



Office of Board of Selectmen

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Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 15, 2022, 6:30 p.m.
Belmont Mill
Tioga Meeting Room

Present were TA Alicia Jipson, Finance Director Katherine Davis, Assessing Administrator Colleen Akerman, TC/TC Cynthia DeRoy, DPW Director Craig Clairmont, Assistant DPW Director Brian Jackes, Building & Grounds Supervisor Patrick Golden, Selectmen's Representative Ruth Mooney, Chairman Ron Mitchell, Vice Chair Tracey LeClair, Norma Patten, Sharon Ciampi, Justin Borden, Mark Roberts, Albert Akerstrom, Roland Coffin, Marsha Campbell and Bob Chapman. Also present was Planning Board Member Kevin Sturgeon. There were no attendees present on Zoom.

Member Gary Grant was absent.

New Member Appointments

Members Mark Ekberg, Tina Fleming and Kenneth Ellis resigned from the Committee so there are three vacancies to be filled. TA Jipson received three letters of interest.

Marsha Campbell introduced herself to the Committee. She said she has lived here most of her life and thought it was time to do something for the Town. Selectman Ruth Mooney commented that we need new faces. This is going to be a tough year with the inflation.

Bob Chapman explained he has served on the Committee before. He has been in Town since 1995. He had to resign the Committee a few years ago due to health issues but he would like to return.

The third interested party was not present.

Tracey LeClair moved to appoint Marsha Campbell and Bob Chapman to serve out two of the vacancies. They will be required to run on the ballot for the next election per RSA 32:15:VII. The motion was seconded by Norma Patten and passed unanimously.

TC/TC Cynthia DeRoy swore in new Committee members Marsha Campbell and Bob Chapman.

Chairman Ron Mitchell wanted to recognize Bob Daws, a former Town of Belmont Police Chief who recently passed away. He gave a lot of time to the Town.

Overview 2023 Budget

TA Jipson provided a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the 2023 proposed budget. The presentation includes staffing changes, tax rate history, grant information, the history of funded and proposed budgets for individual departments, revenues, Capital Reserve summaries and principal and interest for debt service.

General Government Buildings

Buildings & Grounds Supervisor Patrick Golden said he tried to make this budget as level as possible because of inflation, but they can't control the costs of electricity, gas, fuel, etc. They regulate the heat and AC every day for best efficiency. There has been more responsibility with the Parks N Rec program. There is heavy beach use and 2-3 hours each day are spent working there. They originally requested \$10,000 for a side-by-side utility vehicle, however they have now made an agreement with the Fire Department to use their side-by-side in the downtown area. Chairman Mitchell said Building and Grounds had a good year and got lots of things done. Supervisor Golden said they like to be good stewards of the downtown area. There are seven areas outside of the downtown area that Buildings & Grounds takes care of. The trails are heavily used.

Tracey LeClair moved lines 01-4194-101 to 01-4194-980; seconded by Mark Roberts. Members asked questions about the Pest Control line and Computer Network. Some software has been upgraded for fraud prevention. TA Jipson explained these lines cover multiple buildings. The Chairman asked about the status of the Buildings & Grounds truck and Supervisor Golden reported they are currently having an issue that needs to be diagnosed. They hope to get 2 more years out of the truck because it is not abused and is well maintained. The Vice Chair asked about custodial services. TA Jipson said Town Hall lost their part-time cleaner and they are trying to work with the person who currently cleans the Police Department. The Vice Chair confirmed that these are not the same type of custodial services that were provided under the last budget. The motion passed unanimously.

Mark Roberts moved to approve the General Government Buildings Budget of \$475,804.90 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by Justin Borden and passed unanimously.

Highway

DPW Director Craig Clairmont and Assistant DPW Director Brian Jackes presented the proposed Highway budget. Employee retention has been difficult, but they are in good shape now. The crew was stretched thin last year. A road assessment was completed by Underwood

Engineering in 2017 and that has been used as a guide, but things change. They have been able to set aside money with the Reconstruction Fund and Highway Block Grants to stay above water. The shim and overlays have held up well. The Town's paving contractor has provided quality service and products which helps reduce costs. A DPW truck has been on order for 9 months, so they are keeping the old one going. They keep all of their equipment well maintained to save on costs. They went with a conservative budget, but some things are out of their control such as fuel and heat. They do use waste oil burners during the day to heat the Town garage and turn the heat down to 52 at night.

Norma Patten moved lines 01-4311-101 through 01-4311-505; seconded by Tracey LeClair. It was noted that salaries are split with Water and Sewer. The motion passed unanimously.

Tracey LeClair moved to approve the Highway Administration budget of \$80,895.47 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by Norma Patten and passed unanimously.

Tracey LeClair moved lines 01-4312-102 through 01-4312-440; seconded by Norma Patten. TA Jipson noted there was a change to the Assistant DPW Director wages with 50% for Highway, 25% Sewer and 25% Water. Everyone at the DPW is cross-training with the pump stations. There was discussion about wages, which are based on the union scales. The motion passed unanimously.

Tracey LeClair moved lines 01-4312-505 through 01-4312-999; seconded by Mark Roberts. Fuel is getting expensive, and a lot of the costs are weather-dependent. Salt has increased from \$56 to \$85 per ton and there are new Town roads such as Aiden Circle. It is expected the Town will take over the rest of Wild Acres and Grimstone next year. There is a proposed subdivision on Westview Drive. There is no request for new equipment. They have an old grader, an excavator and a backhoe that are all well maintained. Asphalt prices increased but Wolcott held to the price they gave in the spring. Sharon Ciampi said she appreciates the dedication the Director and Assistant Director have to work with their crew and fill in personally for absences. She asked for confirmation that the 0.78% number is the amount of the budget increase. It is, but some wages have been moved to another department. Union contracts are out of their control. The motion passed unanimously.

Tracey LeClair moved to approve the Highways and Streets budget of \$1,178,707.28 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by Norma Patten and passed unanimously.

Street Lighting & Highway Block Grant

Mark Roberts moved lines 01-4316-220 and 01-4319-001; seconded by Justin Borden. This includes electrical and the loan for the LED light upgrade. There is one more payment in 2023 and another in 2024. The cost should decrease. The motion passed unanimously.

Mark Roberts moved to approve the Street Lighting and Highway Block Grant budget of \$196,965.00 as recommended by the Selectmen. The Highway Block Grant does not affect taxes but it is used to repair the roads. The motion was seconded by Albert Akerstrom and passed unanimously.

Sewer

Assistant DPW Director Jackes said they are now fully staffed after 10 months with no sewer technician. There are 8 stations serving about 1,300 people and 20 miles of gravity and high-pressure line. Four stations are cleaned each year. TA Jipson is the Town's Winni River Basin representative and there are funds in this budget for WRBP. DPW has been actively seeking grants to help offset costs. 25% of the assistant director's salary is part of this budget. Everyone is cross-training, and all stations are up to date. Coon's Point needs electrical upgrades, but the voters did not approve it. South Road station needs a new generator but that was part of the fund's voters did not approve. Finance Director Katherine Davis said there are always grants available from the state and federal government, but most need a 2/3 majority vote. TA Jipson mentioned the tax impact will show on warrant articles.

Tracey LeClair moved lines 01-4321-101 through 01-4321-888; seconded by Justin Borden. TA Jipson noted the Winni River Basin makes up about 45% of this budget. There is a line on Route 140 that needs replacement and is estimated to cost about \$6,000,000.00. DPW Director Clairmont is pushing for the Town to be able to speak on alternatives to replacing the line if we are paying for it. Some of the costs will be offset by user fees. Underwood Engineering will be assisting with a rate study as the rates have not increased in many years. Currently there is a flat fee for unmonitored sewer. There isn't a lower user rate in the area. Sharon Ciampi asked if the health, dental and retirement is split the same way wages are. Finance Director Davis said yes, they are split proportionally for two employees and fully funded for the one full-time sewer technician. The motion passed unanimously.

Tracey LeClair moved to approve the Sewer budget of \$633,561.10 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by Marsha Campbell and passed unanimously.

Water

There have been substantial staffing losses in the competitive job market. They are currently subcontracting with Pennichuck for three years for itemized functions like maintaining gates and hydrant flushing. The Assistant DPW Director and DPW Director take care of the day to day operations and handle things like water leaks. Pennichuck charges for all calls so they try to save the Town money when they can. Backflow testing is now handled by a company that Pennichuck contracts with. There are three wells with 24-hour well monitoring. The status of the wells was reviewed. Well 2 is kept and never taken out of cycle completely because they are so expensive to get permitted. Currently Pennichuck is blending the use of wells 1 and 3.

Tracey LeClair moved lines 01-4331-101 through 01-4331-875; seconded by Norma Patten. The health insurance line was questioned, however there are no full-time Water employees. There is still a proportion of the other employees' retirement covered in this budget. DPW workers have stepped up to get some additional training and certificates. Work is also being done to take inventory with a new software to make things easier for the next generation. Right now, they only know as much as the previous generation of employees documented and recorded. The motion passed unanimously.

Ruth Mooney moved to approve the Water budget of \$255,141.92 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by Roland Coffin and passed unanimously.

The Committee agreed to move the Executive and Legal Budgets to December 6th in order to review the Town Clerk, Elections and Finance Department budgets this evening.

Town Clerk

TC/TC DeRoy told the Committee she learned a lot about the budget this year. She has made her intention to retire known, and worked with the Selectboard on a plan for how to successfully make a smooth transition with her office and staff. She has suggested a warrant article be placed on the ballot to separate the Town Clerk and Tax Collector positions. Currently the Town Clerk must be an elected Town resident and this person also serves as the Tax Collector. The Town would have more flexibility with employees if someone does not live in Belmont. A valuable employee would not need to resign if they moved to another location. In recent years the Town Clerk's office has lost a number of employees due to low wages so a competitive wage was recommended. There are two new employees and the wages will almost be offset by TC/TC DeRoy's move to part-time. To best help retain good staff, there should be a Deputy Town Clerk and a Deputy Tax Collector. TC/TC DeRoy will be transitioning to part-time status next year and someone will need to go on the ballot in 2024. There is a 3-year learning curve for a tax collector because many functions are only completed once a year. Currently the office has one person with one year of experience and the other two have just started in the last few weeks.

This past election 3,100 people voted. Generally, there are about 1,200 people at a Town election. The Town Clerk's office is responsible for Elections and only one of the clerks has been through two State and one Town election. There were 255 new voters. We have lots of new residents and buildings. Vehicle registrations have increased. The Selectboard understood the need for an additional employee. She wants to get everyone trained well so the Town won't have any issues when she retires. Her budget was updated to appropriately reflect some items such as shipping and postage, as well as moving specific items to the Elections budget so that costs can be reported accurately on the Election and Town Clerk budgets. TA Jipson noted about \$4,000.00 was moved to the Election budget. This budget includes ballot printing costs which increase depending on how many elections there are each

year. There will be 5 elections in 2025 so the Elections budget will vary from year to year. The cost of the counting device programming is \$1,400 per election.

Norma Patten moved lines 01-4140-101 through 01-4140-505; seconded by Mark Roberts. The motion passed unanimously.

Ruth Mooney moved to approve the Town Clerk budget of \$120,387.31 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by Roland Coffin and passed unanimously.

TA Jipson noted that Town Clerk medical, dental and vacation buybacks benefits are included with the Executive budget.

Elections

TC/TC DeRoy said there are about 4,400 registered Belmont voters and about 3,100 of those voted in this past election. About \$4,000 was moved from the Town Clerk budget to accurately reflect Election expenses.

Tracey LeClair moved lines 01-4141-101 through 01-4141-999; seconded by Mark Roberts. The motion passed unanimously.

Sharon Ciampi commented that she liked seeing the entire ballot count with the page of write-ins provided. TC/TC DeRoy stated that it is now the law to report every write-in, whereas previously it was only required to report write-ins with more than 5 votes.

Ruth Mooney moved to approve the Elections budget of \$11,315.00 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by Roland Coffin and passed unanimously.

Financial Administration

TC/TC DeRoy has received some tax payments from the State of NH through their assistance program. One of the properties was supposed to be deeded but their payment of \$73,000 came through. Another was for \$48,000. Three properties were ready to be deeded but the Selectboard granted a brief extension. One refinanced with the bank and escrowed their taxes so they will be paid. In July 2022, 96% of taxes were collected. There are 4% making payments, and some people are on a five-year plan, but they are current. Her plan works because there is only 4% in back taxes.

Finance Director Davis has included a Finance/Human Resources Clerk position in the budget who will also help TA Jipson. This position was eliminated just before COVID but it is very much needed now. There is lots of behind the scenes work that is done with so many new employees and with managing all of the grants the Town has received.

Tracey LeClair moved lines 01-4150-101 through 01-4150-999; seconded by Mark Roberts. There is a new position and an increase in wages for the two new Town Clerk/Tax Collector positions. The software line increased because the Town must move to a cloud-based system to satisfy the New Hampshire Retirement System requirements. There is no other option. The audit line increased and may need to increase again if a federal compliance audit is necessary for grant awards. The motion passed unanimously.

Ruth Mooney moved to approve the Finance Administration budget of \$309,481.78 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by Roland Coffin and passed unanimously.

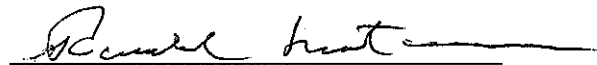
TA Jipson reminded everyone that budget books need to be returned to Town Hall at the end of the season so they can be reused. They are expensive and time-consuming to assemble. Please do not remove everything before it is returned. We can take the books back at the last meeting if they can't be returned directly to Town Hall.


Kevin Sturgeon said if there are still openings on the Budget Committee he would like to volunteer. TA Jipson asked him to submit a request to her. He also stated he was offended by a Town employee making inappropriate comments about how he has previously voted.


Next Meeting The next meeting date will be November 29, 2022 at 6:30 pm.

Adjournment

Tracey LeClair moved to adjourn at 9:08pm; seconded by Ruth Mooney. The motion passed unanimously.


Chairman Ron Mitchell


Norma Patten

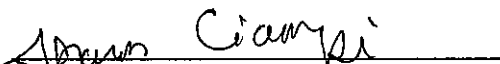

Justin Borden



Albert Akerstrom

Marsha Campbell

Selectman Ruth Mooney

Vice Chair Tracey LeClair


Sharon Ciampi


Mark Roberts

Robert Chapman

Roland Coffin

Gary Grant