

Budget Committee
February 4, 2020
Meeting Minutes

Present:

Chair Joe Caristi, Vice Chair Dave Carr, Tom Kaempfer, Walter Waring, Charles Therriault (late), Janet Cavanagh, and Select Board Representative Les Dion

Others Present:

Jeff Chartier, Water/Sewer Superintendent; Nik Coates, Town Administrator; Bob Blanchette, Finance/Human Resources Director; Raymah Simpson, Town Clerk/Tax Collector, and Chief Ben LaRoche, Fire Department

Call to Order:

Mr. Caristi called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Review and Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Caristi stated that the discussions by Mr. Waring and Ms. Cavanagh should be added to the minutes from January 27th. After discussion, Mr. Caristi will provide written amendments for the committee to review at the next meeting.

Correspondence:

Mr. Waring handed out to the committee a letter he drafted regarding the current Town projects and taxes. He spoke about the Town tax increase and how it is affecting not only himself but those in his neighborhood. Mr. Waring stated that he supports the Town projects and does not debate the importance of each one but the timing of the proposed projects such as the public safety building, combining the Police and Fire Stations. He believes with each project and debt that the Town accrues, the taxes go up, resulting in residents facing a financial burden, especially those who live on retirement funds and or have medical expenses and ailments. Mr. Waring feels strongly that the Town should slow down on spending to lessen the increase of taxes.

Mr. Caristi passed around documents he created for the committee in order to review what currently has been voted through in the 2020 Budget along with what the Select Board has recommended. It also shows the overall growth year to year. Mr. Kaempfer asked if there was any analysis done on revenues and Mr. Caristi stated there's no analysis available, but it is projected that there is a decrease in revenues for 2020 compared to last year.

Old Business:

4140-810 & 4150-810 Town Clerk/Tax Collector

Ms. Simpson stated that the windows in the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's office has a permanent gap to transfer paperwork during transactions, but this gap makes items in the Town Clerk's office vulnerable. Ms. Simpson asked the committee to approve an additional \$2,000 to be added into each Town/Clerk

Tax Collector department budget line for new equipment for the purchase of security shades. She has received an estimate for the two main windows; \$3,795. Ms. Goodwin was not present, but Ms. Simpson relayed that the Land Use Department is also looking to ask approval for additional funds to purchase a security shade as well, however the cost may increase due to a larger gap in the window. The window shades in the old Town Office building all locked at the bottom, making the office, documents, and or items to the public inaccessible. The committee deliberated on the additional funds and referred the request to the Select Board and funds to be taken from the Building Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund.

4711/4712 Principal L/T Debt & Interest & 4194-410 GGB Electricity

Mr. Coates updated the committee that there will be no changes in the Debt budget line. The Town has recently refinanced its bonds with the Municipal Bond Bank but won't take effect until five years. Motion to move bottom line of 4711 in the amount of \$273,753 by Mr. Therriault, seconded by Ms. Dion. Motion passed 7-0-0.

Motion to move the bottom line of 4712 in the amount of \$58,886 by Ms. Dion, seconded by Mr. Kaempfer. Motion passed 7-0-0.

New Business:

4327 – Fire Betterment

Mr. Chartier stated the budget is intended for services rendered for hydrant repairs in the past but never paid and has been carried as a liability and for 2020 repairs. Motion to approve bottom line of 4327 in the amount of \$20,000 by Mr. Therriault, seconded by Mr. Carr. Motion passed 7-0-0.

07-4324 - Water Surplus Transfer

Motion to move bottom line of 4324 in the amount of \$33,390 by Mr. Kaempfer, seconded by Mr. Therriault. Motion passed 7-0-0.

07-4331 - Water Operations

Mr. Chartier stated the budget increased annual wage adjustments. Mr. Caristi asked if the water and sewer project would be reflected in the 2020 budget. Both Mr. Coates and Mr. Chartier stated the project will not be effective in 2020. Motion to move bottom line of 4331 in the amount of \$357,886 by Mr. Therriault, seconded by Ms. Dion. Motion passed 7-0-0.

07-4332 - Water Capital Projects

Mr. Chartier discussed the two projects coming up. The construction of a roof for Fowler Well and the replacement of the alarm dialers in order to be alerted of emergencies. Motion to approve bottom line of 4332 in the amount of \$19,500 by Mr. Therriault, seconded by Mr. Waring. Motion passed 7-0-0.

07-4711 & 4712 - Water Debt Service

Mr. Chartier and Mr. Coates explained to the committee that in past years, principal and interest have always been combined unlike with other department budgets. Motion to move the bottom line of

4711/4712 in the amount of \$63,746 by Mr. Therriault, seconded by Mr. Kaempfer. Motion passed 7-0-0.

05-4324 – Sewer Surplus Transfer

Motion to amend bottom line of 4324 in the amount of \$38,650 by Ms. Dion, seconded by Mr. Kaempfer. Motion passed 7-0-0.

05-4325 - Sewer Capital Projects

Mr. Chartier stated that \$10,000 from this budget line is for two water heaters needing to be replaced. Mr. Caristi asked if the sewer rates would increase with the upcoming sewer extension project if the Select Board decides to move forward with it. Mr. Chartier stated that the rates will not increase, however those who hook up to the new system will see an increase reflecting the charges for the materials used upon installation. Motion to move bottom line of 4325 in the amount of \$51,750 by Mr. Therriault, seconded by Ms. Dion. Motion passed 7-0-0.

05-4326 - Sewer Operations

Mr. Chartier stated there were increases to the budget due to annual wage adjustments and for the change in compensation structure to one employee. Motion to move bottom line of 4326 in the amount of \$367,362 by Ms. Dion, seconded by Mr. Kaempfer. Motion passed 7-0-0.

05-4711/4712 Sewer Debt Service

Motion to move bottom line of 4711/4712 in the amount of \$60,024 by Mr. Therriault, seconded by Ms. Dion. Motion passed 7-0-0.

Petition Warrant Articles Review

When asked on his thoughts regarding the discussions at the public forum for the proposed Public Safety Building, Chief LaRoche stated the forum went very well and the questions were very thoughtful. He also stated that Chief McIntire did a great job explained the reasoning behind the building and was very thorough in his presentation. Mr. Kaempfer asked if there was a way to withhold on spending the proposed \$100,000. Chief LaRoche stated that if the Town wants finalized architectural designs and estimated costs, then the proposed amount would need to be paid out.

Mr. Kaempfer, along with other members of the committee, discussed the concern of perception; not the project itself but of the timing of the proposed project. The Town is on schedule for repayment of the library construction, payments starting on the new Town building, and the upcoming water and sewer project. Mr. Waring stated that these projects are no doubt needed, but his concern is that the Town has done a lot of spending on projects and he feels that it is time to slow down until current debts have been payed off. Mr. Waring asked Chief LaRoche what expenses would accrue if the proposed building was put off for a few years. Chief LaRoche stated that they are unable to foresee unexpected expenses therefore cannot give a very accurate answer, however, the expense for the new building would be advantageous rather than on repairing the current Fire and Police Stations. Mr. LaRoche also

stated that if the funding for the project were to be approved, the construction of the building is a year or two out. It would take a year to get all designs and layouts in order.

Member Comments:

Ms. Cavanagh stated that she would like to ask Ms. Goodwin some questions she has regarding the Land Use Budget.

Mr. Coates discussed the possible conversions of town meetings into SB2. There will be a debate at the Town Meeting and the votes would need to be 3/5 majority to pass. Mr. Coates also stated there are discussions taking place regarding adding recommend/not recommend language into the Warrant Articles.

Select Board Comments:

None.

Staff Comments:

None.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn meeting at 7:45pm by Mr. Waring, seconded by Mr. Therriault. Motion passed 7-0-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shannon Wharton