

Present: Committee Members Chair Mary Jo Holmes, Josh Yokela, Michael Nygren, Jon Benson, Steve Bonaccorsi, Pat Martel, Selectmen's Representative Gene Cordes, School Board Representative Gordon Muench, Town Administrator Heidi Carlson, Recording Secretary Shawn Perreault, Librarian Eric Abney & Trustee John Hennelly. Land Use AA Leanne Miner arrived at 7:30 pm.

Chair Holmes called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the Basement Meeting Room at the Fremont Town Hall. All rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Eric Abney / Trustee John Hennelly / Fremont Public Library 2021 Budget Proposal

Holmes welcomed Librarian Eric Abney, who began by stating that the budget is lower than last year. The door replacement project has been completed and came in at \$5,000 instead of the \$8,000 originally quoted. Holmes asked if the door got fixed to Abney's satisfaction with the final cost being so much lower. Abney stated he was extremely satisfied with the work and company. Wages reflect a 2% raise for employees. Bookmobile was decreased due to lower usage. The fuel, maintenance and water systems went up due to what was actually needed in the current year. They have stopped using the irrigation system to save money, and the grass was OK this year. They have a proposal from Petra Paving to sealcoat the parking lot at the recommendation of the Road Agent.

Abney is proposing to add five (5) hours per week to the maintenance wage line. Trustees have asked for this to allow Abney to do less of the maintenance tasks and more library work. There was an increase in what is paid to the State to allow people to log on and use their devices. They are proposing using some of the excess funds to replace the Library sign this year. The building is 20 years old next year.

Cordes stated everyone is concerned about the HVAC systems and planning for replacement. The Selectmen have been asking departments if they have excess funds that can be used to purchase items this year and remove items from the 2021 budget, or use them to be converted (via Warrant Article from Unreserved Fund Balance) to an Expendable Trust or Capital Reserve Fund to reserve those funds already raised by taxes. This led to further explanation of the options available to the Town for appropriations, revenues, and the pending tax rate setting process.

Abney stated that some of the staff will begin coming back next week. Nygren suggested if we have a known expense that will occur next year, to encumber the funds this fall. Nygren asked for a better idea on what wages would be spent through year end. He suggested items like the paving (Petra cannot schedule it until next spring) be encumbered and not in the budget next year, and asked about what the cost is for a new sign or sign repair.

Abney further spoke of the HVAC needs and is soliciting quotes from vendors on this, considering conversion to propane as well as oil. He mentioned they had also talked about solar and other options. Nygren asked if the upgraded system will decrease the number units they have now and Abney stated they would to have less than the five the building has currently. He is waiting to see what the professionals recommend. Abney stated he went to different vendors asking for numbers and is hoping to have them by the end of the month.

There was consideration and discussion about the funds spent on books versus digital media. Abney explained that a lot of the vendors were not shipping books due to Covid for a few months, and now they are. Abney discussed the different clientele regarding books and other forms of media. The number of customers that prefer the book to digital has not changed. He was considering a movie option, but it can be very pricy and only effects those clients without Prime or Netflix. He is putting some programs back in place, such as Scarecrow contest. Martel stated her only concern is making sure that the budget in 2022 does not have a big increase due to the low budget this coming year. Abney stated unless an unseen

issue comes up, he thinks things will remain even. Holmes thanked Abney and he and John Hennelley left the meeting at 7:25 pm.

7:30 pm Leanne Miner / Land Use / Conservation 2021 budget proposals

Holmes introduced the Board to Leanne Miner. She discussed the Planning and Zoning budget first. The Department request is \$54,992. Clerical wages cover Miner's position for 24 hours per week with a 2% wage increase. Miner explained the line items. The largest is Circuit Rider Planner, we do not have a professional planner, instead contracting with a representative from the Rockingham County Planning Commission. It is a contracted rate and she attends all the Planning Board meetings. There was an increase in 2021-2022. The Master Plan is a way for the Town to envision what we want to look like. Land Use and Recreation chapters are scheduled to be reviewed next year. Nygren wanted to know how many of the ideas are used from the plan and has the town implemented any of the ideas. Miner stated she feels it was used but not as much as it should have been. The focus this year with the chapters has been to make actionable items that are achievable. The plan really is used to see what the vision is going to be. Nygren wants to make sure the Master Plan is going to be used and not just paid for. Miner stated the Planning Board feels the same and is working toward having actions that can be completed and seen.

Cordes requested Miner look back and see what the prior goals were in the chapters that are being updated, then come back with some information on what has been accomplished. Miner stated she can do a "now and then" type comparison. Carlson stated the Master Plan is a living and ever-evolving document and credited Miner with her realistic approach to it in the most current updates. It is hard to get people to complete the surveys and public input process, and all of these comments are welcomed during the process. Carlson said that Miner has looked at the chapters and said we need something that a citizen can sit down and say what does this mean to me and see the results.

Miner stated updating the Growth Management chapter forced them to look at the growth rate of Fremont and the other towns. It forces departments to look at things as well, a way to bring in some revenue, their expenses, and what we want Fremont to look like in the future. Holmes reminded everyone that Master Plans are not something that is completed in one sitting. Miner is proposing that the Planning Board spend some Circuit Rider hours on awareness of Capital Improvement Planning and said the Budget Committee was also an important part of that.

There was lengthy discussion about Fremont soon being subject to the MS4 permitting process, as we do not believe we will be eligible for a waiver any longer. Fremont has been getting a waiver for years due to low numbers, but it appears that will not be the case moving forward. RPC will help with that. Yokela asked Miner for information on criteria for the Stormwater waiver. Miner stated she would, that they do not know when the fee is coming but are trying to be proactive and ready for the expense.

Conservation Commission

Miner stated they made a lot of progress on the mapping. Clerical services includes a more realistic allotment of the hours needed and a 2% pay increase. Miner explained she had personal issues earlier in the year causing her to be away from the office and this is more reflective of actual moving forward.

She was pleased to note the addition of Adobe Pro, which allows her to do more updating online and making things a lot easier. They did not spend a lot in training this year due to Covid-19. Membership dues will be the same, this is our State and local memberships. At the bottom of the report, the balances in each of the CC funds was noted. This led to discussion about the LUCT Fund, currently with approximately \$250,000 in it. Of this, \$150,000 is reserved for the completion of the Brett Agricultural

Easement project. The Forest Management Fund is used to make trails, perform upgrades and repairs. With no further discussion this evening, Miner left the meeting at 7:59 pm.

Other Business:

Cordes made a motion to approve the July 29, 2020 minutes as written. Muench seconded and the motion passed 8-0-0.

4141 Election & Registration: Carlson stated next year will only include the March Town and School meeting/election process. We also have the 10-year purge of the checklist in 2021. The Supervisors are preparing for this and will require added postage, mailing and time. The budget does include a 2% wage increase. There was a brief review of the work involved in voting setup and planning. Covid changed a lot of the election rules and guidelines, but everyone, voters and workers, did a great job at the Primary on Tuesday. There were a few people that did curbside absentee voting.

We are planning that November will look the same, only busier. The Town is not aware of any planned increase in postage rates. Carlson said there were over 200 applications for absentee ballots this primary. Clerk Nicole Cloutier could provide the exact numbers if the Committee wants them.

Cordes made a motion to recommend \$7,985 for budget 4141, seconded by Nygren. Motion passed 8-0-0.

4195 Cemeteries: Carlson presented the Cemetery Trustees budget. There are not a lot of changes, primarily project work. Once the Leavitt work is complete, plans will shift to work with a landowner on South Road and the associated costs for development of a new or expanded cemetery on South Road are in the project line for 2021. There was brief discussion about the land potential on South Road. Carlson is hoping to have more information and will update Cemetery Trustees and Selectmen next week.

We currently have two part-time employees; but neither fills the Superintendent role. Due to that, funds have been allocated to wages from the supervisor line. In response to questions, Carlson indicated what each position was responsible for, and also noted Shawn Perreault and her duties as Cemetery Sexton and the work she is accomplishing administratively.

Holmes wondered if the Committee should wait on approving the budget due to the status of the South Road project, and Nygren stated if this does not move forward, the Trustees would use the funds to complete work on the back, left side of the Leavitt Cemetery. So, either way the money will be spent, just depends on which project it will be. Martel asked if \$2,945,00 was all spent at Leavitt? Carlson stated some was used for the new shed roof, but the rest was used at Leavitt. The Trustees are also planning to get a shed and equipment in Leavitt this year as well. Muench made a motion to recommend \$25,475 for Cemeteries function 4195. Bonaccorsi seconded. Motion passed with 6 Yes – 1 No (Yokela) -1 Abstain (Nygren) vote.

4583 Patriotic Purposes: Carlson stated this is a straight forward budget. Due to Covid the Town did not have a Memorial Day service and are not planning to hold a Veteran's Service this fall. They are planning for both events in 2021. Replacing the Main Street flags as needed is in the budget. Martel asked if this would be an example of a budget that the surplus would fall into the reserve fund. Carlson stated that any unexpended funds from this year will return to Unreserved Fund Balance. The Selectmen's office would like to do a postcard to Veteran's and explain the process and as a commemoration of their service. Cordes made a motion to recommend \$2,985 for function 4583, seconded by Bonaccorsi. Motion passed with unanimous vote 8-0-0.

Carlson told the Board the MS1 needs to be finished soon for the setting of the tax rate. This is the State form summarizing the total of all taxable property in Fremont. The revaluation is finished, and all hearings are done. The total valuation went up about \$120 million. Until everything is done, Carlson will not know the new tax rate. Because values went up the tax rate should go down. Carlson feels encumbering funds and using surplus funds to offset 2021 will help to balance tax impacts. She just wants to make sure that going back to normal the following year will not be a huge increase. All agreed that we need to find a balance. Nygren asked about revenue from new houses. Carlson stated there has been an increase in building permits, but that the exact amount of that increase is not really possible to determine with the revaluation. All improvements completed by April 1st are included in the revaluation. She will get the numbers when they are available.

Carlson gave members the following new budgets for future review:

4199 Town Report

4210 Police Department including preliminary information on new officer Warrant Article

Carlson stated that NH Police Retirement will increase significantly for 07/01/2021. When Chief Twiss comes in, he will present the budget, but Carlson wanted to give the board a preview of the information.

Holmes stated she liked the set-up of tonight's appointments. If we can get the smaller budgets done first, there will be more time to spend on the larger budgets including Police, Highway and Fire Rescue. Waste Management is a contract and will be calculated at the % defined. Carlson will have another Department presenting on September 30th.

Yokela asked if the Town has requested or asked to be reimbursed for the money allowed. Carlson reported on the CARES funding reimbursements (two complete and one final due next week). The Town is requesting reimbursement from FEMA and NH CARES funds as allowable. The reason we have not yet reopened the Town Hall is because we have limited staff and if someone gets sick, we are shut down for a least two weeks. The Town did apply for and receive (and pay out) the eligible First Responder Stipend program.

Yokela asked how the CARES money being accounted for and Carlson explained the set up of EM line 4291 to show everything in and out. The detail could be printed if anyone wants it. If all is even, there will be zeroes at year end (ie: all extra expenses are reimbursed).

At 8:45 pm Cordes made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Nygren. Motion passed 8-0-0.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 30 September 2020 at 7:00 pm in the Town Hall Basement Meeting Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Perreault
Recording Secretary