

## Selectmen's Meeting Minutes February 10, 2020

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

Esposito led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Public Hearing on the proposed Operating Budget.**

Esposito explained that he would go down each department and address any questions as we go.

There were no questions until he got to the **Police Department**.

Esposito explained that the Police Chief had made them aware that Eversource will be working in Town longer than previously thought. He asked that the two Special Duty lines be increased by \$5000 each.

Laurie Brown offered that it will also increase the Fica/Med line by \$385 and the Retirement line by \$1420.

Esposito then explained that the Full-Time Salary line includes a 4<sup>th</sup> full-time officer who will start in July. Also included is the first lease payment on a new cruiser to keep us on schedule with a 6-year rotation.

### **Fire Department**

Eileen Naber asked if they were expecting to have more fires this year because of the increase in the payroll line.

Chief Wilson explained that they have 3 more firefighters this year.

Esposito said that no one could operate a fire department as economically as our guys do.

### **Street Lighting**

Peter King asked about our plans to replace the street lights with more energy efficient LED lights.

Esposito said that we are on the schedule, but we don't know when they will get to us.

### **Welfare**

Tony Immorlica asked why the numbers are so high when we seldom spend much of it.

Esposito stated that we have to have the money ready in case someone needs it. One applicant could use up a good portion of the allotted money.

### **Library**

Brown made a statement to the effect of; The library and Trustees budget works different than any other department. They get an appropriation for the year that we have broken down into several line items. The Trustees turn in a proposed budget. The Selectmen have fiscal control over what the bottom line is, but not the way it is spent. We have filled in the amounts for the lines that got the Board to the bottom line, but if they choose to spend it differently, they can.

Cindy Raspiller, Chairman of the Library Trustees, explained that the Trustees conducted a wage and benefit survey to see where our library stood with reference to other area libraries. They looked at 18 towns closest to us. It was embarrassing to me to see how far out of line we are. Our library is one of the best used libraries in the area. We are providing far better services for much less cost. We would like to restore the budget lines to what we had proposed which is a \$17,000 difference. If the Selectmen would like to propose to reduce these lines at Town Meeting and the voters agree with that, then we will have to abide by that.

Lee Moss asked if he understands this correctly, the Selectmen are being asked to increase the budget \$17,000 and we don't know how it will be spent?

Roberge the Board of Selectmen got their request at the beginning of the budget season. They are asking for the same consideration that was afforded to the Police. The Chief came to us with a wage and benefit survey two years ago. We made the Chief wait two years to get his full percentage increase. He got half one year and half the next. We figured it the same for the library. We went with half the increase in hours and roughly half the percentage increase in pay. That is the bottom line you see on the budget today. This is all we felt we could do in one year.

Raspiller said that she gets that it is a large percentage increase, but the numbers are so small that the impact is small.

Esposito said that the Board would take it under advisement and make a decision after the public hearing.

John Quinlan, Chair of the Heritage Commission, asked why his proposed budget was gutted. He said that they were standing this commission up for nothing as it is underfunded. He believes it is in retaliation for saying no when asked if the Selectmen could borrow \$15,000 for the architect's plans for the Town Hall. He feels he is being penalized for not being a "serf" to the Selectboard. We are not their piggybank.

Roberge said that this committee was formed to support the projects by fundraising and writing grants. The Board found out that money raised for building maintenance could be used for matching grants and that is where the Board decided to put it. If you had had something earmarked for setting up a grant it would be different. The entire Board would have had more consideration for it.

Quinlan wanted to finish his statement and very heatedly yelled "quiet" while pointing his finger at Roberge.

Esposito told him to keep his tone down.

Quinlan went on to say that the Board asked people to work for them in good faith and you treat them with a slap in the face because they didn't do what you wanted.

Jill Weber explained that the Heritage fund was set up because it can't be used for town buildings. I was shocked to hear that we are going forward with the Town Hall project.

Berry said that the Selectmen asked for the \$15k to fund architectural research on the Town Hall. We offered to replace the \$15k plus add \$10,000 that the Commission wanted. Being the first year of the Commission we felt that \$500 was the right number for his budget lines and did not support the historical survey at this time. The Budget Committee decided that, since there was no grant earmarked for the \$10,000, they would not support it and the Selectmen agreed.

Rebecca Swartz was concerned that their grant seeking would be curtailed because of lack of funds.

Roberge stated that they could still seek grants and use the Repair & Maintenance Warrant Article money as matching funds.

Immorlica said that putting money you intend to use for this purpose seems inappropriate.

Roberge said that she looked into the Heritage Commission minutes to see what the \$10k was earmarked for, and found nothing.

John Arico said that the budget committee likes to see a specific project attached to a request. There are no projects on the horizon for the Commission. It is the same thing that we do with the Conservation Commission; if there is a project, we usually approve.

Peter King asked if having a historical survey is something you would need to get an LCHIP grant.

Berry said no; that this building is on the Historical Register with the State.

King said that it sounds like you are asking the Commission to apply for grants but you are taking away their resource.

Amy Wyman thought that the Historic Research Survey is not just tied to this building.

Berry said that she was right, that we set up this Commission as a fund-raising vehicle for all of our town buildings.

Kelly Darula asked why that was the Board's decision to make.

Roberge stated that that is what the intent was when the Commission was set up.

Wilson said that the Commission asked for \$10k and that you are putting that money in another account; you are taking that ability away from them. The Commission is only 6 months old – I think the Selectmen's position is inappropriate.

Weber said that she was on a committee that studied the buildings for 3 years and made presentations to the Town. Came to a conclusion with plans and drawings. This plan is news to me and if you are doing anything to this building it is not connected to the work that took us 3 years to complete.

Roberge feels that it certainly is connected; the study that your committee ended up with was included in the packet put forth for our design-build RFQ. I am hopeful that the library will go soon, but if it doesn't the renovation of this building has to be done – the roof is leaking, there are people with space heaters under their desks...

Charlie Baker read from the document establishing the Heritage Commission that the HC shall have the authority to conduct the Historical Research Survey.

Roberge agreed that they will need the survey, but not this year.

Raspiller said that she would have expected the Commission to be in on this.

Moss asked how they could be in the position to write grants for the whole of the Town buildings.

Esposito agreed to take everyone's comments into consideration and revisit the numbers after the public hearing.

#### **Public Hearing on the Proposed Budget is closed.**

#### **Public Hearing on the Bond Issue for the Town Hall Renovation (Warrant Article #2)**

Budget Committee does not support this article.

Selectmen support this article.

John Arico, Chairman of the Budget Committee, said that they do not support this article. It seems like a lot of money to ask the Town to pay back without a plan for aggressively seeking other funding sources.

Roberge explained that each source of funding comes with its own criteria for what you can do with the money. For example: If you get a grant from a historical foundation, you cannot replace clapboards; you have to glue them. We are looking into what kind of limits granting authorities would impose on us. We are looking to repurpose this whole building to gain us another 30 years. Nothing in here will stay the same. We have heard that we are not following the plan that was done by the Future Use of Town Buildings Committee. I take issue with that. I believe the Building Renovation Committee took everything from the report that was done to make a proposal to put out to bid. We put it all over the place and even sent it directly to 8 different companies, we only got 4 proposals, but they were strong proposals. The previous committee thought that the Town offices would be temporarily moved to the library building while construction on the Town Hall was ongoing. We don't believe that we can wait any longer for the repairs. If it doesn't pass this year, it will have to go next year. The temporary trailer would be placed next to the McCollom building for 6 months. It may not be ideal for everybody, but it will work. I hear talk that the meeting rooms should be larger etc... That is all a work-in-progress. After the committee interviewed the 4 companies that turned in proposals, they narrowed it down to 2 companies, then asked them to come up with some numbers for a design-build project. Interviewed them again and recommended DEW to the Selectmen. They gave us a "not-to-exceed" number. They will put every aspect of the project out to bid and we will realize any economies that come from that process. That being said, I believe that the Committee used everything that came out of the previous committee's reports. We weren't sure we would get anything that we were comfortable putting before the voters this year, but we did.

Esposito related that the January Bond Bank rate was 2.15% on a 20-year bond. 20 years at 3% would be \$.53/\$1000 of assessed value on the tax rate, or about \$150 on a \$300,000 house.

Pam Kennedy asked if this includes foundation work also.

Berry said that there is no question that the wood floor joists are rotten and need replacing, but the granite blocks holding up the sill are fine.

Esposito said that as for jacking up this building and replacing the foundation, they are completely confident that that does not need to be done.

Annette Immorlica stated that this project is going forward with no other fund-raising. All of it is being covered by this bond. The library raised a ton of money. Why should this go forward this year? Why don't you look for some other money?

Esposito said that the Town Hall is in disrepair and needs to be done now.

King said that Francestown raised \$600,000 thru grants.

Berry said that they got an individual donor for \$200k and LCHIP matched it. They don't have their town offices there; it is an empty building.

King said that he is concerned that we are going to start a project that is \$2 million and end up spending \$6 million.

### **End of Bond Hearing**

#### **Public Hearing on the proposed Warrant Articles opened.**

#03 Purchase 2 EVOLIS Radar Speed Signs.

Budget Committee Supports

Selectmen Support

Chief Furlong explained that neighboring towns already use these. They are mobile signs mounted to posts all over Town. If someone complains about speeding, he can tell how fast each car was going and when.

#04 Add \$10,000 to library capital reserve.

Peter King reminded everyone that the Daland Trust matches this \$10,000.

#05 Lease purchase a new fire truck. \$600,000 with \$75,000 due this year.

Budget Committee is split on this article.

The Selectmen do not support.

Chief Wilson said that they need to replace a 20-year-old truck with a new all-wheel drive ruck.

Someone asked why the Selectmen do not support.

Esposito said we don't believe it needs to be this year.

#06 Add \$75,000 to the fire truck capital reserve.

Budget Committee does not support

The Selectmen do not support

Wilson said that if the truck article passes, they will withdraw this article.

Arico said that the Budget Committee does not support this at \$75,000.

Esposito said that the Selectmen will support up to \$45,000.

#07 Highway Block Grant money; \$96,574

The Budget Committee supports

The Selectmen support

Esposito explained that this is State money we use on roads.

#08 \$50,000 Repair and Maintenance to Town buildings.

The Budget Committee does not support

The Selectmen support

Arico said that the Budget Committee feels the article is too general.

Esposito said that it is intended to be general so that it can be used on any Town building.

Randy Wilson asked how much is left from last year's article.

Brown said approximately \$47,000.

R. Wilson asked how much the windows and clock face were going to cost.

Berry said that the budget for those items is \$50,000.

Roberge offered what if we were to have something really major go (ie: heat). It gets close at the end of the year; if something happens, we have nothing to draw from.

Chris Swartz asked what we are waiting for on doing the roof.

Esposito said that it just started leaking this winter.

Berry said that the warrant articles will lapse back to the Town if it isn't spent.

Esposito explained that these department budgets are very lean – there is no slough in any of them. We need this \$50,000 in case something happens.

#09 Operating budget

Budget Committee supports.

Selectmen supports.

The new number is \$2,667,355

### **End of the Public Hearing on the Warrant articles**

**9:15 PM**

- Board reviewed and signed checks and manifest

- Berry motioned, seconded by Roberge to accept the minutes of February 3, 2020 as amended. All in favor.

Board discussed the Library and the Heritage Commission's proposed budgets and decided to leave them with the Selectmen's numbers for presentation at Town Meeting.

**9:25 PM** As there was no further business before the Board, Berry motioned, seconded by Roberge to adjourn. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Laurie Brown