeting Day. Katie noted that there would need to be someone at Town Meeting working the spreadsheets on the fly.

4. The discussion turned to taking a look at internal cost reductions. Bard suggested looking at increases of \$5K or more to begin with. Other than step level increases salary was impacted by the Admin. Assistant becoming a 30 hr. a week position w/ health care for a single person stating the position has taken on some of the responsibilities of the vacant Planner position includes taking the Selectboard and Water & Sewer Commission meeting minutes. Josh stated "she's worth it". Connie added that having an AP backup is important to have for various reasons, that work is approx. 6 hours a week and had previously been done by the Planner. She also mentioned that we just had a FEMA event the position historically managed. Katie wanted to know if when hired was it understood that the position was part time, without benefits. The answer was that the Admin. Assistant position has changed with the work being done more complex and valuable to the Town and that the new Planner when hired would not be expected to resume the financial work or the taking of the minutes. Josh noted that the new Planner position was advertised at 35 hours. Katie mentioned the work done did reduce VOSHA fines. It was decided to table the discussion for now and come back to it at a later time.

5. Moving on to expenses:

A. Highway Maintenance – there's a need to put money into the building and it needs new overhead doors. It was noted that Restricted Funds are \$750K maybe \$40K could come from there. Roger felt the work should be looked at as a capital improvement. Connie reminded everyone that with the FEMA event, purchase of the new truck (which a loan is being applied for to replenish funds) the balances are getting low, if there was another FEMA event it would require a loan to do any work. After discussion it was decided to split the \$40K into \$15K from Restricted & \$25K from Reserve. Pete should come to discuss it further as well as ongoing costs for the highway building. That brought the increase down to 5.79% with a goal of 2%.

B. Equipment Purchases Fire Dept. – Specifically equipment to upgrade cutters and other equipment for car extrications; firefighters stated that at times tools have broken in the middle of a rescue making it necessary to get other departments involved. The cost is about \$6K for each plus \$6K for a pump. It was suggested there may be a grant that would cover the costs like the

VLCT matching funds grant for safety. There is \$77K in the reserve fund, it was discussed that the money is money they raise themselves and that according to the auditors that money is to be used to replace fire capital expenses. Dennis stated previously it had been used for a down payment of a fire truck and that the largest truck was due to be replaced in 2024 at a cost of over \$300K. It was decided to split the \$30K with \$15k coming from the reserve and budgeting \$15K. Connie noted one of their loans will retire in another year.

C. Police Dept. – this is \$10K for a cruiser reserve & equipment. Larry informed the board that this was to invest in a new cruiser in case one blows up and that it was not just a replacement but an additional cruiser. He added that there is currently no reserve for cameras or radios that are antiquated. Josh noted that this department gave back funds from the previous budget. The rationale for the \$10K is that in 4 years the dept. will need a new cruiser at \$40K. In the next 3-5 years the dept. is going to need to replace all radios \$3500 per year, camera's the same thing. They're operating, not but not efficient. Lease programs for the radios and cameras may be the best option when the time comes with cloud based storage. It was decided to change the funding to one line \$10K police capital reserve. Chief was congratulated by the board for his management of resources.

D. Fire Dept. Maintenance – request is for \$20K for replacement of emergency exit back door and equipment purchases. Josh noted that the reserve here is \$28.5K and that \$15K was used for equipment. Katie recognized that this is something that has been put off for years. It was decided to split the \$20K by taking \$10K from unassigned and raising \$10K from tax money.

E. Library – Rebecca stated that not much can change. The increases are due to health insurance and a few positions that are getting increases. It was decided that Library would remain as budgeted.

F. Back to the Police Dept- Chief noted that he could drop his OT number by \$6K since hiring additional staff and working shifts himself. In addition uniforms can come down \$1.5K. Gas can come down \$2k. Police supplies kept the same to replace things that are breaking. Office equipment can drop to \$2500. He advised he's been working with Verizon to see if there is a way to be more cost effective. Chief also offered to decrease the line item for police tires by \$1K. His efforts to make reductions were applauded by the Board.

G. Reappraisal reserve – A new town wide appraisal is needed in the next 2 years. By continuing to fund the reserve at 100% the town will be within \$10-20k of getting that accomplished over the next 2 years. No increase yet for Lister, was up 5% last year. It was decided to look at it again later.

H. Fire Dept. Salaries: \$5K increase in salaries would put volunteers at \$1 over minimum wage. It was decided to leave it for now.

I. Storm water & sidewalks – This is a project that needs to be done on Upper Bridge Street. The money spent here is not coming back because it's storm water. It was decided to have Pete come back for discussion on how to fund it.

J. Highway Diesel Fuel: It was discussed that the Town does not pre-buy its fuel. It was decided to investigate costs with Pete prior to making any decisions.

K. Planning & Zoning Contract services - The Board felt it needed more information; it was noted that planning grants need matching funds from the Town.

L. Office Supplies planning & zoning: It was decided to drop the requested amount by \$1K since there should not be a high printing expense this year.

M. Auditors – Connie noted that because we do not have elected auditors the Town has to be audited annually. There are only a few auditors in the state qualified to do them so the cost is high. She will be looking into how much time the auditors spent on W & S to attribute that expense directly. It was decided to wait on this until the additional information is available.

N. Office supplies Admin- It was discussed that this is an item that is over budget every year. In the last few years there have been filing cabinets & new chairs that were purchased. This year there shouldn't be anything like that. It was decided to drop the requested amount to \$4.5K.

O. Contract services – Will need to increase by \$3.5K to cover the increase in NEMRC services.

Discussion continued, of note:

- The percentage is now at 4.55, another \$80.4K in cuts is needed to keep to a 2% increase.
- Number for appropriations to fund through ballot vote is \$40K
- It's possible 1 person may be coming off health insurance but won't know more for a few weeks.
- Need to add the cost of the insurance broker \$2.5K

- The benefits structure for non-union employees needs to be looked at for FY2021; possible workgroup to lead it.
- Language is needed for appropriations to be by ballot, a lawyer will be contacted
- The next budget meeting will be held in December.

MOTION TO ADJOURN by Katie, seconded by Bard. All were in favor, adjourned at 10:25PM

b) Discussion of cost associated with providing pay increases of more than one step in the pay grid c)
Review of draft capital plan spreadsheet1

9:00 PM II. Executive Session if Necessary

9:10 PM III. Adjourn

Time is available at each meeting for public comment.