

Approved 12/18/2019

Present were Committee members Mary Jo Holmes, Joe Miccile, Gene Cordes, Steve Bonaccorsi, Michael Nygren, Joshua Yokela, Pat Martel and Gordon Muench, Town Administrator Heidi Carlson, Recording Secretary Shawn Perreault, Chief of Police: Jon Twiss, PD Lieutenant Peter Morelli, Road Agent Leon Holmes Jr and Ian Fraize from FCTV was live broadcasting.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm in the main floor meeting room at the Fremont Town Hall with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Holmes signed the appointment form for Pat Martel and she was sworn in. She is officially part of the Budget Committee as of this meeting, for a term expiring at the March 2020 election.

Town Budgets:

#### **4210 Police Department:**

Chair Holmes reminded everyone that larger budgets were tabled until after the School budget was presented. Cordes indicated that there might be money available to make a payment on the base radio lease, but we need to wait for another week or two to confirm available funds as the winter budget has been stretched with the early December storms.

Questions were asked about patrol wages, due to the loss of an officer and whether there will be money left, and there will be. Chief Twiss detailed out the recent recruitment of an officer from Danville with five years experience. Officer Bernier started last week. She will not need to go to the academy and can start right away. This is a replacement for a full-time officer who left in August.

This led to some discussion about the fifth full-time position (that Bernier filled) as Nygren shared some of his thoughts on removing that funding from the operating budget and letting the voters decide on the Warrant Article for another full-time position. Chief Twiss said the Department cannot afford to lose that fifth position in the department, noting the Warrant Article is for the sixth officer. Holmes said she feels that we cannot afford the sixth officer. Chief Twiss presented his argument that the sixth position is very important to have. We are below staffing needs and need to protect officers and our citizens. We have 100 domestics annually, we have had two shootings with one fatality. He realizes that the taxes are high, but public safety is our top concern. The police are stretched too thin. We need the sixth office for the coverage, the type of calls we are getting and for continued 24/7 coverage. The hours vary, with very little overlap (only one cruiser on the road most of the time).

Lieutenant Morelli is working 20 hours on the road instead of the investigative duties he would primarily cover. Chief Twiss said it is almost impossible to cover vacation, family emergencies and officer sick calls. Chief Twiss said he would like the Budget Committee's support for the Warrant Article. Holmes stated she felt he has their support, but they are closely watching these large critical budgets. Miccile recited some history about how previously the cruisers were a wreck, and that problem has been addressed, and reiterating that they need to make difficult decisions about what is the most important and what can we wait on.

Twiss offered some comparisons including Fremont had 23 simple assault calls, more than double Atkinson, which is a larger town. Chief Twiss said the stats do not have domestic calls on them because the Police Officer makes the determination once they arrive at the call as to how to handle it. They are all different.

Cordes said that having a candidate come forward into our department with experience, that says something about our Police Department and its reputation.

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Holmes asked about OHRV money, if the fines exceed the cost of manpower? Chief Twiss and Carlson explained that it is a revolving fund and used as needed. The OHRV details are primarily funded by the State Fish & Game Grant. The officers write a ticket on the OHRV trials for Fish and Game, the Town gets a portion of that fee in return.

There was discussion about the FBI numbers, some of which are not updated. The Chief said he compiled the spreadsheet of stats that was presented. He explained he submits information to the State, who in turn sends statistics to the FBI, and he cannot explain the discrepancies. Fremont PD contacted other towns close to our population and local to Fremont and got actual staffing numbers. Twiss said the numbers do not include Motor Vehicle offences either, such as DUI. Lt Morelli further explained that they take a lot of investigations, but they might not be a crime. They still have to generate a report for it. This is to document something in case a crime occurs.

Chief Twiss said an overdose is handled like a homicide and there is a lot of time involved. On a domestic the officer could be at that call for many hours and he further explained the logistics of a second call coming in while that officer is tied up. There was discussion about time involved in court cases.

Holmes asked about the equipment line, and if there was grant money for the cameras. Twiss said he was still looking for some, and indicated he just got a 50% grant for some vest replacements. He has also put in for a 5,000 grant from Walmart. He is looking into everything he can. It is noted that searching for grants also eats up staff time.

There was discussion about the Communication line, and the change to that is the base radio payment. He then recapped the history of the base radio and contract. Further discussion was held.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend the amount of \$643,879 for the Police Department. Cordes seconded. It is noted this removes the \$7,464 in the communication line for the base radio payment. Motion passed 7 Yes – 0 No – 0 Abstain.

Yokela arrived at 7:20 pm. Chief Twiss and Lieutenant Morelli left the meeting at approximately 7:25 pm.

## **Highway**

There was discussion on the two road paving projects, including Ann Lane and Hooke Road. Finishing Whitter Drive would be proposed for 2021. Updated spreadsheets with the engineer's estimates and work that the Town will do in-house and reduced contingencies were distributed to show the makeup of the funding on each road. Hooke and Ann are within the operating budget. Worksheets were also included for the Chester Road Warrant Article and the Whittier Drive work to be included in 2021.

Holmes Jr stated that the difference from the October budget submission/presentation is a reduction in the operating budget of \$20,000 in paving. He stated the budget is up about \$44,000 over 2019. There was discussion about the Highway Department needs and the Budget Committees' representation of the taxpayers. The Committee feels we cannot do it all in the same year. Holmes offered this as a minimal increase and they are not looking to do everything in one year.

There was lengthy discussion about these two separate areas and that paving from year to year will go up and down depending on the scope of work. The paving work is also in two different places, some in the budget and some in Warrant Articles. There was discussion about upgrades versus constant repairs and the comparison of costs. People travel on these and sometime a small road is better in the budget because if the voters do not drive on it, they may feel the Town doesn't need it and it will be voted down. Some

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of the Town's roads are beyond their life. Miccile said he would like to see prioritization of these budgets, for example, solid waste is a large increase. He feels that Ann and Hooke should be done but are not a high priority. These are low traveled roads. He mentioned Martin Road is bad too. Holmes Jr feels strongly about Ann and Hooke, given the complaints he gets, and the plows are digging up pavement.

There was continued lengthy discussion about the merits of the road, and how to prioritize or fund, and whether that should be in the operating budget or Warrant Articles. There was a review of NH Highway Block Grant funds and that offsets the highway operations annually, in general, as long as it is funded by the State.

There was lengthy further discussion about creation of the Town Trust Fund for Emergency Weather events such as the Chester Road storm this past June.

Holmes noted that an estimated \$410,000 of NEW expense is equal to approximately \$1.00 on the tax rate. The Chester Road Warrant Article is \$134,528 and there were various totaling and comparisons discussed on the cumulative Highway and Bridge projects in the 2020 proposed and 2019 actual budgets. which is down \$120,000.

There was extensive discussion on the road work and whether it should be an annual amount within the operating budget instead of Warrant Article, to try and keep up and maintain it as any other maintenance expense. The optics of the funding were discussed at length, and how to get the voters to understand what they are voting on.

Carlson will put together a spreadsheet of information, Committee asking for 2012 to present, to look at the Town's overall operating and Capital expenses for highways and bridges. The discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

Gordon Muench arrived at 8:14 pm and Greg Fraize arrived at 8:21 pm.

Carlson circulated the final expense report of the Sandown Road Bridge Overflow project completed this summer. The current estimate is that there will be approximately \$77,000 in the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund. We are trying to align the work that needs to be done with when the aid is available as of 07/01/2020 for the Martin Road Bridge Project. The Sandown Road Bridge overflow cost was approximately \$241,000. The Martin Road Bridge will be between \$350,00 to \$400,000 additional. There is a lot of planning that needs to be done and might not be all in one year.

### **School Budget**

The School District will be coming back in two weeks. The Committee really needs to get these other budgets out of the way. If members have any more questions for the School, please email them to Sue Penny before the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Other Town information:** Carlson stated there are about 4 or 5 Camp Director applications. She feels it will probably be a go. Nothing has been received from Park and Rec on a Warrant Article for the Pavilion, and no one has any indication of anything else that may come in by petition. Petition Warrant Articles are due by 12 noon on Tuesday January 14, 2020.

Holmes told members to have specific things you want to take out of budget, if you want to decrease any budgets.

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Carlson reported that there is nothing new on the Deliberative Session regarding having both session on the same day. She is waiting for feedback from the NH Secretary of State's Office. This is the first time the question has been asked.

Carlson indicated that the Vendor Payments budget is still outstanding.

Yokela made a motion to adjourn at 9:14 pm, seconded by Miccile. Motion passed 8 Yes – 0 No – 0 Abstain.

The next meeting will be held at 7:00 pm on Wednesday December 11, 2019 in the Town Hall Basement Meeting Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Perreault  
Recording Secretary