

**SELECTBOARD BUDGET MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2024, 5:00 P.M.**

Those present in person: Mike Hogan, Karen Larsen, Skip Bothfeld, Fred Ducharme, RD Eno, Amy Monahan, Frank Kampf, Marie Achionne, Kurt Steinert, Paul Stecker, Betty Ritter, Jeanne Johnson; On line: Dean Deasy

1. Call Meeting to Order – The meeting was called to order by Mike Hogan at 5:00 p.m.
2. Approve Agenda -A motion was made by Fred with a second by Karen. Motion carried. Mike would like to add under Other Business – vacation for Town Crew and Stipends from the other night.
3. Public Comment – There was no public comment.
4. Review Entire Budget – what is the total going to be and the calculation tax rate. Went through line item – take out Fairbank Museum and put it as an article for a vote. RD suggested that we take Constable and Pound Keeper out of line item, and take out any expenses of general fund, which is \$3,000 and it should cover these expenses, no decision on this at this time.

Karen informed the Board that Bob Burke has signed on as Incident Commander for West Hill Pond Dam and would like to get a radio for him. We will check into this. There is a possibility that the State would have some other access to radios than we do at this time. We will check into this.

Cabot Ambulance – Karen stated that we should fund them at \$40,000 as we do not have a budget from them even though it states in the contract, they should submit a budget. After discussion we will keep it at \$40,000 and wait for a budget. Mike will contact Glenn about this.

Dean mentioned there will be an additional payment for a different service - \$2,000 approximately, to do with dispatch. Dean stated that we might be running into an issue of equipment, radios. He thought with all new radios and gear it might run around \$100,000. We will be looking into any grants out there for gear and radios. Will is checking into a smaller grant that is a very good possibility to receive some money for these items instead of applying for the larger grants. We may be able to purchase equipment through other Fire Departments as long as it is in compliance. All of the radios are failing (this is due in part to changes in dispatching). We have 6 that in working condition, and we need 10 portable radios at a cost of \$25,000, along with gear for the firefighters. Fred stated that we need to add some for the gear or a total of \$122,900.

RD – officially is the health officer and suggested that we remove the \$500.00 associated with expenses of the health officer. At this time, we will Level fund from the previous year from. Regarding the Library. We should level fund this. Fred wanted to know why not give them the amount they asked for. RD stated that it is the responsibility to present the least expensive budget to the voters, and to get the budget down and prepare to ask the voters to decide. There was much discussion regarding the Library budget. Karen stated this is going to be a lean year. An article should be put on the warning about the difference between level funding and the additional amount. Kurt said that every year we work to make it as lean as possible. It is only a difference of \$4,034 difference. He said you are forcing us to cut the budget. Other items were discussed about the CCA helping out with Cabot Arts for the Cheese and Culture Program in July, reducing the Cemetery budget back to current level. Any tree removal could be

taken out of their investment fund. Green-Up request had the wrong amount, and we will make that change. Mike stated that just by bringing these and other items down to level funding we have saved around \$9,000. We will be working on this before the budget is finalized.

Fred stated the entrance roof will cost \$8,260 and we need to have another circulation pump as we are running on only one. If that goes down, there will be no heat in the building except for the heat pumps and that cannot maintain the correct temperature during the cold winter months. Years past expenses we have had little maintenance and we need to keep up the building. The windows in the back also need to be painted.

Mike stated the tax rate would be \$.5676. We can talk more about potential tax rate. Not changing property values. We may be getting a Christmas present from that state possibly \$200,000. Karen - where would it go – flood account or other. Mike stated that we will determine where this goes, probably to help pay down the flood loans. The money should come in fairly quick.

We reviewed the loans we took out. We will have to do another loan and renew the bridge loans. We owe a significant amount of money to Goodhue, and we have maxed out our line of credit. We are about \$100,000 short to pay him the full amount. FEMA is giving money to the state and they in turn issue us some money. If FEMA comes through to 90% - we should be doing good. Amy will pay as much as possible to Goodhue. It looks like some money will start coming in to pay the rest to him shortly. She will be cutting a check for him on to take care of the larger portion of the invoice for the work his company did on Jug Brook Road. It was done in less time they thought and did an excellent job.

5. Calendar Review – Betty asked if we want to have the SB start earlier on January 7 as we have the hearing for the Town Plan at 7. It was decided to keep it at the scheduled times and make the agenda short for the SB.

6. Other Business – The motion that was tabled from Tuesday until tonight was discussed. It was noted that RD had a fruitful conversation with the parties involved. Plainfield is playing a grant writer \$4,000 hired on a 20 hour week. Gary and Peg each put in 20 hours per week for a long duration. It is the least we can offer them in this fiscal year. Karen wanted to know if all 3 are comfortable with this. In light of what we are doing and getting a smart move – and there are more grants coming. All were in favor of the stipend.

Current policy – specific to highway to another – with a maximum of 240 vacation hours and has not been taken any vacation and would like to have it carryover to the next year. RD moved that a temporary waiver on our Personnel Policy to carry over the accumulated hours for Sid with a second by Fred. Motion carried.

7. Motion to Adjourn A motion was made by Fred with a second by Skip, motion carried, and we adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Betty Ritter, Town Clerk