



Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Workshop Minutes

Wednesday, October 13, 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, Mark Ekberg Code Enforcement Officer, Craig Clairmont Director of Public Works, Candace Daigle Interim Town Planner, Sharon Ciampi Cemetery Trustee, Russell Wheeler Building Inspector, Donna Cilley General Assistance Director, and Finance Director Katherine Davis.

Budget Reviews

Highways

Craig Clairmont Director of Public Works provided an overview of his department noting that they had worked safely during COVID, and he noted that a new Assistant DPW Director, Brian Jackes, had been hired within the past 5 months. He is working out very well and the department has also recently filled the vacancy left open due to retirement. The department has had a very busy year with a number of roads receiving shim and overlays; parts of Seavey, Upper Parish Settlement, Sargent Lake Road, Forest Drive, Bennington Drive, and parts of Jamestown Road were completed. We also provided some general maintenance on Durrell Mountain Road although additional work will be needed in the future. The first part of Seavey Road will need a full reconstruction, so it was not addressed during this year's program. Craig explained that the cost of salt had gone up for this coming year, he noted that the bay is currently half full; discussion followed regarding the need to increase the line item. TA Beaudin updated the Board that we did receive copies of the Gravel Reports from the DRA on the pit on Durrell Mountain Road and they have been passed onto Underwood Engineering for review to add into their report. DPW Director Craig Clairmont announced that he is going to be looking to purchase another truck for the department, TA Beaudin has been researching some options for purchases with leasing companies. The 1st quote we have is \$34,107 for 7 years. The backhoe payments will come off this year. The leasing company will not hold interest rates due to the market uncertainty. The cost for salt has gone up 17%, we have budgeted \$135,000 for 2022, and Craig can see us increasing it to \$150,000. If we go over, we have the option to take it Highway Block Grant funds. We increased the overtime budget with anticipation of the upkeep of the new PD and Mill. Selectman Patten suggested we leave the salt

budget where it is at \$135,000, Selectman Pike agreed to leave it where it is, and noted we can take the funds from elsewhere if we need to. TA Beaudin commented that overall, there is a 4% increase to this budget, and it includes the additional lease payment for the truck and can fluctuate a little with the interest rate. Discussion followed with the Selectmen regarding the recent accident on Main Street and the need to potentially consider additional funding for streetlighting. The Board agreed and added \$2,000 to the streetlight budget.

Sewer

TA Beaudin commented that the rates with the WRBP have changed, those are fixed rate increases. The budget is anticipated to increase. We won't have to increase our rates. The Sewer Department maintains a positive cash balance. DPW Director Craig Clairmont commented that we had to increase the budget some for DES mandates on camera work in the lines. We are working on updating the Asset Management Plan for the Sewer Department. We have put in a request in with DES for funding but have not heard any word if we will receive any funds for that.

Water

DPW Director Craig Clairmont commented that we have a Sewer Tech and a Water Tech in the department and they both are right on the ball, they also help out with winter maintenance when needed. Our service contact is with Pennichuck. We had some additional assessments that had to be done this year at an additional cost. We increased the training to get Tim and Mike the proper training. TA Beaudin mentioned that we will want to take a look at the water rates in the future to make sure we are moving along in the right direction. The budget has been steadily increasing over the years. The last increase was 5 or 6 years ago. TA Beaudin added that we are currently earmarking ARPA funds to cover the repairs to well 1. DPW Director noted that lastly painting of the tank will need to be done in the next 3 to 5 years.

Land Use

Candace Daigle Interim Town Planner explained that we are going thru a transition period. We have a new Town Planner coming on board shortly. She explained that they will have different ideas to bring to Belmont. During the 30 years that she worked for Belmont; she noted that she kept a lot of the work to herself some of the duties that might have logically been passed off to an administrative assistant. She noted that the new Planner is likely to expect some of those other duties to be completed by an AA and will likely pass them on. She explained that she has taken a look at the department, on how it will work, how it has worked and how it should work. The departments and the public all come into the office for questions. She explained that she does not see the type or amount of work in our department being reduced, and noted that her recommendations are meant to best position the office. She noted that staff provides an unusually high service to the Board members. The department produces a high level of record keeping which is very time consuming; digitalizing the process would lessen the load. She explained that she had changed the title of the Land Use Administrative Assistant to a Coordinator to take over a great deal that the Town Planner may not do. The Clerk hours would be reduced, and Town Planner and Land Use Tech will be working more closely together. Hiring the part time Code Enforcement Officer and Building Inspector has pushed more work back on staff since they are not here all the time. CEO is doing a great job so far and doing a lot of face to face. He is cracking some hard nuts and a fresh way of doing it is proving to be effective. In 2019 we had 215 applications

submitted for the department. In 2020 we had 286 applications, and so far in 2021 we have 354 applications. The processes are all the same. We have a lot of people coming in with new builds, and a lot of additions. Our zoning applications have skyrocketed this year. The pay raise for the new Town Planner is in line with the market. The added Land Use administrative assistant is a hit to the budget, but the position is needed, and she explained she did not see the department functioning without it. A cell phone was added for the new Town Planner. Postage and noticing should have been increased over the years and have not so we are playing catch up there. The legal and professional lines should be temporary. She explained that credentialing and training expenses have been increased and the Planning Board did request that she be available for a 6-month period to assist with training and provide a 6-month evaluation. She explained that during her tenure as Planner she was someone who did most every task necessary either to assist those doing the work or in lieu of. Selectman Mooney replied that we will digest this and can come back to this at a later date.

Conservation Commission

Interim Planner Daigle explained that the CC budget does not typically change year to year. Last year they had a great deal of money that went back to the Conservation Commission Fund, due to a request from the TA to monitor budget expenditures due to covid-19. She explained that she had asked TA Beaudin about establishing a capital reserve fund for the CC. It would stop the unusual spikes in the expenditures. They have \$258,259.98 in Conservation Fund now. She noted that there are properties under consideration for purchase to protect the green space. At some point as Current Use property is removed from CU and there isn't land going into CU, the CC fund will stop growing, she noted it would be nice to see the fund used just for purchasing land. The capital reserve fund would be for the administrative side of purchasing land. She asked that the Board reconsider refunding the lines that you zeroed out last year, if you budget what is requested, it is still \$8,000 less than last year. Selectman Mooney commented that it was our thoughts that were there any funds left over it goes to the general fund. They are the only committee that they get to receive the funds back. Candy replied that you are chastising them for what was voted on by the voters. Selectman Patten added that he doesn't agree with adding the Capital Reserve fund, he did support funding the additional requested budget and then have the professional services taken out of the CC Fund, Selectman Pike agreed.

Cemeteries

Cemetery Trustee Sharon Ciampi, presented the budget, stating that they went with their pre covid budget amount which was \$20,000. The majority of this is used for general maintenance. The Trustees enrolled into the NH Cemeteries Association this year which has a small fee associated with it. They have not sent out requests for a bid on maintenance due to scheduling conflicts. Their feelings are if they hold off, they may get a better response in the spring. The current maintenance budget is currently at \$12,500 and the \$20,000 they feel more than covers it. There is a lot of perpetual care funds that are not being used. TA Beaudin stated that the income can be used from the perpetual fund if they are used for the person in that lot, noting only the interest can be spent. Capital gains are added to the principal. The income can be spent. Sharon Ciampi added that we are looking at the fencing issues and have identified them in the CIP. Selectman Pike commented that Sharon had once said that the computer and printer they use was down, if that is true, why don't you give it back to have out IT look at it. Sharon replied that yes, she can do that, she has also considered purchasing 3 chrome books for the

three trustees, so that we can all zoom and have meeting capabilities with all that is going on with scheduling. We can use what was left over in the budget this year to buy the computers.

Building Inspection and Code Enforcement

Building Inspector Russell Wheeler stated that there are no big changes in the budget. A salary adjustment since adding the Code Enforcement Officer position. The supply and postage lines have been increased. The CEO department is using more in postage. The fuel line we are increasing as we are both using the town vehicle. He also added maintenance for the vehicle as it is getting older. BI Wheeler noted there are funds in training for the CEO if it is needed. TA Beaudin commented that there is one expense that she would ask the board to consider. Russell is using the old laptop, and Mark is using the office PC, she recommends that a laptop or tablet be purchased from this year's funds for use by Mark in the field. The added budget expense to us will be adding a service fee to the general government and building budgets line. Russell Wheeler added that we are 6 to 8 weeks ahead of last years. Building Permit applications, we are at 205 not counting mechanical. I am doing inspections on my off days; I get calls all the time.

On a side note, TA Beaudin commented Mr. Griffith called back and there was no asbestos in the samples that they collected on his property; therefore, he will call Casella to come back and collect the dumpster.

Code Enforcement Officer Mark Ekberg commented that we are getting some movement on cases that have been stuck in the mud. TA Beaudin noted that we have responded to Mr. Malone's request, and we have since received a 2nd letter from Mr. Malone, And she recommended to the Board that Town Council respond to Mr. Malone.

General assistance

Donna Cilley General Assistance Director reviewed the proposed General Assistance Budget noting that many of the line items remain the same as in 2021. She noted that she had removed \$5,000 from the housing, utilities, and heating budget. She commented that she believes that the housing relief from the government will go away in 2022. She noted that she had taken advantage of every opportunity for housing relieve monies during the past two years, limiting the amount to be taken from her housing line. The housing relief helped 74 applications to tap into the covid housing monies. CAP had 33 that they processed, the other 41 applications fell on and fell off. We had 18 legal stays during the moratorium, and they were represented thru legal aid. We had 160 covid calls, meaning they were looking for information on where they could get their shot, etc. and to know more on covid and she explained she recommended they contact 211. We had 19 homeless referrals. In total the department had 86 homeless individuals that were trackable; 7 of those homeless that were seniors. She noted that she had not seen such high levels in her years of service TA Beaudin commented that her heating line has little as we carried over. Donna Cilley added that with our current administration she feels fuel, heat, utilities will be taken care of, housing not so much. She recommends leaving the line for food at its current level as she is unsure where that stands at the State and Federal level. Selectman Mooney commented that we have the two food banks at the churches in town. Selectman Patten asked what the PT Labor line was for, and Donna replied that it is if she leaves on vacation, and someone needs to cover the office. TA Beaudin added that Donna has been dedicated to the services that she provides and even when on vacation or out sick never does not take calls, she should but has not. The level of service

Donna provides to her clients and the Town will be hard to replace in the future We have to look at historical data pre covid, and not look at covid numbers, it is a gamble. Selectman Mooney commented that Donna does go above and beyond. She does a great job at case management and goes above and beyond to make sure that we do not spend our money 1st and that we utilize outside services first. Donna commented that the rents are not stable now. A 1 bedroom is no longer \$800. They are now \$1,400. The rates have increased so much. Selectman Patten commented that he is not voting for this budget, that the other Board members can, we work for the taxpayers and the tax rate is already too high. Donna responded that we can never predict this budget. We do not know what we will get in relief funds if any. We have based the budget back on pre covid numbers that we had historically spent. TA Beaudin added that General Government is one of the most difficult jobs in a community. People land here and under the law we have an obligation to provide for them. It's not a pleasant job. This is one budget with so much unknown and it comes with a risk to the board if you fail to provide for individuals.

Executive

TA Beaudin explained that the budget is basically flat as proposed for 2022. Selectman Pike asked about the administrative assistant line. TA Beaudin responded that this is Alicia's salary that historically has been split between three budgets and we have moved it into 1.

General Government

TA Beaudin noted the overall increase in the budget and explained the various line items including the cost of internet access at the Police Department. Discussion followed and it was noted that we were not able to fill the part time laborer position with Building and Grounds this past summer, but we are proposing an increase in the line to assist the department and to cover a part time cleaner for our Town buildings. There was an increase in OT in Building & Grounds, as actuals for this year are over.

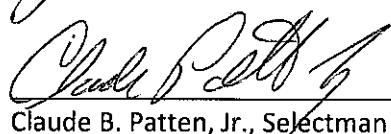
Library

TA Beaudin commented that the Trustees are asking for an afternoon or nighttime meeting, or the Library Director can present during the day. Selectman Pike commented that we should ask the Trustees and the Director to come back in to discuss the budget and explain the increase in salaries.

Meeting adjourned at 12:06 pm.


Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman


Jon Pike, Vice-Chairman


Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman