

TOWN OF FRANCESTOWN
OFFICE OF SELECTMEN
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BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET & ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
12/07/2016

Selectmen Present: Abigail Arnold and Henry Kunhardt

Budget & Advisory Committee: Charlie Pyle, John Thalhauser, Judi Miller, Tom Anderson

Also Present: Town Administrator Jamie A Pike, Gary Paige and Pam Finnell

Ms. Arnold called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Highway Department – Gary Paige

Mr. Paige explained that a new line was included in the budget for invasive vegetative species control, particularly the Japanese Knotweed located at the Town Offices, Bixby Dam and other locations. An estimate has been received for this service of \$1,500. This would be an on-going program as the treatment must be repeated to thoroughly eliminate the plant. The Conservation Commission had also requested funding for vegetative control upon their managed lands, such as the Autumn Olive located on Crotched Mountain.

Another notable change in the budget was the shifting of \$2K from Heavy Equip Parts and Repairs to Truck Parts and Repairs. This shifting of funds more accurately reflects the funds spent on truck repairs.

Mr. Paige feels that investing in the repair of the current truck fleet remains a viable option to replacement based on the costs of new trucks. Further, the loader and grader being new equipment and still under warranty should not need any major repairs beyond routine maintenance.

Mr. Paige also summarized his exploration of the purchase of winter sand and crushed gravel from other sources than the Tri-Town pit. Current loaded prices for these materials are \$7 and \$10 per yard respectively, and do not include trucking costs. Discussion continued about the possible purchase of material from Bennington and Antrim from the pit and the determination of the in-ground value.

There was also discussion about the overtime payroll budget and its history.

Town Clerk / Tax Collector – Pam Finnell

Ms. Finnell explained that 2016 was the first year that the two budgets for Town Clerk and Tax Collector were combined following the position being combined. At this time there are no changes from the 2016 budget proposed for the ensuing year. Ms. Arnold asked about improvements to the office with the software purchase. Ms. Finnell explained that the new Town Clerk software has added to the efficiency of the office through end of day processing, reporting, and record keeping. Ms. Finnell also stated that the online transactions have been well received by the residents. There have been requests to add over-the-counter credit/debit card transactions, and Ms. Finnell will be looking into adding this program in 2017. There was a question regarding the office supply line, and whether it could be reduced to better reflect historical spending. Mr. Pike explained that there was formerly a line item solely for the purchase of toner cartridges for the State printers. These cartridges are approximately \$300 each. Ms.

Finnell stated that she had just purchased one cartridge this year, and knows that there will be one to replace in 2017. The office has not had to replenish these cartridges as often as originally anticipated. Ms. Finnell also discussed the communication issues with residents through the existing glass windows at the counter. She had received a quote from Granite State Glass to replace the existing solid window with one that has a speaking hole through it to improve the ability to hear customers. This quote was in the amount of \$491. There was discussion regarding the removal of the window completely as an option. Ms. Finnell will review options with Mr. Pike and determine the best solution.

Solid Waste Disposal

Mr. Pike stated there were three major budget cuts in the Solid Waste Disposal line items. The first is \$6K that was for the 2016 Household Hazardous Waste Collection event. This event is not annual, and the next event is not currently scheduled until 2018. The other major savings were in mixed paper and co-mingled recycling. The 2016 budget was based on a trucking schedule of every 10 days. Through the use of larger containers, this schedule has been extended to every 14 days with a total savings of approximately \$7K. There is also a \$1K increase in the e-waste line item. Mr. Pike explained that the e-waste program still remains a net zero expense with off-setting revenues through collection fees paid by residents. It was questioned why there was no expense line for the removal of scrap steel from the Transfer Station. Mr. Pike explained that the scrap metal program has remained revenue positive with the new container collection process and is reflected in the revenue budget, net of expenses.

Recreation

Mr. Pike explained that there were no proposed changes to the Recreation Budget for 2017. In review of the 2016 budget, the Swim Instructor line was below budget due to the low number of students this year and the fact that the Town did not need to use a second instructor. It was noted that the cost of the certifications for the lifeguards had seen a considerable increase over the previous year and the committee is looking at limiting reimbursement for this expense. There was discussion about eliminating the electricity at the baseball field. This meter has not had any usage for several years.

Health and Public Assistance

The merits of the \$1000 request from the Avenue A Teen Center were discussed, and whether the addition should be a separate warrant article. It was decided to place the additional funding in the operating budget.

The budget for direct assistance was discussed. The Board shared that the current case load may require additional funds and suggested a budget of \$25,000 in total.

Executive

Mr. Pike explained that the increases shown in the executive payroll lines were for increases provided to employees in 2016. There is also \$150 in Town Website management to account for the increase in the licensing of the .gov domain. This fee has increased to \$400 annually. Alan Treadwell has recommended an alternative of moving to a .org domain that would reduce costs significantly. The final increase is for the full year subscription to Town Hall Streams for the video playback of meetings.

Election

The budget reduction of \$6900 is due to budgeting for only the Town Election in 2017.

Treasurer

The only increase in the Treasurer's budget is a contractual increase in the Auditor's fee.

Revaluation

The budget amount of \$10,500 is for 20 days of service from Avitar Associates, the Town's new assessor. The Town will only be billed for actual days of service.

Legal

Mr. Pyle requested the Board consider reducing the two line items for general legal and utility value defense for the 2017 year. Ms. Arnold stated the Board is aware of at least one potential case that may result in significant expense in the ensuing year, but felt that the Utility Value Defense budget could be reduced by \$3,000.

Personnel Administration

Mr. Pike explained that these items are non-discretionary such as Social Security/Medicare, NH Retirement and other statutory benefits. Due to a change in personnel policy, \$600 was reduced from the Health Stipend line item.

The Board and the committee engaged in a lengthy discussion regarding employee raises for the ensuing year. No decisions were made.

General Government Buildings

Mr. Pike reviewed the major changes including reductions for heating fuel and telephone expenses at the Town Offices. The heating fuel budget for the Town Hall was also reduced by \$1,000, it had been previously increased pending its rehabilitation. Electricity for the Town Hall was increased by \$1,200 to accommodate construction in 2017. The committee requested the Board review the Repairs and Service line item to determine if a reduction was possible.

Being no further business, Ms. Arnold adjourned the meeting at 8:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie A Pike

Brad Howell

Abigail Arnold

Henry Kunhardt