

**TOWN OF WOLFEBORO
BUDGET COMMITTEE
APPROVED MINUTES
November 30, 2023**

I. Call To Order

Chairman MacDonald opened the meeting at 6:00 pm at the Wolfeboro Public Library.

Members Present: John MacDonald, Chairman, Bob Tougher, Vice-Chairman, Bob Loughman, Brian Black, Bob Moholland, Paul O'Brien, Bobbi Boudman, Members, Brian Deshaies, BOS Representative, Linda Murray, BOS Alternate Representative.

Members Absent: Tom Bell, Matt Plache, Members (both excused).

Staff Present: Jim Pineo, Town Manager, Kathy Carpentier, Finance Director, Lee Ann Hendrickson, Administrative Assistant.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

The Committee participated in the pledge of allegiance.

III. Public Comment

None.

IV. 2024 Budget Presentations

Economic Development

No changes.

Fire and Emergency Management

Ambulance Services

Jim Pineo stated the Town has evaluated its options and believes the best option would be to continue with the contract at an increased cost. He stated there may be a warrant article for the purchase of a used ambulance.

John MacDonald asked if the existing contractor would remain if the Town pays the additional cost.

Jim Pineo stated the contract would be extended by two years.

Bobbi Boudman questioned support from the Friends of the Ambulance.

Brian Deshaies stated he is hoping he can fundraise enough money for a used ambulance; noting there are four other individuals interested in being on a group that drives the fundraising. He stated Stewarts Ambulance splits services with other surrounding towns and is hoping that Stewarts would continue providing services (one ambulance). He stated as a citizen, he has done research and found that it will cost less if the Town has a fire based ambulance service.

Bobbi Boudman asked if Taylor Community is expanding their assisted living or only elderly care.

Brian Deshaies replied both.

Tom Zotti noted the new facility has 61 beds and is a memory care facility.

Fire and Rescue

Jim Pineo noted a 20% increase due to the previous approval of a firefighter and the vehicle lease purchase. He noted there would not be a warrant article to fund the capital reserve account.

Bob Loughman questioned the terms of the lease.

Tom Zotti replied down payment this year and four additional years.

Bob Loughman questioned the increase in overtime wages.

Tom Zotti stated the increase is due to the addition of the third firefighter in July and backfilling shifts; noting three firefighters will be on duty for each shift (24/7). He reviewed the Kelly schedule for current staffing; noting backfilling staffing creates additional overtime.

Paul O'Brien questioned whether the problem gets solved by additional staffing.

Tom Zotti stated he performed calculations and noted it is cheaper to carry overtime than it is to hire new staff. He reviewed accrued leave time structure for staff members; noting such impacts overtime wages.

Bobbi Boudman asked why training is being paid through overtime wages.

Tom Zotti stated there are certain training activities and drills that include all employees.

John MacDonald questioned the number of part-time employees.

Tom Zotti replied nine responders.

Referencing part-time wages, John MacDonald noted the current year to date expenditure is \$27,550 and questioned whether the Department could operate at such for 2024.

Tom Zotti stated the reduction could limit the Department's ability to implement call firefighters.

Paul O'Brien asked what would happen if part-time wages were reduced.

Tom Zotti reviewed such.

Brian Black asked if any of the call firefighters are utilized to fill a full-time shift.

Tom Zotti stated the Department currently has one firefighter that is certified to do such.

Linda Murray recommended the Committee decrease the bottom line of the budget rather than decreasing a specific budget line.

It was moved by John MacDonald to decrease 01-42200-117 Part-Time Wages from \$39,752 to \$39,000. Paul O'Brien seconded the motion.

Discussion of the motion:

Paul O'Brien stated he would prefer to manage the bottom line rather than a specific line.

John MacDonald stated the Committee has been generous to the department and gave three new full-time employees as well as a boat. He stated Department Heads need to step up with alternative plans to help the taxpayers.

Bob Loughman understands Mr. MacDonald's motion however, agrees with decreasing the bottom line.

John MacDonald stated he would amend his motion to decrease the bottom line.

John MacDonald withdrew his motion.

Bob Loughman withdrew his second.

It was moved by John MacDonald to decrease the bottom line of the Fire Department Budget (42200) by \$10,000. Bob Loughman seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Bobbi Boudman – no, Bob Tougher – yes, John MacDonald – yes, Brian Black – yes, Bob Moholland – no, Tom Bell – yes, Matt Plache – no, Bob Loughman – yes, Paul O'Brien – yes, Brian Deshaies – yes. The motion passed (7-3-0).

Bob Moholland stated the Department's portable radios are basically obsolete; noting the radios are a need and not a want. He asked Chief Zotti to address the issue.

Tom Zotti stated Motorola will no longer provide support (produce parts) for the existing radios after December 2023 and noted the radios are ten years old. He stated the Department submitted the request as a capital outlay.

Nate Nichols stated the Department can purchase parts until the parts are no longer available. He stated a two-year proposal for the purchase of the radios was submitted and the Town Manager pushed out the purchase to 2024.

John MacDonald questioned the total cost.

Jim Pineo replied \$200,000.

Matt Plache asked if the Department has spares.

Nate replied no.

John MacDonald questioned the number of units being requested.

Nate Nichols replied 22 portables, 2 charges, and 4 mobiles.

John MacDonald asked if the Department could pursue a lease purchase option.

Paul O'Brien asked what happens if the radios are not replaced in 2024.

Nate Nichols replied in an ideal world nothing happens and the Department goes into 2025 with a plan to replace the units. He stated he doesn't know the inventory that Motorola is carrying.

Brian Black asked if there are grants available to purchase the equipment.

Tom Zotti stated at this time there is not a grant that currently supports the purchase of such.

Bob Tougher questioned whether the request should be put forth in a warrant article.

Bobbi Boudman asked if radios from other Fire Departments can be purchased.

Nate Nichols stated the radios would have the same issue – the parts will no longer be available.

Paul O'Brien stated he doesn't support the purchase of used equipment. He asked the Department to request the imputed rate for interest when the lease purchase option is explored.

Brian Deshaies recommended contacting Motorola and ask if they would upgrade the equipment and assist with grants.

John MacDonald requested a lease-purchase price for 22 units and lease-purchase price for half the units (revisit 01-42200-432 Communication Maintenance).

Bobbi Boudman questioned the increase in professional development.

Tom Zotti stated that such includes the Department's training and instructors for such.

Bobbi Boudman asked if the Town recoups money when staff leave for another department following training.

Tom Zotti reviewed issues associated with such; noting it is an issue in the industry and there are parameters of what can be asked of applicants regarding future plans.

Bob Tougher stated the Town Manager decreased professional development by \$5,000.

Bob Loughman noted a \$30,000 increase in the Department's budget, excluding the lease purchase.

Emergency Management

Tom Zotti stated he submitted a grant through Homeland Security Emergency Management to offset some of the cost of the new EOC and generator in the Public Safety Building. He stated Homeland Security informed the Department that the Town is due to update their Emergency Operations Plan and that they are willing to do that concurrently. He stated he sent an RFP to vendors and requested an additional \$3K in the budget to complete the update in 2024. He stated he expected to start the process next year until the matter was brought to the Town's attention.

Kathy Carpentier stated a new line, outside services, would be incorporated into the budget.

Brian Black questioned the shelf life of the Emergency Management Plan.

Tom Zotti replied approximately five years.

John MacDonald asked if the BOS has reviewed the request.

Tom Zotti replied no.

John MacDonald requested the Department present the request to the BOS and return to the Budget Committee following such (revisit Emergency Management, Outside Services).

It was moved by Bob Tougher to add \$3,000 to a newly created line (380 Outside Services) in the Emergency Management Budget (42900). There being no second the motion fails.

Public Safety Building

John MacDonald questioned the increase in water.

Tom Zotti stated during the course of reviewing the five-year average a bump in the reading (tripled) during July/August was observed. He stated by the time the Water Department looked into the matter the issue had resolved itself.

John MacDonald questioned whether the request could be decreased by \$1,500.

Tom Zotti stated one more bill is anticipated prior to year-end.

The Committee and Department discussed the condition of the existing furniture and funds proposed for contemporary furniture; noting the anticipated move in date for the Fire Department is November 2024 and the move in date for the Police Department is 2025.

It was moved by John MacDonald to decrease 01-42901-750 Furniture & Fixtures from \$4,600 to \$400. Bobbi Boudman seconded the motion.

Discussion of the motion:

John MacDonald stated he does not want the furniture for the Fire Department and Police Department to be separated and would prefer the costs to be combined.

Tom Zotti stated that would be an issue because the Fire Department is moving the year prior to the Police Department.

Bob Loughman questioned the soft costs in the warrant article.

Jim Pineo stated the soft costs were not included in the warrant article; noting the Town has some obligation to fulfill those costs. He stated the Town was hit by a \$300,000 increase in the cost of steel which has caused an issue in upfitting the building. He stated the Chief has talked about seeking donations for certain components

Bobbi Boudman withdrew her second.

John MacDonald asked if the \$5,000 would be all the Department would need with no further requests.

Tom Zotti replied no, the funding was intended to get the Department from October/November to a point they can function at and move forward with a plan for the building. He stated the Department originally proposed \$10,000 and it was reduced to \$5,000.

Bobbi Boudman questioned whether the Department can

Tom Zotti asked the Committee to review the Department's original request; noting the Department has given back \$25,000. He stated if the original desks need to be moved then that is what will be done.

Brian Deshaies stated he views the \$5,000 as an emergency fund for the first two years of the move while the Department is getting up and operating because what is needed in the new building is not known.

Paul O'Brien stated the Fire, Police, and Public Works Department are core departments and as such, we should invest in that core. He recommended the Department find a way to move the desks.

Jim Pineo stated the Department came to the Committee last year in the budget process with a capital outlay of \$15,000 for rescue equipment. He stated in the interest of removing that from the tax rate the Town found the funds in the 2022 budget and purchased the equipment the Department needed without putting it on the 2023 budget. He stated such is done for all departments when there is a balance of funds available; noting it would have been done this year if it could have been.

John MacDonald stated the Town pays \$324,450 every year for hydrant maintenance and this year there is a capital outlay for hydrant replacement for \$20,000. He stated the cost for the hydrant replacement should be covered under the maintenance line.

It was moved by John MacDonald to decrease 01-42200-380 Outside Services – Hydrant from \$324,450 by \$20,000. There being no second, the motion failed.

Jim Pineo stated the hydrant replacement comes out of the Enterprise Fund and not the General Fund.

John MacDonald asked why the Town is paying \$324,450 annually.

Jim Pineo stated the fund pays for the hydrant system.

Linda Murray stated the money goes into the Water Fund; noting such pays for the whole network.

Jim Pineo stated the hydrants have been identified as lead hydrants and have to be either removed or replaced. He stated the consultant advised the Town that the \$324,450 is the cost that the Town should be paying as a percentage of the hydrant fees.

V. Other Business

Pop Whalen Advertising

Addressing Bobbi Boudman's concern about the Pop Whalen board advertising and the amount of money that the Town is not receiving from the board rentals, Linda Murray stated when the rink was taken down there were eight boards; noting the Town received less than \$10,000/year. She stated the BOS agreed that the Friends of Pop Whalen could seek 3-year contracts for the boards and to sell banners; noting the Friends of Pop Whalen would retain the money for the capital campaign and in the third year the money would go to the Town. She stated the Friends of Pop Whalen have sold 35 boards and 12 banners for a total of \$47,000 per year. She stated next year the Town will receive \$47,000 from the work that the Friends have done.

Bobbi Boudman stated the Town has a full time employee, Chuck Smith, who could fundraise.

VI. Approval of Minutes

November 16, 2023

Correction: Page 5, add who seconded the motion

It was moved by Paul O'Brien to approve the November 16, 2023 Budget Committee minutes as amended. Bob Loughman seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. The motion passed (10-0-0).

VII. Public Comment

None.

VIII. Adjournment

It was moved by Bob Loughman to adjourn the November 30, 2023 Budget Committee meeting. Bob Tougher seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. The motion passed.

There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 7:57 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lee Ann Hendrickson

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