

**PRELIMINARY BUDGET MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2024, 6:00 P.M.**

1. Call Meeting to Order The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. Approve Agenda - a motion was made by Fred with a second by RD. Motion carried.
3. Review of 2024-25 Budget –Mike stated that 2023 has been a hard year and trying to put Cabot back to a pre-flood condition. All this work costs money. We have started the budget process in public meeting since October. We would like to hear people. At Town Meeting we are looking at an increase of \$200,000. It could be lower or higher.

To go over a few things: we reviewed the proposed highway portion. Sid stated that we are grading after this thaw. The highway fund has been underfunded for some time. Town is replacing new trucks on a rotating basis and a new one coming this year – lots of stress on the trucks. Leased increase by 42K. Gravel went up, health insurance, salt and sand – everything is going up. Unfortunately, everything is going up. We are also replacing the town pick up - \$15,000 to cover the cost of truck. Today we hired another person, which brings us to 3 full-time crew members and a parttime person as needed.

It was asked how much salt we use in a year. We use around 500-600 tons a winter.

Ruth – she wanted to thank them for the good work they are doing.

Cabot Special Appropriations – We have \$40,000 for EMS. Two different approaches – we continue with Cabot ambulance or go out to for RFP. The appropriations Increased - \$14-15,000. The Chronicle is now monthly. Dana Glazier wanted to know about the ambulance. Ruth explained that it is a private business. She explained that there were lapses in 401C, but that is now fixed. Dana how many calls did the go on. Jenn stated it was 115 and 125 calls. It was significantly higher when we served other towns. We had 9 calls in December, and we responded to them all. We have served the Town of Cabot 57 years with no agreement. Ruth stated that we have had 2 calls thus far in January. Karen – one of the things the SB is considering a different form of FD fast squad along with an ambulance for transport – new model – no decision yet what this is going to look like. Ruth advised stated that the Ambulance has potentially 4 new members. Dana stated that it would be wise to have a contract. It is always good practice to have Fast Squad and Ambulance mobilized at the same time. Ambulance is qualified for life support – from basic to advanced. Paramedical and we can meet them on route. The question came up as to where they would keep the ambulance. As of right now it is in a heated building at Goodrich Sugar House. The present building has been red tagged and will be taken down. Walls for the temporary fire station are going up next week. Afterwards the Town can purchase the building. We are starting a sinking fund for the aging tanker. Dispatching services are increasing throughout the state.

FEMA is covering 90% of all flooding, 10% of that will be covered through the Town, however, the Governor is deciding for further help for the Towns that were affected by the flood.

We did take out a load for \$1,000,000, then had to borrow another \$500,000 and may possibly have to borrow more to pay all the bills related to the flood.

Due to the flood, we had to vacate the present fire station and needed a temporary building.

Amy - due to the spiraling inflation, even if we get the temporary and permanent FS all paid for. What about after it is built it still has maintenance.

FD must be out of the temporary building in 2 years. Someone asked about what happens to the cost of homeowner's insurance if a Town does not have a FD. Dean stated homeowner's insurance will go up significantly. RD – FEMA is paying for the demolition of the temporary and construction of the new safety building. It is imperative to have a new FS for many reasons.

Dean – The price for the new building is not locked in yet. Regarding the upkeep of the building – We will be using material that will help with the maintenance of the building and we are using materials that are good for Vermont's climate and will help with long-term maintenance. The old building is 3K Sq Ft. and does not a allow bay area and decon area. The new building overall is 10K sq ft. and will provide these essentials. We did need to go 2 stories up because of the wetland. We must follow FEMA requirements for them to pay for this. The Town could not afford this building if we had to pay for it. It is also important for insurance – ISO – number of viables – members, apparatus, size of pumps, city hydrants, and dry hydrants, etc. The response time does affect car and home insurance. Because of the new additions to the FD, we may see insurance prices going down.

RD – decontamination – perils FD volunteers face – leaves a residue for these fire fighters and ambulance personnel and we need to provide the residue to be decontaminated and not taken home to their families.

Ruth – can we stabilize the bank behind the old fire station.

Dean – talked with FEMA – to be stable – it roughly falls at the yellow line of 215. Who is responsible for river corridor? It will fall back on the state. Needs to be addressed.

Fred – bank FD side lost 2-3 ft of the bank and needs to be addressed sometime soon.

Mike – there will be a permanent fence for the bank which goes all the way to lower Cabot. A lot depends on what the State allows us to remove from the streams of what we can do.

Next item: Library Kurt – 6.3% last year and this year. We all realize the importance of the library.

Cyber Security – grouping in all areas and have IT personnel to review this all the time.

Mapping – We haven't had current tax maps since 2016. This will be a benefit to the Town and very helpful for the listers, town office, even the residents and can see a parcel and if there is a survey to compare.

Summarize – fund balance of \$152,000 – believe it will be a positive balance.

Borrowed 1.5 to pay for flood related items and may have to borrow more. \$54,000 interest a year on these loans.

Revenues – offset – Neighbors in Action will be purchasing the Masonic Hall so we will have approximately \$147,000 coming into town.

We need to discuss what to do with the UDAG money.

Mike stated there is a possibility the tax rate could go down as we are dealing with a lot of unknowns at this time. The Town is in fairly good condition as compared to other towns affected by the flood.

Other items to discuss - how do we get fuel in town, parking, and keep rebuilding Cabot.

RD – one of the reasons is that we in are better shape – is that we have outstanding volunteer people. He also wanted to thank Mike, Dean Deasy and Jenn Miner at EM.

Fred reported on the Christmas dinner – 110 meals delivered, and 40 meals served in house. Lots of money and time.

Mike wanted to thank everyone for coming and for all the work accomplished so far with the situation of the flooding this summer.

4. Motion to Adjourn – A motion was made by RD with a second by Karen. Motion carried, we adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Betty Ritter, Treasurer/Clerk