

Budget Committee  
October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
Meeting Minutes

**Present:**

Chair Charles Therriault, Walter Waring, Paul Regan, Sue Sodano, Janet Cavanagh, and Select Board Representative Shaun Lagueux.

**Others Present:**

Don Milbrand; Select Board, Nik Coates; Town Administrator, Les Dion (late) and Bob Blanchette; Human Resources/Finance Officer.

**Absent:**

Vice Chair Joe Caristi

**Call to Order:**

Mr. Therriault called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.

**Select Board Budget Presentation:**

Mr. Therriault stated that the CIP presentation is still in progress, but the Select Board presentation is still being presented.

**Revenues**

Mr. Coates discussed the Revenues section and the lines it consists of. Mr. Therriault asked if the 2022 budget revenues came from the Select Board or town employee driven. Mr. Coates stated the numbers come from him and Mr. Blanchette, then get presented to the Select Board. He also stated that the Rooms and Meals line will be revised when the state sends the updated numbers. It is currently at \$229,000 which is \$80,000 more than before. Mr. Coates and Mr. Milbrand stated that it is best to be conservative with revenues as the current numbers are only estimates. Mr. Coates stated that subscription numbers to T.V. services are steady and ambulance revenue numbers are tracking well. Mr. Therriault asked what the reason was for being conservative with the beach permits line. Mr. Coates discussed that since COVID, non-residents and non-taxpayers were not able to purchase permits for the last two years. Mr. Waring asked if this would be a permanent situation and if many non-resident permits were purchased previously. Mr. Lagueux stated that it may not be permanent but with COVID, town residents should be given priority access to the town beaches. He also stated that 2020 was complicated due to the uncertainties and the unknown factors of COVID. Mr. Regan asked if the town was missing out on the non-resident revenues and the effects on the tax rate. Mr. Milbrand stated that the tax rates are set on actual figures, not estimates or budget revenues or expenditures. Mr. Milbrand also noted that it is set on 2020 figures, always a year behind. Mrs. Sodano asked if permits were sold on site before. Mr. Lagueux replied yes, though the past two years, permits have been sold at the Town office. Mr. Regan asked why line 3509-100 Misc. numbers were over budget when normally are level funded in the past. Mr. Blanchette stated that the difference stems from short term disability, reimbursements, and Health Trust. Mr. Coates discussed the Ambulance line, stating the revenue coming in depends on the number of rides given. The Fire Chief and Select Board have been working on updating the formula to include population base. Mr. Lagueux stated that the formula would also include non-transport situations. Mr. Therriault verified the town was falling into line with other towns regarding best practices in these situations. Mrs. Sodano asked about the difference between ambulance and member fees. Mr. Therriault replied that ambulance fees are paid by individuals where

member fees come from the towns. Mr. Coates then discussed Highway and Solid Waste lines, stating they were big revenue generators. Revenues from metals increased due to cost effective collection systems and working with Gilpatric Recycling along with the cardboard from the Transfer Station. Mr. Milbrand stated a revenue line for cardboard is missing and will need to be added. Mr. Coates then discussed Pilot Payments from non-profits or other organizations who are not required to pay taxes and motor vehicle revenues were also looking very profitable, that all in all revenues in total were looking to come in a little higher in 2022. Mr. Blanchette reminded the committee that when voting on revenues, the figures are just estimates and not yet actual numbers.

## **2022 Budget**

Mr. Lagueux discussed the Executive lines of the budget, stating the Select Board agreed on the 4% COLA wage increase along with a case-to-case discussion on the pay scale. Another addition to the budget was line 312 – EDC Project Manager part time contracted. Mr. Therriault asked for an example of the tasks for the project manager. Mr. Coates stated he currently running the projects such as the Fiber Project which is very time consuming. Mr. Coates stated that while an outside group or individual may cost more hourly, the benefit would be no cost or offer of health insurance. Mrs. Cavanagh asked about the increase to 4130-115. Mr. Coates said that Financial Executive Assistant had received compensation for the work they have been doing beyond the position and the Select Board agreed.

Mr. Lagueux stated there were no major changes to Town Clerk/Town Tax Collector besides the rise in mail costs and three elections in one year. Mr. Therriault asked about the unused sum of \$2,000 budgeted last year for a printer that has not been purchased. Mr. Milbrand stated it is not encumbered, as an actual contract and approval of the Select Board must happen to do so. Mr. Therriault asked if not budgeted for this year, could it be paid for out of a surplus at the end of the year if available. Mr. Coates stated that if a line is underspent and with the Board's approval, could move those funds and the printer could then be purchased. Mrs. Sodano asked if the same financial regulations go for the salt and sand shed. Mr. Therriault said no, which is why the shed was placed in the Warrant Articles.

Mr. Lagueux stated there is a 3% increase in the wages line of Finance/Financial Administration.

Mr. Lagueux stated there is an increase to line 120 in Property Appraisal. Mr. Therriault asked if the increase in hours was long-term. Mr. Lagueux stated that it depends on the demand for work. Activity levels and amounts of projects have increased therefore hours increase.

Mr. Lagueux stated the Legal budget is always greatly discussed each year. Select Board has tried to reduce it but focusing on department to department or individuals, lawsuits of utility companies, and addressing yards or those in breach of zoning regulations. Occasional costs of deeding due to back taxes will occur.

Mr. Lagueux stated that the only increase seen in Personnel Admin is from health insurances, locked in until June, and other employee-based taxes. Mr. Therriault asked if the numbers were expected to change. Mr. Lagueux stated that it may for positions hiring or anticipated changes in status. The current numbers for health insurance do represent the new percentage.

Mr. Lagueux stated that the Land Use/Planning/Zoning/Tax Map lines saw an increase for the Master Plan. Three chapters will be worked on which is cheaper than just working on one. \$6,000 is seen in that line with \$13,000 which had been previously encumbered for this purpose.

Mr. Lagueux discussed General Government Buildings, noting the big change is to line #342 – Technology. Mr. Coates stated that the town is working on moving to a paperless office, permits being filled out online soon. The change in processes was triggered by COVID. Mr. Coates also wants to harden the town's systems and focus on cyber security as other non-local towns have been at the center of multi-million-dollar hacks within this past year. Along with cyber security, Mr. Coates wants to change from the current Office 365 and move to a governmental version that only is used and accessed in North America. The purchase of security cameras is also included in the budget, not only to catch vandalism on the bike trails but to be used in multiple locations such as the Police Department, which have not had their cameras replaced in almost 15 years. Mr. Regan asked if there would be any reoccurring costs. Mr. Coates stated not on the actual purchases but would on software costs. Mr. Regan also noticed the Town Website and Town Signage lines increased. Mr. Coates noted that the Economic Development Committee website was added and fees such as website, security, and upkeep were included in the increase. He also discussed the two new signs 'Welcome to Bristol' and 'Welcome to Newfound Lake' that were put up and would like to add two more signs for the town. Mr. Coates said much of the sign costs were paid for by donations and partnerships. Mr. Coates then discussed the electricity costs, saying there would be a slight increase as they contract a year to 16 months out. The town is currently shopping now. Mr. Lagueux stated that Cemeteries budget increased slightly for head stonework focused in the five town cemeteries.

Mr. Lagueux stated that there was a small increase in the Police Department budget by 4%. Mr. Therriault asked for the rationale behind the \$43,000 Vacant line. Mr. Lagueux explained that is the estimate for what the officer would be paid for if currently hired for the vacant officer position.

Mr. Lagueux discussed the increase to the Fire Department budget. The Select Board still needs to address changes to OT and Call Coverage which is getting harder to fill. The current expectation is that personnel work 48 hour shifts then come back for OT to coverage a small skip in employee coverage. The Chief would like to take a part time employee and make them full time to save on overtime and ensure no employees are forced to accept shifts and get burnt out. Mrs. Cavanagh asked about the increase in line #350 Medical Expenses. Mr. Therriault stated the line covered costs for physicals and the department is currently in the process of getting those physicals completed. Mr. Lagueux stated that heating oil, gas, and diesel prices are higher. Discussion followed about combining those lines together. Mr. Coates stated he and Mr. Blanchette combine lines each year but do not want to combine too many lines and create confusion. Mrs. Sodano asked about line #250 Radio Equipment Expenses. Mr. Lagueux stated that was added as a Warrant Article from last year due to costs and leasing over a certain amount of years. The original radios replaced were from the 1990's.

Mr. Lagueux noted that both Forestry and Emergency Management budgets decreased.

Mr. Lagueux discussed one of the main increases for Highway is line #114 for the new position for a current employee which has helped decrease line #350 Snowplowing as the current contract has changed. The employee will help take over plowing routes along with summer training and support other workers. Line #390 Tree Removal is at a healthy increase to remove ash trees near the roads. Mr. Lagueux stated that salt prices are rising and along with the costs of the 2009 Freightliner. Discussion followed on new equipment details that Mr. Bucklin had presented before. Mrs. Sodano inquired on street light removals on River Road. Mr. Coates and Mr. Milbrand noted that River Road is a state-maintained road and the state had decided to remove the light. A light could be placed back on River Road, but the problem is how to power it.

Mr. Lagueux noted an increase to line #360 Drainage Projects in the Highway Projects budget. He is unsure if the numbers are up to date as they go hand in hand with the paving schedule. Mr. Therriault asked how far out the town plan projects. Mr. Lagueux answered 10 years for resurfacing but will add cheap seal if the road wears sooner than expected. Hall Road funds were encumbered due to not being completed in its entirety. Mr. Therriault asked and was told he could get a rough estimate of cost per mile. He will communicate with Mr. Bucklin for details. Mr. Lagueux also mentioned the town office parking lot pavement plans for next year however costs may rise such as oil. Mr. Coates noted that the contractor has the right to increase based on cost of oil. Mrs. Cavanagh if locked into a three-year contract, how do prices change from year to year within the contract. Mr. Lagueux stated it has not always been a three-year contract lock in, but fees are more reasonably low then on a year-to-year basis. Mr. Regan asked about line #398 Danforth Brook Road Culvert. Mr. Coates stated Mr. Bucklin is working on this currently to bring in a surveyor and a contractor. \$2,000 and allocated last year and \$2,000 again for this year to start the engineering process. Mr. Coates stated that once this process is completed, the town could receive federal funds for the rest of the project.

Mr. Lagueux and Mr. Therriault disputed the typo in Solid Waste, line #367. The line will be updated to reflect the accurate figures. Mrs. Sodano asked why line #120 Attendants increased. Mr. Lagueux mentioned an additional part time staff member who can also run equipment and may also cross train with highway at the transfer station.

Mr. Lagueux stated that Fire Betterment is the same as last year.

He added that Land Use increased the lines for Administrative Assistant and Associate due to job description updates.

Health Agencies is slightly decreased though services are staying the same as last year. Recreational is level funded as previous years,

Mr. Coates noted the only change with Beaches is the Capital Project to make Avery Crouse more accessible was pulled and added to the Warrant Articles. Mr. Therriault asked the reasoning behind overspending on Attendants for this current year. Mr. Coates stated it was to add more attendants and increase the pay scale.

Mr. Lagueux stated the change to Kelley Park's budget was for the seasonal part time employee position to keep up maintenance of the park along with back up for watering plants. Mr. Coates stated this position is contracted out however last year, the highway employees mowed the lawns. Years back, it used to be a share labored position, part highway, part water and sewer. Ms. Dion stated there was a contractor for fertilizing the fields. This position would also attend to bathroom cleaning and playground equipment maintenance. Mr. Lagueux discussed plans to build a new concession stand. Ms. Dion noted she looked at designs last night, tying in the pavilion with the concession stand.

Mr. Lagueux discussed the only change with the library budget was matching the 4% COLA wages. He also noted thought the budget it decided by the town, the Library Trustees have decision making over spending.

Patriotic is same as last year, Historic Commission is level funded, EDC has moved its project to the Executive budget, and Outside Agencies have seen a slight increase.

Principal and Debt consists of Capital Purchases and projects approved by the taxpayers. The Interest lines are budgeted for retainers, and it was noted that it was the Library's last year.

Mr. Coates stated that Capital Equipment is where Warrant Articles are placed.

Mr. Lagueux concluded the Select Board's presentation of the 2022 Budget. Mr. Therriault stated the optics on budget increases do not look appealing to taxpayers. Mr. Lagueux agreed, saying that it was their job to relay the rationale behind the increases. He also mentioned in terms of tax rates, Mr. Coates stating that the increase in evaluation is up to 80 million. Mr. Regan also asked if the increase was due to new buildings or assets versus existing ones. Mr. Milbrand stated most of the increase was due to existing buildings and assets.

Mr. Lagueux reminded the committee that Water and Sewer zeros out certain lines every year, as Mr. Chartier is great with money management for the department. Mr. Coates stated he always has a surplus at the end of the year.

Mrs. Cavanagh asked if it was true that the town could not afford both the Public Safety Building project and the Sewer project. Mr. Milbrand noted everyone has opinions and that the Select Board has not decided either way on the projects in question. Mr. Coates and Mr. Lagueux stated if decisions are made about the projects, town meetings would be held for the public to gain more access and knowledge.

**Old Business:**

None

**Correspondence:**

None

**Member /Select Board/Staff Comments:**

None

**Review and Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Therriault and other members discussed changes. Mr. Therriault recommended emailing Ms. Wharton with any changes and would review and approve minutes at the next meeting.

**Next Meeting:**

November 9<sup>th</sup> at 6pm, Meeting Room A Town Office, Questions to Department Heads and Budget

**Adjournment:**

Motion to adjourn meeting at 8:40pm by Mrs. Cavanagh, seconded by Mrs. Sodano. Motion passed 6-0-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shannon Wharton