



BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
TOWN OF GORHAM
GORHAM TOWN HALL
PUBLIC MEETING ROOM

MINUTES OF JANUARY 15, 2018

Members Present: Diane Bouthot, Co-Chairman; Douglas Gralenski, Co-Chairman; Robert Demers; Lee Carroll; Abigail Evankow; Mary White; Dan McCrum; Jessica McCreedy; Judith LeBlanc, Selectmen's Representative

Absent:

Town Staff Present: Mark Shea, Town Manager; Denise Vallee, Finance Director; James Watkins, Fire Chief; PJ Cyr, Police Chief

Others present:

Minutes Taker: Shelli Fortin

1. Call to order: 5:59 PM
2. Approve Minutes 1/10/2019: **Motion to approve from Judy LeBlanc with a second from Dan McCrum. Voted in the affirmative.**
3. Old Business

TM Shea addressed Mary White's email with questions relative to the Moose Tours, and other financial items. Shea advised that she was welcome to come in anytime to discuss them, or to meet with Jeff Stewart, as sometimes members as individuals have more questions than the committee. Denise Vallee addressed the issue of depreciation, stating it is figured in on the schedule by the auditor. It affects the town assets on the balance sheet, not as a revenue or expenditure for the budget. Doug Gralenski suggested that members of the committee read through last year's minutes, as many of the same questions come up.

Doug Gralenski asked about the police coverage during the Fourth of July and if this is something that may be covered by the Revolving Fund. Vallee advised that money in the Revolving Fund is used for new buses when needed. TM Shea also commented that this money is for programs, and the more money that is taken from the fund, the less that will be available for those programs. Abby Evankow asked if the total the town spends for the Fourth of July is \$19,000 and Vallee advised it is, which includes the amount they request for fireworks. Vallee advised that Miller Amusements does give a percentage of their ticket sales to the Fourth of July Committee, and the committee financial report is included in the town report.

Denise Vallee passed out a list of the changes that were made to the budget at the Selectmen's Meeting on Monday night. The Board approved a budget in the amount of \$4,914,057, and exceeded their goal of a flat line budget by \$345. A major expense this year will be the snow dump project, and the Road Resurfacing CRF and Road Improvement CRF were both reduced for a total of \$372,000 to make money available for the snow dump. This will be a one-year suspension of the Road Resurfacing CRF that was approved at town meeting last year.

4. New Business

a. Review of Fire and EMS Budget

Chief Watkins advised the biggest change in the EMS budget is in the part-time position line. Watkins is increasing the salaries for paramedics and EMT's to compete with other agencies in the area. Paramedics will be increased to \$18.00/hr, advanced EMT's will be \$15.00/hr, EMT at \$13.00/hr, and EMR at \$12.48/hr. There is a decrease in the health insurance line. Overall, the budget is up \$19,542 after the decrease in workmen's compensation. Doug Gralenski asked about the gas line item and Watkins advised that he is hoping to do more transfers this year, which will mean they will use more fuel. Currently they are losing business, as the paramedics they do have are working for other agencies because they pay more. Watkins advised that reimbursement from insurance companies is a big concern, as many pay what they want to pay and that may be less than what it costs to do the transfer. Watkins advised that the ambulance is staffed from 6am-6pm every day, and at night the staff is on-call. Mary White asked about the minimum staffing for a transfer and advised it is an EMR and EMT for a basic transfer, and a paramedic and EMT for one requiring a paramedic. At times they also need staff or a second paramedic if a patient is on a ventilator. Hospitals they transfer to included Dartmouth, CMC, Concord, Hampstead, and Central Maine. Watkins advised they focus on transfers from AVH, but also do them for Memorial Hospital and UCVH. AVH does have policy that if the patient is from Gorham, Randolph, or Shelburne, they call Gorham first for the transfer. Watkins advised they also cover Pinkham Notch, and if responding there, will transport the patient to either AVH or Memorial Hospital. Bob Demers asked about heating and if pellets were still being used. Watkins advised that they lost the circuit board for the pellets and it will cost \$650 for the part, not including the installation. Watkins advised the hopper is not full. The plan is to fix it, and money may be available from the Building CRF. Watkins also advised that they lost their network server and have to run Cat 6 lines for separate data and voice. Demers suggested that if the pellets are not used, additional money will be needed for oil for heating. Diane Bouthot asked about the age of the ambulances and the mileage. Watkins advised that one is a 2009 and the other a 2016. The 2009 has about 98,000 miles. Watkins advised \$25,000 is added to the Ambulance CRF each year, and \$126,822 is in there now. The cost for a new ambulance is \$130,000-\$160,000 and he is hoping to replace one next year. Bouthot asked if any equipment is needed and Watkins advised that they will need cardiac monitors at some point. Zoll will stop servicing the ones that they have in 2022. Replacing them will cost approximately \$50,000. There are potentially some grants available, which include the Assistance to Firefighters Grant and the USDA grant. Watkins advised that he does get daily emails about grants that are available, but many of them the town does not qualify for. Watkins advised there will be a study report on the threat on Mt. Washington, and after this comes out Federal money may be available to assist.

Watkins advised the Fire budget has dropped \$6,837 with the workmen's comp decrease. Watkins advised that he has been trying to work on a better system for department physicals. Currently they require all firefighters to obtain a DOT physical, as this meets the Federal requirements to operate a commercial vehicle. The firefighter physical costs about \$900, and the department is looking to define roles to determine which physical each member will get. Watkins advised they have 3 who just finished the Fire 1 class, and have 2 others who will be in the next class. Watkins advised they are on a rotation for replacing the SCBA tanks. The grant they applied for in 2017 was denied due to a mistake on the grant application. Another grant was applied for in 2018. If the grant is approved, they will be able to purchase 16 SCBA packs. The tanks have a shelf life of 15 years. Bob Demers asked about the Cascade station and Watkins advised the tanker is there. There is no maintenance required at this time, and the heat is kept at 50 degrees. Watkins advised that the Fire Truck CRF needs to be looked at as Engine 2 was sold. A new truck would replace both Engine 2 and the Tanker, and be a combination pumper/tanker. The quote he received for this truck was \$377,000. Watkins advised that if \$200,000 was put down and they made lease payments for the next 10 years in the amount of \$21,000/year, by the time Engine 3 needs to be replaced, with the amount currently being added each year to the CRF, they won't have enough to replace it. Watkins advised that they are looking for a used vehicle, but

that good ones that come on the market do not stay there long. Diane Bouthot agreed with Watkins that they need to increase the amount added to the CRF to plan ahead.

b. Review of Police and Dispatch Budget

Chief Cyr advised that three items in the budget were adjusted: the leave coverage on page 6 should be \$17,429, the PD Holidays should be \$17,818, and on page 7 Training Permanent Positions will be \$3,631, as the money for the ERT position was removed since they do not have an officer on the team at this time. The bottom line for the budget is \$660,745, which is a decrease from 2018 of \$36,429. Cyr advised that the number of full-time officers in the department was reduced to six, including himself. Cyr advised that he and Sgt. Santos cover shifts that are need for training, sick time, and vacations. Cyr also increased the part-time staff to help cover some shifts. The majority of the part-time officers are from Berlin, and one is from the Sheriff's department. All are fully certified. Cyr included 16 hours of part-time work per week in the budget, some of the hours will be used to cover traffic control at the Tuesday concerts in the park in the summer. The OT for Criminal Investigations and Arrests was increased this year to include money for extra OHRV patrols. Last year they had 77 hours of OHRV patrols, paid by the Fish and Game grant of \$2,800. They will receive the grant again this year. Jessica McCreedy asked if the town gets any money from OHRV registrations, and was advised they get grant money for patrols and a percentage of any OHRV fines. However, the town does not get a portion of motor vehicle violations. Cyr advised that the gas line is up due to the cost of gas increasing. Mary White asked about prosecution duties, which Cyr advised he is currently doing. Cpl Turgeon will be taking over prosecution after attending prosecutor's school. White asked how many hours per week Cyr spends on prosecution and he advised 2-3 hours per week preparing for cases and time in court varies depending on the court docket. White mentioned that some towns are hiring attorneys for prosecution. White asked about criminal investigations and who is responsible for those. Cyr advised the investigation is done by the officer who is working when the offense occurs. White asked about OHRV patrols and why the extra is needed. Cyr advised that there are residents on Lancaster Road, Jimtown Road, and Crestwood Drive who feel not enough has been done for enforcement. The extra patrols will give them more presence in the area and lessen the impact of the ATV's. Bob Demers stated that this area is now a recreational area. White asked if the extra OHRV shifts will be filled with full-time or part-time officers and Cyr advised a mix of both. White asked about coverage and if it is single, double, or triple. Cyr advised there is double coverage Monday-Friday during the day, and also more double coverage on weekends, but since they have six instead of seven officers, double coverage has decreased. Cyr advised that they are requesting money for the Police Cruiser CRF. They are hoping to replace the 2013 Taurus with a 2020 Ford Explorer. The quote at Berlin City was \$39,735, which does not include the cost to equip the vehicle with radio and lights. Lee Carroll asked if the town was able to buy through the state bid and Cyr advised Berlin City has usually had a better price. Mary White asked if the department had considered a truck instead of an SUV and Cyr advised he has mixed feelings. Although the 4WD would be useful, it would not be convenient for transporting subjects under arrest. Cyr also stated he would like to keep the same model vehicle, as then they can use the same setups for outfitting the vehicle. Bob Demers asked about the Police Equipment CRF and Cyr advised they are planning to purchase body cameras for each officer. There also may be grant money available to help offset the cost. Diane Bouthot asked about money for firearms, and Cyr advised he would like to leave the balance there to help offset the cost when they need to be purchased again.

In reviewing the Dispatch budget, Cyr advised it is up \$21,931 to \$273,940. The bulk of the increase is for contractual obligations for salary. Bob Demers asked about the overtime, as the reason for hiring a 4th full-time dispatcher was to reduce this. Cyr advised that although reducing overtime was one of the reasons for the additional position, it was also to help with retention issues, which it has. Dan McCrum pointed out that overtime was \$42,000 in 2017 and was down to \$14,000 this year. Cyr advised that in 2017 they had an employee out on extended medical leave, and that may happen again this year. Cyr advised that he is not asking for the Dispatch CRF of \$76,500 this year, as he has received a new quote to replace the radio equipment which was for \$147,000. There is enough already in the CRF to cover the cost of replacement of the

system. Doug Gralenski asked that Cyr check with other departments who have Kenwood radios to see if the system is working as advertised. Dan McCrum asked about health insurance and Denise Vallee advised the maximum rate increase this year is 0.6%. There is an open enrollment in June when employees can make changes, and they can also make changes during the year if they have a qualifying event, such as the birth of a child. A committee member asked about leave coverage for dispatch and Cyr advised it was miscalculated last year, which is why it is up to \$15,950 this year. It is calculated at the overtime rate of pay for the vacation weeks that are needed to cover, however Cyr advised they are using part-time dispatchers 80% of the time, so they may not need the full amount.

Doug Gralenski advised the committee that he would like to look at rates for gas at the next meeting, as he feels the town could save some in those line items. Mary White advised that the IRS has raised the mileage rate.

Bob Demers advised the school budget hearing is scheduled for next Wednesday, January 23 at GHS. He suggested that the committee members should attend.

5. Date of Next Meeting: January, 17, 2019 at 6:00 pm

6. Adjournment – Robert Demers made a motion to adjourn at 8:06 PM, seconded by Abby Evankow. Voted in the affirmative.

Respectfully Submitted
Shelli Fortin