

Bristol Select Board
Minutes
September 23, 2021

Present: Select Board members: Chair Don Milbrand, Anita Avery, Les Dion, Shaun Lagueux and Nik Coates, Town Administrator

Absent: JP Morrison

Others Present: Robert Blanchette, Finance Officer/Human Resources Officer; Christina Goodwin, Land Use/Assessing Manager; Deborah Clarke-Tivey, Administrative Assistant

Work Session: Chair Milbrand opened the work session at 3:15pm.

Tax Rate and Revenues Planning: Mr. Coates, Mr. Blanchette and Ms. Goodwin presented to the Board the history of the Town of Bristol's tax rate for the past year to show that the current rate of \$8.10 is lower than past years. They reviewed the Town's reserves, expenditures, and evaluations from 2016 through 2020. They explained that the Town has completed everything required of them and has submitted everything needed for the tax rate to be set by the State. The Town's information is in the state queue and the Town is waiting on the State to review the documents and give their feedback.

Select Board's Goals and Priorities: Mr. Coates led a discussion with the Board to identify the Board's goals and priorities for this budget season. The Board felt it was important to get staff wages to a competitive rate to retain and show appreciation to staff. The safety and security of the Town is a priority to the Board and the Board felt it important to limit project requests.

Budget Priorities presented by Department Heads: Budget Chair Therriault opened a joint meeting between the Select Board and the Budget Committee at 5:05pm. Both Boards met with Department Heads to discuss their departments' budget priorities.

Present: Chair Don Milbrand, Les Dion, Shaun Lagueux, Select Board members; Nik Coates, Town Administrator; Chair Charles Therriault, Sue Sodano, Walter Waring, Janet Cavanagh, Paul Regan; Budget Committee Members; Robert Blanchette, Finance Officer/Human Resources Officer; Brittany Overton, Library Director; Raymah Simpson, Town Clerk/Tax Collector; Christina Goodwin, Land Use/Assessing Manager; Mark Bucklin, Highway Superintendent/Transfer Station; Ben LaRoche, Fire Chief & Emergency Management; Jeff Chartier, Water and Sewer Superintendent; Jim McIntire, Police Chief; Ingrid Heidenreich, Human Services; Steve Moore, Community Member; Cade Overton, Media Manager; Deborah Clarke-Tivey, Administrative Assistant

Absent: Joseph Caristi, Anita Avery, and JP Morrison

Library: Ms. Overton explained to the Boards that the library staff has adjusted their services to the needs of their patrons. The community has shifted more to a digital world. This has affected the library's use of space and the need for the library to increase downloadable books, eBooks, computers/laptops use and providing a home delivery service carried out by volunteers. She discussed the library's leaky

roof and repairs to some of the walls that have cracked and need repair. One employee resigned due to length of commute however another employee was hired locally to fill the open position.

Mrs. Sodano and Mr. Therriault asked about technological plans and desktop additions. Mrs. Overton stated no additions at this time, though all computers are used, the longest wait time for a computer is 20 minutes. Trading in is a good idea when the computers are out of date and that she invited Mr. Milbrand to the library to discuss CIPs and a plan is being worked on. Mrs. Overton mentioned the decrease in CDs and Audiobooks as an app for free downloadable audiobooks is available. Mr. Lagueux inquired on substitutes or extra employees for coverage purposes. Mrs. Overton stated that the part time employees can cover shifts and not be over worked. Mrs. Sodano asked how the home delivery services work. Mrs. Overton relayed there is a form that is filled out online to determine how often and what goods the patron wants. The home delivery service is driven by volunteers. Mrs. Cavanagh asked about details regarding volunteer legalities. Mrs. Overton stated that if the volunteer gets into an accident, the claim goes to their personal insurance company.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector: Town Clerk and Tax Collector are now combined; line number 4140. Ms. Simpson explained to the Boards that her department will need to increase the equipment line to \$2,000 because the printer they are currently using will need to be replaced. Her department will also need to increase the number of Supervisors needed for the three elections taking place in the coming year.

Mr. Therriault asked if there has been an increase in online services versus in person appointments. Mrs. Simpson replied that they were both about the same. Some residents prefer in person due to a small additional charge online to process credit card payments.

Police: Chief McIntire stated the methodology for the Police Departments budget was the same. He wishes to increase patrolmen's salaries to be competitive with other town's police departments. He felt that this would help his department fill a position they have been unable to fill and retain the staff they currently have. OT is currently overspent this year for coverage and has been adjusted for next year. He explained why the travel line and canine items in the Police Department's budget were increased and that the cameras were an asset to his department in reviewing incidents, resolving complaints, and gathering evidence. Travel and Bike Patrol has been put on hold due to COVID. Electric and Propane may change once seasonal rates are sent from Dead River.

Mr. Therriault asked if the Select Board has considered combining vehicle lines to all be one. Chief McIntire and Mr. Coates stated that it has been in talks for six years but has not been agreed upon. The K9 dog recently had stomach surgery, a result of digesting an unknown object. Most of the surgery was paid for by donations and the generosity of the vet, along with the use of the \$1,000 in the K9 budget. The service dog is 5 years old and has a service life of around 8 years old. Chief McIntire discussed the grants line is zeroed out as many grants are attached to contracts that could potentially penalize officers if they do not work certain shifts regardless of circumstances. Mr. Therriault inquired on the server that was discussed last year and was not able to be put into the past budget. Chief McIntire stated that Mr. Coates came to him with a surplus after last year and was able to purchase the server instead of adding it to the upcoming budget. Chief McIntire was also asked if some services increased or decreased this year. He replied that drug overdoses and deaths were uprising along with road rage incidents, suicide, and mental health calls while DWI rates were down.

Land Use/Health & Assessing: Ms. Goodwin explained increases to the Land Use/Assessing's budget, making a part time employee full time and increasing the meeting and membership training line. She stated that the Planning Board's budget was increased to allow for chapters in the Master Plan to be written or rewritten. Chapter One and Two will be completed this year and Chapter Three will be completed next year. Mrs. Goodwin stated the Land Use budget reflects a full year pay in 2022 for the new Administrative Assistant position they filled in June. Health supplies and clean-up costs may increase due to the number of inspections that have been very unclean and due to COVID regulations, masks, gloves, and other supplies are needed for each visit. Also, herself and the Deputy and Assistant Deputy will need to be certified next year as mandated by the State, also due to COVID regulations. The Zoning Board's budget would stay the same even though there has been an increase in cases with site plans, special use permits, subdivisions, variances, and enforcement related issues. She explained that more funds will need to be added to the legal line in the budget to get properties out of non-compliance and into compliance. Ms. Goodwin explained the removal of the Conservation Commissions secretary being moved to the Land Use Minute Taker and an increase in water testing that was not budgeted correctly. She let the Board know that the Historic District Commission was level funded in the budget. She discussed increases for software permitting programs, chemical toilets, and maintenance to the enforcement car so it could be inspected for another year. The Tax Map Update Fee is level funded; however, the Water and Sewer Update is behind schedule though everyone involved is happy with the work being done. The Town Car budget line was recommended to increase for upcoming rust repairs quoted at \$2,000.

Mr. Regan asked about the possibility to save up over time for a new vehicle as the market is low and expensive. Mr. Coates stated it could become a Warrant Article, but it would be easier to budget \$6,000 or \$7,000 next season. Mr. Therriault asked if permits increased since pandemic. Mrs. Goodwin replied that there are currently more permits now than projected and some are still being entered in.

Highway & Transfer Station: Mr. Bucklin presented to the Board that his Operations budget would see an increase due to an additional truck driver hired to help with plowing and the maintaining of new roads the Town has picked up. There is an increase to help with the removal of trees around Town that are sick with White Ash Tree Disease. He discussed planned projects regarding drainage and the resurfacing and overlay on Town roads. In addition, the Transfer Stations budget has a proposed increase for a part time employee, repairs to equipment and needed supplies. Mr. Bucklin noted he neglected to remove \$100,000 out of the budget from the Windridge Project.

Mr. Lagueux asked if the Spring Street Sidewalk and the Salt/Sand Shed were in progress. Mr. Milbrand stated it is contracted but delayed by two weeks due to a shortage of drivers and the shed pieces are in, erection of the shed will begin on October 7th and take between three to four days to complete.

Fire & Emergency Management: Chief LaRoche proposed salary increases for his department and to help cover overtime requests for accrued time off for tenured employees who would lose their accrued time. The minimal is two people staffed every 24 hours He asked both Boards to please make sure that radio lease equipment was not duplicated in the budget in two different places. Chief LaRoche discussed the call activity numbers for 2019 and 2020, making comparisons. The calls are slightly low but requests to out of town hospitals such as Concord, Manchester, and Dartmouth have increased. He stated he saw no increase in the Forestry portion of the budget even though the forestry truck was not in the best condition and that the Emergency Management will only see a dollar increase due to grants. The

Emergency Management line of \$7,500 was not spent this year so Chief LaRoche hopes to encumber that money in case of other spending needs.

Mrs. Cavanagh asked if the department already had portables. Chief LaRoche stated they had portables that were out of date and the new ones are in, chargers mounted, and will all be installed and programmed in the next few weeks. Mr. Regan asked with the increase of cost, would there be an increase out of town services and billing enough to offset costs. Chief LaRoche stated that salaries are set and that the billed costs bring in billed revenue. Mr. Regan also asked if it was beneficial to hire another employee rather than increase OT. Chief LaRoche stated he would love to hire another employee if it was feasible, but there are already enough employees with time requested off, and there is an equal balance and share of shifts now. Mr. Therriault asked about a past budget line that was increased, Fire Fighter Physicals. Chief LaRoche said it was currently up in the air as costs went up and not all employees could be sent.

Water/Sewer: Mr. Chartier asked the Boards for an increase in his Operating budget, so his employees can receive an increase in wages and the needs for materials, supplies, and equipment for vehicles. His department hopes to hire a part time seasonal employee to help in the busy summer months along with a full time and a part time position. In Capital Reserves he is looking for new software and laptops to update to Windows 10. This will help his department reading meters and keep the department safe from any possible cyber-attacks. He is asking for funds to epoxy coat floors, a mid-size truck to check stations, collect water samples and bring them to Concord and read meters. The North Main Water tank is due for its five-year inspection and cleaning and the department would like to purchase a line inspection camera to inspect outdated sewer lines, estimated at \$9,000. The other benefit to the camera is the digital videos it produces, making it easier for the department and residents to see the outdated lines. Mr. Chartier also stated that until he can budget \$6,000 for ECOLI Manufacturing Sealant, he is using other sealants on a unit that has constantly failed as it is not worth high spending for.

Mr. Regan stated the budget and certain line items make sense, however the budget in total does equal a larger sum. Mr. Regan asked if there was enough in the reserve or revenue to take from. Mr. Chartier stated that operations come from the revenues and although the department has a healthy capital reserve, most items are strictly budgeted for.

Human Services: Ms. Heidenreich stated she had no big changes to her departments budget. She is requesting more funds for office supplies, for meetings and membership trainings. She stated that her department has seen an increased need from community members for their electric bills but in many cases when a patron comes into her office, she is able to direct them to other service agencies and help them utilize other resources that can help with their needs. Grant funds are running out however most residents were teaming up with Eversource and creating payment plans and reaching out to Tri County Cap for fuel/heat assistance. Ms. Heidenreich stated that to get TCC resources, you must fill out an application yearly, it is not renewed.

Everything Else: Mr. Coates and Mr. Blanchette explained to the Board that the Executive Budget was flat except for a small increase in the Moderators fee for the increase in elections. They reiterated the need to increase the legal section of the budget for upcoming litigations that were expected to arise. A priority was a 4% cost of living adjustment and bumping up some employees' salaries. They stated that the Town of Bristol's' employees are one of the Town's greatest assets and they would like to retain

them. Mr. Blanchette let the Boards know the Town had no projections for insurance as the Town would not receive insurance rates until mid to end of October. They reiterated the need to increase the following budget amounts to keep the enforcement car maintained for inspection, correctly budgeting for chemical toilets, supporting IT for permitting and maintaining the Town's website and maintaining the Economic Development Committees website. Mr. Coates explained to the Boards that the budget supports added security for the Central Street Pump Station, continuing the Town's signage project to support local businesses, and a stair construction project at Cummings Beach. Mr. Blanchette and Mr. Coates discussed the tenure of the fire engine, library, highway tractor and Town building loans. Mr. Coates stated that Principal Interests budget would represent the Fire Department project off, along with Highway's falling off next year, resulting in \$150,000 of retiring debt. The Town is still negotiating on the Fiber Project figures on a yearly basis to lower operating management costs along with looking to purchase a security line to add to the bike trail due to an increase of vandalism incidences. Beaches will increase to add another attendant. Mr. Coates and Mrs. Tivey, Beach Attendant, discussed that the plan was to have two attendants at the beaches, especially Friday through Sunday. The beaches were available to residents only this year, upsetting visitors, some becoming abusive to the staff. Mrs. Tivey stated that July was the busiest and by August, lost three attendants who were going back to college. Mr. Coates stated that Patriotic and Kelley Park budgets are level funded, however Kelley Park may get a later request for a seasonal maintenance staff member.

Revenues are stabilized and are projected to stay stabilized next year. The Fund Balance is close to the minimal amount with an overlay spent of \$69,000 coming out of the Fund Balance. Mr. Coates stated there is also an unused amount of \$300,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act which can be spent on water, sewer, and broadband costs.

Mr. Coates reminded those in attendance that the Budget Committee's next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 28, 2021, at 6:00pm and their topics are Budget presentations by Outside Agencies, Health Agencies, Regional Associations and Goals & Priorities. He also reminded the Budget Committee that they would not have a meeting the week of Thanksgiving and that meeting has been moved to December.

Ms. Cavanagh made a motion to adjourn the joint session of the Select Board and Budget Committee at 8:19pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. Warring. The Budget Committee voted 6-0-0, in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

Mr. Coates led a short discussion with the Select Board to see if they were willing to add an additional meeting to their September schedule. The Board agreed to meet at 5:00pm on September 30, 2021, at the Town Office to work on the remaining wage scale.

Ms. Dion made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:21pm, seconded by Mr. Lagueux. The Board voted 3-0-0, in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,
Deborah A. Clarke-Tivey
&
Shannon Wharton