

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes May 10, 2021

7:00 PM Meeting called to order by Selectboard Chairman, John Esposito. Also in attendance were Selectmen Kim Roberge and Tim Berry and minute taker, Laurie Brown.

Esposito led the meeting in a moment of silence.

Berry motioned, seconded by Roberge to open the Public Hearing on the 2021 Proposed Budget and Warrant Articles. Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

Esposito said that he would move down the budget by department and for anyone to ask questions as he goes.

Account #414280 Town Clerk Computer line we are adding \$510 for IT services bringing it to \$2610.

Account #415210 Assessing and Pick-Ups line we are adding \$67,500 bringing it to \$73,500 to cover ½ of the legal settlement for the Consolidated Communication (Fairpoint) case. Fairpoint sued all of the Towns in NH saying that the States assessment of their equipment resulted in the overpayment of taxes. Attorneys took a sample of the towns and fought back. The court found in Fairpoint's favor. Our portion of the settlement deal is approx. \$135,000 which we can pay over 2 years.

Berry explained this to the meeting participants.

Esposito said that our Town Counsel suggested that we take the deal and pay our share.

Berry believes it is a good idea to add ½ to this year's budget.

Roberge said that it can't be completely settled because some of the towns have already had their town meeting.

Berry said that he is of the mind to pay our share this year.

Roberge said that she would like to revisit this at the end of the meeting.

Account #415310 Counsel Fees we have added \$75,000 to begin litigation of the junk yard properties. There are several in Town and we have had minimal to no cooperation from most. There have been written complaints regarding these properties and the Board needs to see if the Town wants to move forward.

Account #419443 Highway Garage Repairs and Maint. There is an extra \$20,000 in there to replace the stand by generator which is at the end of its useful life and needs replacing now.

Account #422070 Repairs and Maint. to Tanker 1. There is \$2500 in there for a temporary fix to the tank that split to hold us over until the tank can be replaced. There is also \$32,500 in there for the new tank that will come in October.

Building Inspector: There are two new line items; one for **Telephone** and one for **Mileage** and in **Supplies** there is money for a computer.

Account #456001 Heritage Commission Fund. They are asking for \$5,000 more than last year.

John Arico, Chairman of the Budget Committee, asked why the funding of the Heritage Commission was a line item instead of a Warrant Article.

Berry explained that it is the same as last year. The year before there was a Warrant Article to put the seed money into the HC fund.

Eileen Naber asked if it was a "spend it or lose it" line.

Brown explained that it works like a warrant article – all the funds are transferred to the HC checking account.

Roberge asked if the HC would consider going back to a Warrant Article. The debate is: is this the right way to show it? We should go back to a Warrant Article; that is the standard way to do it.

Esposito said that we can make it a Warrant Article next year.

Charlie Baker, Chairman of the Heritage Commission, said that we had this debate last year and it was decided to put it in a line item – we are going backwards.

Esposito said that this year it has to stay as is and we can revisit it next year.

Account #47110 Principal Long Term Note. The \$75,000 is the annual payment for the fire station. It will be paid off in 2027.

New total for the 2021 proposed budget: \$3,008,670

Esposito asked if anyone had any questions on the budget.

No one from the public spoke up.

Roberge said that she would like to get the total under \$3 million.

Both Berry and Esposito said that it is what it is, and to leave it.

Esposito asked if they could go back and discuss the \$67,500 for the Consolidated Communications (Fairpoint) settlement. He said that he doesn't like to pay penalties, but the towns lost in court. He believes we will have to make a payment this year.

Berry said that Esposito has outlined a good plan to pay ½ this year and ½ next.

Esposito said that it is unfortunate that they got the letter this morning, this is really a bare-bones budget.

Bob Haines, of the budget committee, asked why Fairpoint is charging us \$67,500.

Esposito went over it again saying that there was a lawsuit regarding the assessed value of their equipment in Mont Vernon. They won and we have been assessed the amount to settle the case against us.

Arico said that all the Fairpoint towns have to pay. We have the opportunity to split it into two payments.

Roberge wondered why there was no number listed for 2017.

Esposito said he has to assume the numbers are correct, but we won't pay anything until we know for sure.

Cindy Raspiller asked where the money shows that we got from Covid relief.

Brown explained that the operating budget only shows expenses.

Esposito went through the 2021 Warrant Articles.

#2 \$13,500 to finalize the road design to the cemetery and proposed library.

Budget committee supports.

#3 \$20,000 to add to the Library Capital Reserve Fund. This money will be matched by the Daland trustees

Budget committee supports

#4 \$25,000 to purchase new Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus for the Fire Department.

Budget committee supports

#5 \$620,000 lease/purchase of a new Fire Truck

Raspiller asked how the budget committee voted on this article.

Brown said that the budget committee does not support this article; 5 – 1.

Roberge asked how there could be 6 votes since the budget committee has 5 members.

Brown explained that the committee voted to give the School Board representative a vote.

Sean Mamone asked how the Selectmen feel about this article.

Brown said that they were unofficially split 2 – 1 in favor on this article but have yet to vote officially.

#6 \$55,000 to add to the Fire Truck Capital Reserve. This article will be tabled if the Fire Truck passes.

Budget committee supports; 5 - 1

#7 \$70,000 Repairs and Maint. to Town Buildings.

Berry explained that this is to refurbish the windows and add storms.

Mamone asked what the split was on the budget committee's vote.

Brown said that they were not in favor; 5 – 1.

#8 \$80,000 Town Hall Renovation Design Work.

Budget committee supports; 4 – 2.

Mamone asked about a structural engineer study.

Roberge told him that there is a structural engineer involved in this project. There is also a mechanical, and electrical engineers on this job.

Raspiller said that CP Williams did a structural study and found much less wrong with the building than anyone thought they would find.

Roberge said that DEW worked with that also.

Mamone asked if that could be uploaded to the website.

Roberge said that it was already there.

#9 \$94,690 State Block Grant money.

Budget committee supports.

Esposito asked if we got that number from the State.

Brown said no, they don't have that number since they work on a fiscal year; it is a guesstimate.

#10 \$3,008,670 Operating Budget

Arico said that the budget committee supported the budget before the addition of the \$67,500, and that they will have to discuss it as a committee.

#11 Discontinue the Carleton Pond and Surrounding Park Capital Reserve Fund.

Budget committee supports.

It was asked how much money is left in the fund.

Brown said "only cents".

Berry motioned, seconded by Roberge to vote on the 2021 Warrant Articles. Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

#2 Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.**#3 Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.****#4 Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.**

#5 Roberge said that she would have preferred it come from the Fire Department as a bond issue because the amount would be less the amount from the capital reserve fund. We wouldn't have to pay interest on that amount. That is why I am choosing not to support this article

Esposito said that he does support the FD getting a new truck, but he prefers the bond issue also. If it is a lease/purchase we can't use the capital reserve money as a down payment. We could, however, use that money to prepay the last two years. The bond fee in 2007 for the fire station was approx. \$5000.

Berry said that the Board is in agreement. We support a new truck – just not as the warrant article is written. If we bond the truck, we will be putting down \$165,000 and borrowing \$455,000. If we had gotten together with the fire chief when we made this decision, we would still not have had time to make the bond deadline.

Esposito said that there are two bond issues per year, but we don't have time to have a hearing.

Fire Chief, Jay Wilson, said we applied for 2 grants based on a bond issue. We didn't get either, but the BOS feedback was for us to use a lease/purchase. You are leasing all our other equipment. You should have told us this in Dec.

Esposito said that the Board did not know that they could use the capital reserve up front with a bond.

Berry said that we came to realize it last week when we saw the projected interest amounts. It is not economically sound to borrow \$165,000 that we don't need to. We didn't give it enough thought. The highway's three trucks equal one fire truck.

Wilson said that we need better oversight in this town.

Esposito said that the Board is going to let the people decide.

Berry; no, Roberge; no, Esposito; no.**#6 Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.****#7 Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.****#8 Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.**

#9 Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

#10 Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

#11 Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

Naber asked when we get a Town Report.

Brown said 10 days before Town Meeting.

Berry motioned, seconded by Roberge to close the public hearing. Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

Esposito brought up the letter from Tom and Sally Wilkins about building a house on a class VI road.

Roberge suggested sending them to the Planning Board to discuss improving the road for emergency vehicles.

Berry said that he would bring it to the Planning Board.

Roberge asked Brown to ask the Wilkins's to have a preliminary discussion with the Planning Board.

Esposito went to the SRLD meeting. They will be installing a 2nd compactor for cardboard at the transfer station in the next 2 – 3 months.

Recycling is so volatile – colored plastic is making a comeback. We may need to change our guidelines on plastic.

Berry asked if we will be compacting plastic.

Esposito said maybe later.

Roberge said that we are installing a compactor for cardboard, which we do very well as it is; we don't on plastic.

Berry agreed and said that we haven't had an acceptable load in quite some time.

Esposito said that the problem with the plastic is the people. They don't follow the guidelines. He also said that the contract for our trash is going up. They are encouraging composting.

Roberge asked if we were going to purchase bins that people could buy from us.

Brown reminded her that they said that we would have to purchase an entire pallet.

Esposito wanted to discuss Town Meeting. The cost of a 40' x 80' tent is \$2700. They said that they could put it in the parking lot. The cost of chairs is \$.90 each. He estimates that the MPR can hold 145 people socially distanced as it is 59' x 87'.

Berry said that Brookline had their town meeting inside with overflow outside in a tent. A 40' x 80' tent is not big enough for the whole meeting. If we have it in the parking lot, we can use the school chairs.

Roberge agreed with having it both inside and outside; there are people that are still not comfortable with Covid.

Esposito suggested thinking about it for the week, and said that we will need video outside.

Roberge feels that audio is enough.

Mamone said that we should check with the Emergency Management Director because things have been opening up.

Berry said that the school still has a mask mandate; we will have to have a place for people without masks to vote.

Naber asked about parking and suggested using the Fire Station/Town Hall and running a shuttle.

Roberge said that she is asking Brown to send out the request for input on the Town Hall Renovation plans one more time. She would also like to know how much room everyone is working in now, and how much they might need in 10 – 20 years.

Esposito asked about the website.

Brown said that she did not get to inviting the top 3 proposals to come in to a meeting, but that she would do that this week.

Esposito brought up MACC. Milford is now proposing that each town be responsible for their own equipment, which is what we were proposing right along.

Roberge said that she has requested minutes from them.

Board reviewed minutes of 4/5/21. Roberge motioned, seconded by Berry to accept the amended minutes of April 5, 2021. Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

Board reviewed minutes of 5/3/21. Roberge motioned, seconded by Berry to accept the minutes of May 3, 2021 as printed. Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

Berry said that he will invite Spencer Tate in to the Selectmen's meeting on 5/24 along with the PB chair to discuss the \$13,500 quoted for the design of the road to the cemetery and library.

Angulas said that she has interviewed the daughter of the Amherst librarian who comes highly recommended for the 6 hour per week teen position. She will never work unsupervised. Do we need to do a background check?

Esposito doesn't think it is necessary.

Berry agreed.

Roberge concurred, but said we should have a discussion with the police chief. This shouldn't hold up her hiring, and she will have a 90-day trial period anyway.

Roberge said that we should talk about the AED for the transfer station next week, and can amend the budget on the floor of Town Meeting to allow for the cost.

9:10 PM As there was no further business before the Board, Berry motioned seconded by Roberge to adjourn.

Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Brown