



BUDGET COMMITTEE
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MINUTES OF THE BUDGET COMMITTEE HEARING

Monday, December 28, 2021 – 6:30 p.m. – Town Hall Conference Room

Members Present: Mike Bilodeau, Todd Cadle, Mark Connelly, Frank Hansler, Sharon Hussey-McLaughlin, Bob Krasko, Don Miller, Zack Pike, Paul Sanderson, Jamie Connelly – Selectmen's Rep, Pat Walsh – School Board Rep

Members Absent:

Present: Department Heads; Matt Scruton – Town Administrator; Steve Smith – Chairman, Board of Selectmen; Ralph Cresta – Fire Chief; Tara Laurent – Police Chief; Candace Cousins, Weeks Library Director

B. Krasko opened the Budget Committee meeting at 6:30 p.m. A roll call was taken; B. Krasko announced a quorum was present and the meeting was being recorded. The purpose of this meeting was to review the Town budget.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: P. Sanderson moved to approve the minutes of the meeting on Wednesday, December 15, 2021. Second – F. Hansler; all in favor. MOTION CARRIED

Town Budget Review

Library: The Budget Committee received an updated request. The Library Trustees decided not to move forward with increasing the part-time position to full-time; they felt it was not the best move for this year. P. Walsh stated that they have looked into connecting the Library with the School's internet and it was not cost effective; he suggested another company.

General Government: P. Walsh questioned the grant the Police and Fire Departments received. Chief Laurent explained it was a donation received in 2020 with specifications on how it was to be spent: up to \$60,000 for an outfitted cruiser and \$65,000 for the Fire Department ambulance. TA Scruton clarified that the donation was not intended to subsidize the budget but was a gift.

TA Scruton noted that there are still outstanding bills for 2021, including snow removal invoices. Funds have been encumbered to finish road projects contracted in 2021. The Unreserved Fund Balance was discussed. J. Connelly explained that DRA sets guidelines where towns should be in their Unreserved Fund Balances. P. Sanderson further explained that DRA guidelines are a range of percentages for a total town appropriation (town and school). In their judgement, the Selectmen used the higher range of the percentages, and beyond.

DRAFT: SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Police: Chief Laurent discussed her review of the last decade that she has been in Greenland; a copy was given to the Budget Committee. P. Sanderson recommended that her report should be available to residents at the Public Hearing.

MOTION: F. Hansler moved to withdraw \$6,000 from the Canine Officer line.

Discussion: Chief Laurent clarified that Willow is owned by the Town. She is assigned a handler and goes home with the handler, and they train together. There was a lengthy discussion about the Canine Officer stipend.

F. Hansler withdrew his motion.

MOTION: P. Walsh moved to add \$6,000 to the Police Department budget as a stipend for the Canine Officer. Second – Z. Pike; 6 in favor, 5 against. MOTION CARRIED

Fire: Chief Cresta noted that some departments had submitted a 5% wage increase rather than 3%. D. Miller explained that the Budget Committee could not dictate the amount of the wage increase to employees. The Selectmen made that decision.

Highways: P. Sanderson noted there was \$871,728.24 in capital reserve funds for roads (General Road Maintenance CRF and Road Maintenance CRF). An appropriation was not needed; the funds are available. Decreasing the Road Maintenance line by \$290,000 will create an operating budget less than the default budget. A significant dollar cut can be made without making a significant program cut. Z. Pike questioned if it would lead to another big tax increase in a few years. P. Sanderson responded he would like to take each year on its own merits. Decreasing that line will avoid \$0.33 on the tax rate next year. TA Scruton noted that decreasing the Road Maintenance line may affect the tax rate the year after next because those funds will have to be replenished (it would be one year of relief). TA Scruton will take the Budget Committee's concerns to the Board of Selectmen. There was a lengthy discussion about roads and road maintenance funds.

Wages: Department heads requested a 3% increase and 5% increase; the Board of Selectmen submitted a 3% increase in their proposed budget. D. Miller noted it was the Selectmen's purview to approve the wage increase. P. Sanderson requested a report giving the impact on salaries and benefits for each wage increase (3%, 3.5%, 4%, 4.5%, 5%) for the next meeting. TA Scruton noted it was a bottom-line budget and the Selectmen submitted 3%.

MOTION: P. Walsh moved to decrease the Road Maintenance line by \$290,000. Second – P. Sanderson; ten in favor, 1 abstained (J. Connelly). MOTION CARRIED

Discussion: F. Hansler questioned if the Budget Committee was going to give the Selectmen one more review. P. Walsh responded that it was a recommendation. TA Scruton clarified they were taking the Budget Committee's recommended budget and decreasing the Road Maintenance line by \$290,000, and noted it was not a recommendation but a change to the budget going to the public hearing. TA Scruton has requested that \$1 be left in the Road Maintenance line, leaving it open; the Budget Committee agreed. The line will be decreased by \$289,999.

Library: C. Cousins questioned if the Budget Committee was recommending the numbers in the budget or were they going to use the revised numbers she submitted. The consensus of the Budget Committee was to leave the Library budget as is.

DRAFT: SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Summary: P. Walsh noted that with the adjustments to the budget, the increase is approximately \$0.11.

Warrant Articles: Draft warrant articles were reviewed. The Budget Committee requested that the Board of Selectmen use more of the Unreserved Fund Balance. TA Scruton will take recommendations to the Selectmen.

Adjournment

MOTION: Z. Pike moved to adjourn at 8:12 p.m. Second – M. Bilodeau; all in favor. MOTION CARRIED

NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday, January 04, 2022 – 6:30 p.m., Town Hall Conference Room – School Budget Review

Tuesday, January 11, 2022 – 6:30 p.m., Greenland School – Public Hearing

Submitted By: Charlotte Hussey, Administrative Assistant