

**TOWN OF WOLFEBORO
BUDGET COMMITTEE
APPROVED MINUTES
December 5, 2022**

I. Call To Order

Chairman MacDonald opened the meeting at 6:03 pm at the Wolfeboro Public Library.

Members Present: John MacDonald, Chairman, Bob Tougher, Vice-Chairman, Steve Johnson, Bob Moholland, John Burt, Bob Loughman, Brian Black, Tom Bell, Matt Plache, Members, Brian Deshaies, BOS Representative, Linda Murray, BOS Alternate Representative.

Staff Present: Jim Pineo, Town Manager, Kathy Carpentier, Finance Director, Lenore Clark, Conservation Commission, Tavis Austin, Director of Planning and Development, Tom Zotti, Fire Department, Lee Ann Hendrickson, Administrative Assistant.

The Committee participated in the pledge of allegiance.

II. 2023 Budget

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Matt Plache questioned invasive species management and the types of invasive species being managed.

Lenore Clark stated the Commission is currently managing invasive species on three properties. She stated some of the species include Japanese barberry, common and glossy buckthorn, knotweed, and bittersweet.

Tom Bell asked if anyone from the Town has approached Matt Plache with regard to the use of farm animals to eradicate invasive species.

Matt Plache replied no.

Lenore Clark stated goats work well however, they eat everything not just invasive species. She reviewed the locations of the properties noting such are not located in an area conducive to free roaming goats.

Steve Johnson questioned the technique used.

Lenore Clark stated an ultra-low volume wand application is used; noting such allows for targeting of the invasive species plants only. She stated there is no broadcast spraying and noted some are being cut and treated.

Matt Plache asked how long the funding request will continue.

Lenore Clark stated the request will remain ongoing; noting multiple treatments are necessary.

Steve Johnson asked if the Town (Highway Department and/or Parks & Recreation) are learning from the Conservation Commission's efforts.

Brian Deshaies stated there is crossover in that Dan Coons is a member of Wolfeboro Singletrack Alliance (organization working on trails at Abenaki).

FIRE/RESCUE DEPARTMENT (revisit)

Fire Department, cost for second additional employee/hire

John MacDonald stated the Fire Department originally requested in 2021 three new firefighter positions over the period of three years (2022, 2023, 2024). He noted at a previous meeting this year a request by a member of the Budget Committee for two firefighters in 2023 was proposed and discussed.

Tom Bell asked if the request for an additional firefighter in 2023 has been submitted to the BOS.

Linda Murray replied no.

Jim Pineo stated he stands behind the original plan that was proposed and agreed to be executed. He stated he supports the concept and supports the Department, however, feels it is a lot to ask of the taxpayers to fund the additional position in 2023. He stated if the additional position were approved the Department would work at a higher level of efficiency and safety.

Bob Moholland stated he is the member who recommended hiring two firefighters in 2023; noting such was the result of a conversation he had with Chief Zotti when questioned why the overtime line was cut in excess of \$22,000. He stated Chief Zotti was trying to backfill the lack of staffing by increasing overtime. He stated the Town continues to grow and only one firefighter has been hired since 2002; noting the Department is understaffed.

Bob Tougher stated the Police Department is going to request three police officers, one per year, starting next year.

Linda Murray stated the Police Department wants to add a new police officer starting in 2024 for three years. She stated the Fire Department's budget is a large budget and didn't feel there was a need to question it following the Town Manager's review of the budget. She stated the BOS have agreed to follow through with the original plan of one new position each year for three years.

John MacDonald questioned the year-to-date expense for overtime.

Kathy Carpentier replied \$65,000.

Following review of Chief Zotti's memo, dated November 23, 2022, John Burt noted a moderate increase of required responses from year to year.

Matt Plache asked how many shifts are covered by two firefighters now.

Tom Zotti replied half.

It was moved by Bob Tougher and seconded by Bob Moholland to hire two new firefighters beginning July 2023.

Discussion of the motion:

Bob Tougher stated he doesn't foresee next year's budget being different from this year and feels that having a new police officer and a new firefighter in one year is a lot. He stated both Chief Zotti and Nate Nichols stated it is a critical need and he trusts their judgement.

John MacDonald stated he will vote against the motion because the taxpayers were told that there would be one firefighter hired each year for three years. He stated he reviewed the overtime; noting the funds requested and expended were accurate to one another. He stated the Committee supported the original proposed plan and communicated such to the voters.

Steve Johnson agreed with Mr. MacDonald and stated he would also vote against the motion.

Brian Black stated he agrees with the process the Budget Committee committed to last year and expressed concerned for the precedent set if the Committee were to digress from that commitment. With regard to the critical aspects of the need for the positions, he stated he is not convinced by the call numbers that it equates to a critical need at this moment. He stated one additional firefighter will not make or break the situation and noted the Town has mutual aid available. He stated he supports the original plan of adding one firefighter per year for three years.

Bob Loughman stated he concurs with Mr. Black and would vote against the motion.

Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, John Burt – no, John MacDonald – no, Tom Bell – no, Brian Black – no, Bob Moholland – yes, Steve Johnson – no, Bob Loughman – no, Matt Plache – yes. The motion failed (3-6-0).

It was moved by Bob Moholland and seconded by Bob Tougher to increase 01-42200-140 Overtime by \$22,000 (from \$71,305 to \$94,006).

Discussion of the motion:

Bob Moholland stated the funds would be used to backfill a position through July of next year.

Tom Bell requested clarification of such.

John MacDonald requested an explanation of the Kelly schedule.

Jim Pineo and Tom Zotti reviewed such.

John MacDonald asked that if overtime is increased would it put too much stress on existing staff.

Tom Zotti stated it would be a challenge to fill the overtime shifts.

Brian Deshaies stated the Town never wants to have a firefighter in danger and asked if there has ever been a time when a firefighter has been needed in a critical situation when staff has been lacking.

Tom Zotti stated the Department places great emphasis on the safety of personnel and there have been incidents where staff have been held back because there haven't been enough staff to address a situation. He stated he cannot say that someone was seriously injured or worse because of the lack of staff.

John Burt confirmed overtime has been expended by \$56,000 as of October.

Matt Plache asked whether only full-time staff are used to backfill a position.

Tom Zotti stated the Department has call members to fill the position.

Jim Pineo asked the Committee to consider bringing on the third firefighter in December 2023 (6 months earlier than scheduled).

Bob Tougher confirmed the Town Manager is suggesting the motion to increase the overtime is rejected and instead, recommend hiring the third firefighter in December 2023.

John MacDonald stated he would not support such. He stated the motion on the floor is to increase overtime from \$71,305 to \$94,006.

Roll call vote: Bob Tougher – yes, John Burt – yes, John MacDonald – no, Tom Bell – no, Brian Black – no, Bob Moholland – yes, Steve Johnson – no, Bob Loughman – no, Matt Plache – yes. The motion failed (4-5-0).

Fire Department Capital Outlay, Replace Technical Rescue Gear; \$16,414

Tom Zotti stated the Committee requested additional information on such; noting the backup information had not been previously distributed to the Committee.

PLANNING & ZONING

ZONING BOARD

John Burt questioned the increase in advertising; noting this year's allocation has not been expended.

Tavis Austin stated the Board is rewriting their rules of procedure to post notice of decisions in the paper and the request represents the cost for newspaper publications.

John Burt questioned the five-year average.

Kathy Carpentier replied \$2,427.

It was moved by John Burt and seconded by Tom Bell to decrease 01-41304-582 Advertising from \$5,000 to \$3,000. John Burt, John MacDonald, Tom Bell, Brian Black, Bob Moholland, Steve Johnson, Bob Loughman, Matt Plache voted in favor. Bob Tougher opposed. The motion passed (8-1-0).

Bob Tougher questioned the number of permits issued this year.

Tavis Austin replied approximately 1,100.

PLANNING BOARD

Bob Loughman questioned the increase in outside services.

Tavis Austin stated the Planning Board is in the process of rewriting the Impact Fee Ordinance; noting a consultant would be hired for such.

John Burt asked if impact fees are currently being assessed.

Tavis Austin replied yes.

John Burt questioned the amount of revenue.

Kathy Carpentier replied \$54,000.

PLANNING

No changes.

BREWSTER BUILDING

Bob Loughman questioned the \$25,000 increase in building maintenance.

Linda Murray stated bricks need to be replaced and painted.

Bob Loughman requested a breakdown of the issues and maintenance proposed for the building.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

No changes.

LIBBY MUSEUM

No changes.

III. Approval of Minutes
November 15, 2022

It was moved by Bob Tougher and seconded by John Burt to approve the November 15, 2022 Budget Committee minutes as submitted. All members voted in favor. The motion passed.

November 30, 2022

It was moved by Bob Loughman and seconded by Steve Johnson to approve the November 30, 2022 Budget Committee minutes as submitted. All members voted in favor. The motion passed.

December 1, 2022

Corrections: Page 1, Public Works Department, 1st paragraph, 6th line; change “success” to “succession”
Page 3, motion to adjourn; change “2021” to “2022”

It was moved by Bob Tougher and seconded by Steve Johnson to approve the December 1, 2022 Budget Committee minutes as amended. All members voted in favor. The motion passed.

IV. Other Business

Jim Pineo announced the Pop Whalen Ice Arena Open House is scheduled for December 14th from 6:30-8:30 pm.

V. Public Comment

None.

REVISIT ITEMS

- Brewster Building; building maintenance issues and expenses for 2023 (proposed repairs/maintenance)

It was moved by John Burt and seconded by Tom Bell to adjourn the December 5, 2022 Budget Committee meeting. All members voted in favor. The motion passed.

There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lee Ann Hendrickson

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