



Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Workshop Minutes

Wednesday, October 6, 2021, 9:00 a.m.

Belmont Mill 4th Floor Tioga Meeting Room

Chairman Ruth Mooney called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Also present were Selectman Claude Patten, Selectman Jon Pike, Town Administrator Jeanne Beaudin, Assistant Town Administrator Alicia Jipson, Fire Chief Michael Newhall, TC/TC Cynthia Deroy, Police Chief Mark Lewandoski, and Finance Director Katherine Davis.

Budget Reviews

Police Department

Chief Lewandoski provided an overview of the year to date, noting that he expects the department to surpass last year's totals. The department is extremely busy. The department saw its all-time highest call volumes last year and we will exceed that this year. He explained that the Town has a significant homeless population that they deal with and try to move along and get them services. The department currently has two officers in the Police Academy. He explained that when the two officers complete their academy time in December, the Department will be almost at full capacity. He noted also that we have a potential new hire coming on in the next few weeks. The Chief was pleased to note that the new Police Department is finished, and the department has moved in; he explained that we are still waiting for the elevator to be installed so that we can officially open to the public and hold an open house. He noted that they keep being told dates for delivery and it keeps getting pushed off. The department is also waiting on lockers for the staff locker rooms. He explained there are a few minor issues with the heating and cooling, and that is in the process of being worked out. The old building is set to be torn down within days. He expressed that they are a steady busy Police Department. We are seeing that we are more productive in the new building. The safety is great in the new building. TA Beaudin commented in the updated budget that she sent, she made a change in the electricity line, as a new bill had come in that was more in line to what actual usage is in a given month. TA Beaudin also commented that she has found a new leasing company for the vehicles and their interest rate is lower than the company that we use now. The total cost all in was \$93,600 for the 2 new vehicles. The new proposals were significantly lower than Bancorp and it would be her recommendation that we look into making the switch. We will be dropping two cruisers off lease in August of 2022 and one in November of 2021. Police Chief Mark Lewandoski added that in the beginning of budget prep he was close to being

2% under. The only thing that is costly to some degree is the cruisers. We had gotten out of cruiser rotation. We have a sedan at the shop that needs \$800 worth of work, and it is not worth fixing. The other car that he would be getting rid of is a frontline car and is why he is asking for two more cars this year. The one's going out are at the 90k mile mark and at that mileage the value begins to drop significantly. This year's budget will be higher, but we will drop one in November and then drop two in August of next year. We cut the rotation last year and that is why we are playing catch up. Cost of tire rotation went up from \$60 to \$100, and the state bid on tires went up. The Uniform line went up because uniform expenses went up, and with the turnover of employees, he noted he went over in the budget purchasing new uniforms. The Chief explained that it was determined following the move that the department needs two more computers, if the purchases of the two new computers are done this year, then the computer line can be reduced down to \$8,000. TA Beaudin added that she will add the service contract in on the general government line. The budget is up 4% but is mainly due to union contracts, other than that it is a flat budget. The overtime budget did not go up. We hope to hold onto the full-time crew, and up the part time crew. Cleaning charges for the new building will go under general government at \$14,000. TA Beaudin commented that we include the heating of the new building in the general government building line. We were able to lock in propane at \$1.57 and oil from Irving Oil at \$2.47 a gallon.

Fire Department

Chief Newhall explained that this has been a big year for turnover within the department, he noted that when staff gives their notice, he does inquire about why, and has found that some are leaving for departments with more manpower, and there has been some discussion regarding pay. The department is still dealing with covid in the field and patients require more hands-on treatment, he also noted that they are transporting to Concord Hospital frequently. The department has done 11 RSI transports which is Advanced Life Support and he also noted there have been several accidents on Route 106 during this past year. Ambulance 2 is approaching 30,000 miles and it's only been in service for a year. Chief Newhall noted that the department had applied for the SAFER grant, and we were not approved, he heard that only three communities in NH were approved. With our call volumes increasing he believes the department needs two new employees, so that we have three people on both shifts. We have less people coming back, and with the need we won't be able to keep up with our level of service. We have been doing well with what we have but we are at a breaking point where we are getting so busy, and he feels that the level of service will decline if we don't staff up. TA Beaudin commented that the proposed salary is \$45,769.98 for the new hires. In the budget we included the health insurance at single plans, which she noted is an unknown until they are hired. Fire Chief Newhall added that if we don't move to hire two additional employees then we may need to look at alternatives and management changes. The overtime line is high. We have had two employees out on military leave therefore we needed to cover those positions with OT, and it seems we keep hitting that every year. Training for employees has been pushed off this year and last year due to covid. There is an increase in the training line to accommodate the two new hires. At the end of the year is when we get hit with the training, that's why it has not been expended yet. We pushed off a lot of training till end of year so that we were not going over budget as the OT has been high due to turnover. Fire Chief Newhall also commented that he feels he can decrease the operating expenses line. The cleaning of vehicles is required after a covid call. That line covers the cleaning expenses involved in the covid-19 cleaning per CDC recommendations. Selectman Mooney asked about the call line item, assuming that is for call

firefighters inquiring if there are different levels of call people. She asked if we have some that are more involved and trained, and some that are not and just want to be involved? Ruth commented that she thinks it can be forward thinking to consider these levels, and she has had numerous people ask me, as they want to be involved in helping out at a fire, but the training is too involved for them to try. In reviewing Contracted Services, Fire Chief Newhall commented that Lakes Region Mutual Aid Dispatch is going to have to be relocated from their existing space as the building is being sold, they are looking for a new location. Chief did explain to them that this burden cannot be placed on the Towns. TA Beaudin added that the repairs for the roof should be moved out of that budget and moved into the Municipal Facility Capital Reserve. Selectman Pike looked over the CIP requests and suggested we take the rescue boat out; he is not in favor of purchasing that. Fire Chief Newhall added that the Assistant Fire Chief's current vehicle now would go back into use for Forestry as it was intended and the new truck we want to purchase would be used as an all-purpose command vehicle. The Board agreed that they could support the new command vehicle for the Assistant Chief.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector

TC/TC DeRoy explained that the office has seen some changes in staffing and has changed since covid. The number of new residents is increasing, and they are seeing a lot from out of state, and they require more time from the staff. One of the functions of the TC office is to provide paperwork to the Water Department. Last year we did 51 final readings, this year we did 78, and that is everyone on Town Water and Sewer. We had 96% pay the June tax bill. We only have about \$200,000 uncollected and that mainly represents the 13 who are set up on payment plans who do not pay. We are trying hard to collect the old dues on the water and sewer. The automatic bill pays take a while to set up, as it is not always clearly defined as to who is paying and on what account they intend the monies to go to. The number of new vehicles being registered is unbelievable. Each customer is taking more time. Marriages are up and that process takes a lot of time. A lot of requests for birth certificates to enter into school are being made. Other surrounding towns send their residents to us because they have decided that they don't want to process marriage licenses or AG and farm plates. So that puts more work on us. I would like to upgrade the credit card machine, but they cost \$500 a piece and we would need three and the wiring is complicated, so I am waiting on a move to the Mill to do that. Cynthia noted that the office has been short staffed for a while, however the new deputy has been working out well, she joined the Town having had experience working for the State of New Hampshire for many years; she is learning the tax side, and Cynthia noted that a new clerk will start next week and then will go to training. She recommended that the Board consider increasing the salaries. She feels she needs to stand up for her employees noting they are not represented by the Union. TA Beaudin commented that we have already begun to move the clerk's position up on the wage scale. We plan to move the Deputy position up two steps in the next increase. Cynthia noted there will be three elections in 2022. The supplies and OT will go up because of that. Postage went up this year due to us being closed and having to mail more, and the cost of postage went up this year. The changes that you do see is more based off the elections increase. Cynthia noted that there have been a number of Clerks across the State who have retired during this year; noting that she had considered it but felt it was not in the best interest of the office until the new employees are fully trained.

Legal

TA Beaudin explained that there are no changes to the legal budget for the coming year; she noted that the Town will begin negotiations for the new union contracts in the spring of 2022 and she would expect they might be longer than in prior years; pay and benefits seem to be an anticipated topic.

Assessing

TA Beaudin expressed that there is not a lot of changes in this budget. She noted that she adjusted for a full-time position to start in June to cover assessing, data entry, and assisting the new Town Administrator. The goal is to hire a full-time position with an assessing background

Solid Waste

TA Beaudin commented on this budget stating that we have one more full year with the current contract with Casella. TA Beaudin is working on putting together an RFP with the City of Laconia on moving to automated. This budget contains the built in 3% increase that was in the original contract. She noted that she had consulted with legal, and we will continue to get that host fee if we did move away from using Casella. She noted that the Town currently has a really great contract with Casella, and I'd really like to keep it, but they would not be in favor of that. We currently get recycling disposed of for free. The goal is to get a better program and limit the cost of disposal. Right now, we are paying for the school dumpsters and disposal, and we are looking to remove them from the next contract.

Patriotic Purposes

TA Beaudin noted that the Patriotic Purposes budget did not change and that funds remain for someone to oversee Old Home Day; the Town will be reaching out to this year's organizer to inquire if she wishes to continue in the position.

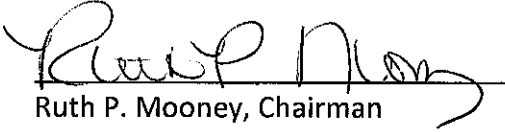
Old Business

TA Beaudin noted that the Town had corresponded with Mr. Plummer of 14 Highcrest Drive regarding an abatement however he did not follow through on his end and make good on his payment arrangements. Then we further denied his most recent request. He reached out and said he did not receive the letters. Cynthia's office sent both certified letters and standard letters through the mail so that we were covered. He states that he needs the abatement because the inspection did not come in high enough. He is claiming the new mortgage is going to escrow the taxes in. Selectman Pike commented that he feels bad, but we have been fair enough for a long time and our latest decision stands as is.

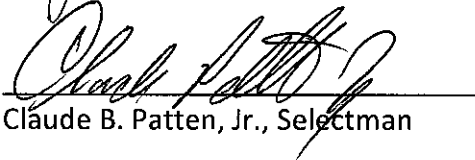
Non-Public

Chairman Mooney moved to enter non-public session in accordance with RSA 91: A:3 II (b) at 11:45 a.m. Those present and voting were Ruth Mooney, Claude Patten and Jon Pike. Also, present was TA Beaudin.

The non-public session concluded at 1:15 p.m.


Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman


Jon Pike, Vice-Chairman


Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman