



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES November 30, 2022, 6:30 PM Whipple Town Hall

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Chris Lorio (Chair), Joe Cardillo (Vice Chair), Hannah Bianchi, Lou Botta, Lyndsay Harkins, John Wilson, Mark Christensen, Colin Beasley, Melissa Leintz, Bill Helm (Selectmen's Representative)

STAFF PRESENT: Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator, Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer

OTHERS PRESENT:

Police Chief Cobb (for part – called out for an emergency)
Fire Chief Lyon (for part – called out for an emergency)
Adam Ricker, Planning & Zoning Administrator
Will Kidder, Town Clerk-Tax Collector
Bob Harrington, Public Works Director
Steve Ensign, Chair, Board of Firewards

Approval of Minutes of November 16, 2022

John Wilson noted typographical errors for correction.

Colin Beasley questioned whether a comment concerning a capital reserve fund potentially being closed this year is accurately reflected in the minutes. There ensued a discussion of the mechanics of closing a capital reserve fund. Ms. Hallquist noted that if the Selectmen agree that the fund should be closed, the question will be placed on the warrant for Town Meeting and the amount will be included in estimated revenues. If approved by voters, the balance would go into the general fund.

Mr. Beasley questioned the minutes concerning the computer maintenance and replacement CRF fund and questioned if the minutes accurately reflect what was said by Ms. Hallquist. No change was made.

Mr. Beasley noted that it was brought to his attention that at the last meeting he stated that 10% of the budget equals \$100,000. The correct percentage is 1% not 10%.

Mr. Beasley inquired about revenues and when they would get the estimated revenues. Ms. Hallquist noted that the Selectmen have not taken up revenues yet, but she expects that they will at their next meeting. She noted that she and Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer, have completed a preliminary review of the revenues and significant changes are not expected from the previous years estimated revenues. Mr. Beasley stated that without knowing what the revenues are estimated to be, he did not believe the committee could adequately evaluate the budgeted expenses. Mr. Wilson agreed and noted that it is important to have revenue information as early in the budget process. Ms. Lewis will provide the Committee with the draft revenues before the next meeting.

It was moved (Mark Christensen) and seconded (Joe Cardillo) to approve the minutes of the November 16, 2022 meeting as amended to correct typographical errors. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Selectmen's Report

Selectman Helm reported that the Selectmen have the renewal agreement for disposal of the town's trash and the per ton cost of \$58 which is lower than expected so there will be a reduction to that line.

Joe Cardillo inquired about the status of the P&S for the Bewley property; Ms. Hallquist reported that the process is ongoing, no new information to report.

FY2024 Budget Review:

Executive

Ms. Hallquist noted that there are no changes since being approved by the Selectmen. Mr. Cardillo asked if the \$200,000 in the budget would be used for employee COLA's. Ms. Hallquist agreed that it would and also for adjustments in salaries that may be needed as a result of the upcoming salary study. Mr. Wilson asked who was covered by the insurance in the Executive category; covered employees are the Town Administrator, Land Use & Assessing Coordinator and the Administrative Assistant in the Selectmen's office. Mr. Beasley noted that he was told by the Finance Officer that that each 1% COLA equals about \$37,000 so a 4% COLA would be \$147,000. He asked if the cost of the compensation study would come out of the \$200,000 appropriation; Ms. Hallquist responded that it would not as the cost of the study would come from the current budget year so long as it is contracted by June 30th.

Mr. Beasley noted that the Town Administrator has estimated that employee compensation is 62% of the budget. He asked if the Budget Committee saw any need for them to be involved in the compensation study given that compensation is such a large portion of the budget. There was a discussion of whether the Budget Committee should be involved with the Selectmen in the study. There were no members expressing the opinion that the Budget Committee should be involved directly. Mr. Beasley noted that if no other members agreed he would make his comments on the study directly to the Selectmen.

Town Clerk, Elections, Tax Collector

Will Kidder, Town Clerk/Tax Collector explained that there are increases in his town clerk and tax collector budgets for training and the poll pads are included for the elections.

Finance

Lynn Lewis noted that there are no changes since the Selectmen looked at the budget. She noted that she included information for funding for budget software that would increase the accuracy of the budget and would also aid the Budget Committee in seeing what impact various changes would have during the meeting and it would also improve CIP process and forecasting of capital reserve funds. The Finance Officer did not include the \$25,000 in the budget and the Selectmen did not vote to include it in their budget.

Mr. Beasley noted that looking at the last three years budgets, they were 19% off, 9% off and 11% off, meaning tax money is collected by not spent. He understands that they can not come up with a budget that is spent down entirely but he feels with proper budget software Lynn will have a better opportunity to forecast so they have budgets that don't result in 10% or 20% unspent. Selectman Helm noted that he has always taken the position that if the budget is squeezed too much, they will come to a point where there is no available unreserved fund balance to reduce taxes and if there is an emergency there may not be funds available to address it without impacting services.

It was moved (John Wilson) and seconded (Joe Cardillo) to add a new line for \$25,000 for the budget software. A vote on the motion: Voting Yes: Lorio, Wilson, Cardillo, Christensen, Harkins, Botta, Beasley. Voting No: Helm and Leintz. THE MOTION PASSED.

Selectman Helm noted that as the Selectmen's representative it is his intention to always vote consistent with the Selectmen's earlier vote.

Reassessment of Property: Assessor & Tax Map

Kim Hallquist noted that the assessing budget is down slightly (\$1,236) due to the tri-town assessing budget being approved.

Legal & Animal Rescue Fees

No comments

Personnel Administration

The bulk of this area are items are for library expenses that are reimbursed to the town by the library.

Planning & Zoning

Adam Ricker noted the decrease is the result of the engineering for the Main Street study is not included this year.

Insurance

Colin Beasley questioned if a more accurate figure could be arrived at as past years there has been a surplus. Ms. Hallquist explained that the town uses Primex, a pooled insurance carrier that covers many towns in the State for insurance and they also provide training. She noted that they do the best they can to estimate what the claims will be. Ms. Hallquist pointed out that several years ago she and former Finance Officer Wendy Johnson, looked in getting quotes from commercial carriers and found that such coverage is not widely available as towns presents risks that are not common to commercial entities, especially for facilities likes dams.

Motion to adjourn

It was moved (John Wilson) and seconded (Hannah Bianchi) to adjourn the meeting. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 7:24PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly Hallquist
Town Administrator