

Present: Board Members Chair Mary Jo Holmes, Josh Yokela, Michael Nygren, Jon Benson, Steve Bonaccorsi, Pat Martel, Selectmen's Rep Gene Cordes, Recording Secretary Shawn Perreault; FCTV Greg Fraize.

Meeting was called to order by Chair Holmes at 6:35 pm in the first floor meeting room of the Fremont Town Hall. FCTV taped the meeting for future rebroadcast and Vimeo. The Pledge was recited.

At 6:30 pm Leanne Miner met with the Committee ahead of her 7:00 pm scheduled Planning Board meeting to finalize the Land Use (4191) budget.

4191 Planning Board: Chair Holmes welcomed Miner. The Committee asked her to return to clarify the Master Plan budget items. Cordes recalls the Committee questioning the need for the Master Plan when it appears that the follow through doesn't seem to be there. Miner stated State requirements are that Town's must have a Master Plan and it must be updated. If we don't have this we would be subjected to suit. The Planning Board is committed to the Plan, especially with the growth increase. The action lists are very helpful. Holmes asked if everything was being completed or just parts. Miner stated they are using them and the Land Use really requires professional help. The Recreation plan will help add things for adults. Someone writes the chapter and comes up with an actionable plan. When you have open space and grants, the Master Plan helps Towns apply for them with the data collected and knowing what is needed.

The Planning Board has been waiting to see what funds could be encumbered from this year. She feels it will be about \$6,500 and would use it toward the Land Use chapter and the Stormwater Regulations. That would leave the Recreation Master Plan chapter in the 2021 budget. Nygren asked if they were looking at what other towns are doing? Miner said they do look at other towns. The current Recreation chapter is only about two pages long and talks only about kids. It is old and out of date. Yokela wanted to know if it was a chapter that was required. Miner stated no, the chapter is not required, but it is good to have especially in a growing town. Yokela asked if there were volunteers that were able to be used, instead of spending the money. If our Parks & Rec Commission only has two members (currently) and the chapter won't be used, is that the best spending? Cordes supports this chapter, that using the current number of volunteers is unfair. The volunteers are passionate, but they need this. Miner is proposing the use of professionals to do the chapter, gather the information and create the chapter. This would then help the volunteers to plan. Miner would like to reduce line 4191700 line by \$6,500. Martel asked if the 2020 Conservation Commission budget has the cost of the Master Plan in the project/Master plan line. Miner stated they each share part of the cost due to the Natural Resources. They planned on spending money for Rockingham planning to write the text, but volunteers end up writing it, therefore the cost was not as high. Cordes stated this makes sense and he supports it.

Cordes made a motion to recommend \$47,576 for Department 4191, seconded by Benson. Motion passed 5 Yes – 2 No (Nygren, Yokela) – 0 Abstain.

Miner left the meeting 6:51 pm.

4550 Library: Librarian Eric Abney met with the Committee relative to the Library (4550) budget. Holmes asked if Abney was able to remove anything from the 2021 budget. Abney stated yes, he was able to take out \$6,480. There was money left in the current budget to do the exterior painting and sealing and line striping of the parking lot. This will be removed from the Exterior maintenance line. Nygren asked if the rest of the lines would zero out. Abney stated yes. They have to spend \$16,000 on a water filtration system due to two positive PFOA tests. Holmes stated the new numbers and asked Abney if he was comfortable with it. Abney agreed the new budget numbers would work for 2021.

Cordes made a motion to recommend \$146,240 for department 4550, seconded Bonaccorsi. Motion passed 6 Yes – 1 No (Yokela) – 0 Abstain.

Abney left the meeting 6:55 pm.

Motion made to approve the October 28, 2020 meeting minutes by Bonaccorsi, seconded by Benson. Motion passed 7 Yes – 0 No – 0 Abstain.

School Budget items: Holmes doesn't have any updates on the School. They will be here on November 18th. Greg Fraize stated he would answer any questions. Fraize stated the school budget will be presented next Monday. There will be a live Zoom cast. Fraize stated that the zoom information will be on the School website. Holmes asked if anyone asked about going remote on the Holidays. Fraize stated there were talks about giving the families flexibility for those leaving the state. There has been nothing further. Restrictions of people leaving the state is monitored by the State of New Hampshire and the restrictions are very strict. Negative Covid tests do not allow people to skip the 14 days quarantine, no exceptions. Further discussion was held.

Town updates – It is noted that Heidi Carlson sent out the following updates over the weekend in follow-up to the last meeting:

- a. The Road Agent is most comfortable having the road work in a Warrant Article. He said “in my gut” and talked about it being the best way to “let the people decide.” I did share this with Selectmen and they continued their debate about it Thursday night. After much discussion the Selectmen decided to increase the operating budget by the Mast Tree road work amount. All are concerned about the budget passing if it looks to be elevated. This is a concern largest in year one, and education is key.
- b. The Selectmen also met with Chief Twiss on some other matters Thursday, and discussed with him the WA option as well. This was kicked around again and in the end Selectmen voted to put the new officer request (\$45,402 in year one) in a Warrant Article.
- c. The Library has a contract with Petra Paving for \$3,480 to crackseal and stripe the library parking lot. This will be an encumbrance and I have begun showing it in the December expense column as a placeholder. The water system is approximately \$15,000 and Abney believes that with the supplies and other commitments that they will spend more of the budget, but not all of it. We have not yet come to a final number. If crackseal was in the 2021 budget, it could be removed.
- d. Nicole Cloutier does not think she will be able to make next Wednesday, but can do the following week if not. Leanne Miner also has a PB meeting next Wednesday. Both of these appointments are pending this week.
- e. Leanne Miner is looking at getting a contract ready now for some of the components of Stormwater Regulation and a chapter of the Master Plan. Once that is finalized, the amount in the proposed 2021 budget could be reduced if we can forecast out with some certainty.
- f. The Town is beginning to forecast out in the monthly expense report many areas of the budget for things we know the monthly cost of. This will help in projecting what may remain for year end to reduce the 2021 budget.

Cordes feels the Highway Capital Reserve for equipment will still be a Warrant Article. Holmes confirmed there will be no warrant articles on road work. Although the Road Agent is more comfortable with the Warrant Articles, the Selectmen decided to give it a try this year and put it in the Highway Department budget. Martel stated the operating budget is about \$262,000 higher than last year, which is about what the highway budget is up. It's going to be very important to explain the increase to the public.

4312 Highway Department: Cordes stated he feels there are things that will be purchased from this years budget, but nothing has been confirmed. Nygren asked if that would lower the recommended 2021 budget, Cordes stated no.

Cordes made a motion to recommend \$866,568 for Department 4312, seconded by Benson. Motion passed 5 Yes – 1 No (Yokela) – 1 Abstain (Holmes). Yokela's objection is to the 2% wage increase. Bonaccorsi asked if the 2% wage increase could be encumbered. Cordes stated no, the funds must be contracted.

4445 Social Service Agencies: Cordes stated last week the Selectmen recommended \$30,242. He stated there is \$4,750 requested by So Rock Coalition, which will be a Warrant Article as a new agency to Fremont. Holmes questioned the Homecare. Cordes stated they just haven't requested their money. Lamprey Health combined with Rockingham Nutrition for transportation and Meals on Wheels services. Cordes stated they are still requesting the same services.

Martel made as motion to recommend \$30,242 for Department 4445, seconded by Benson. Motion passed 6 Yes – 1 No – 0 Abstain.

4711 / 4721 Long Term Notes and Bonds Principal and Interest: Cordes stated the Selectmen saw this budget last week for the first time. It doesn't show they took any action, but they are committed. This is the final payment on the Library. There is 4 years left on the Glen Oaks Land.

Motion by Bonaccorsi made to recommend \$85,000 for department 4711 and \$9,270 for Department 4721 for a total of \$94,270, seconded by Cordes. Motion passed 7 Yes – 0 No – 0 Abstain.

4723 Tax Anticipation Notes: Cordes explained they removed \$1,499 and lowered it to \$1 to keep the line item open. Motion made by Cordes to recommend \$1 for Department 4723, seconded by Bonaccorsi. Motion passed 7 Yes – 0 No – 0 Abstain.

4140 Town Clerk Tax Collector: Nicole Cloutier arrived at 7:27 pm to review the Town Clerk Tax Collector budget request.

Cordes has stated the Selectmen have not seen this budget yet. Cloutier passed out a hand out containing the budget explanation. She explained that due to the online (E-Reg) process, there are an additional five steps required in the office. There is an increase in postage because registrations and such have to be mailed out (more due to the use of drop box and E-Reg during the pandemic). Appointments are every 15 minutes for things that have to be done in person, such as new car registrations and marriage licenses. If people were allowed to come in, there would be no way to monitor it or have people wait outside until the person inside left.

Nygren asked how many hours someone is in the office. Cloutier stated they are open every day: Monday 9-12. On Tuesday they close to the public at 1:30 which allows Cheryl to process paperwork until 3:30 pm. Wednesday is 3-7, Thursday 10-3 and Friday 9-12, Nicole comes in the middle of the day to help with electronic registrations. Cloutier stated public hours are different. She is responding to emails and voicemails at all times and days. This is to help keep things manageable, people cannot just come in and ask questions.

Further discussion was held regarding in-person vs. online services. Nygren asked if the three extra hours being requested are for public hours? Cloutier stated no, those will be used for the paperwork, filing tasks and such that are suffering because of the way things need to be done. Yokela questioned the postage that

was originally listed at \$7,200 and now the new explanation requests \$10,000. Cloutier stated that there was a transfer error in the original print out. The Town purchases pre-paid envelopes. She calculated it by adding 70% to the cost of the envelopes. The tag for dog registrations adds a \$0.15 overage charge to each envelope. Cordes asked where the ballot postage shows up. It shows up on the Town Clerk and Voting. She didn't change the number because this isn't going to effect next year's budget. There were 615 Absentee ballots for the November election. The planning is 12 months not 8 months, which adds to postage. The certified tax lien notices service has increased, the person that was previously doing it has retired and was about ½ the cost as the new company. There is currently no Selectmen recommendation, as they have not reviewed it yet. Holmes stated she doesn't want to recommend something the Selectmen have not seen yet. Cordes stated they will be reviewing this budget tomorrow night. The budget was tabled until a Selectmen's recommendation is made.

4210 Police Department: Due to the new officer being placed in a Warrant Article, the board discussed the police recommendations. The Selectmen recommended lower amounts in the equipment, fuel and cruiser equipment lines.

Bonaccorsi made a motion to recommend \$666,586 for Department 4210, seconded by Benson. Motion passed 5 Yes – 2 No (Yokela, Nygren) – 0 Abstain.

Draft 2021 Warrant: The Selectmen have not fully been through the Warrant as currently constructed. In general, it contains the following topics: (NOT currently numbered in sequence)

Election of Town Officers, Town Operating budget, New Police Officer \$45,402; Computer Equipment Expendable Trust Fund for computer replacement \$4,000; Library Building Maintenance Fund \$5,000 (amount still being discussed); possibly funded from Unreserved Fund Balance; Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund \$50,000; Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Fund \$25,000; Bridge Capital Reserve Fund \$25,000 placeholder pending discussion; Mosquito Control – There is some movement on this line. There have been some changes with the current vendor and two proposals are being reviewed. Town Clerk 2% raise \$729; Amend the Elderly Exemption value to correct a clerical error last year; Amend Disabled exemption in light of pending 2020 revaluation; and Funding a Road Engineering Study. Cordes stated they are not sure this Warrant Article will be used.

Holmes asked Cordes if the Selectmen would be taking action on any of these. He believes they will be doing some of them tomorrow.

Other Town Updates:

a. The Town successfully received a \$5,000 grant that will offset our overages in the elections budget. We can only keep of it what we spend, so it is not any extra revenue, but will cover the overages/added costs.

b. The final CARES Act grant reimbursement (unless they extend it again for the FEMA denials) was submitted on Friday night. If we receive everything submitted, this WILL be some excess revenue that will help us with cash flow as well as fund balance (or next year revenue, depending on when we actually receive it).

c. The 2020 tax rate came in at \$23.13. The total assessed valuation including utilities is \$535,327,528 and it is \$525,925,328 without utilities.

Holmes stated some taxes might go down, but people need to look at their new assessments because most properties increased in value.

Budgets remaining to be reviewed:

4140 Town Clerk / Tax Collector
4155 Personnel Administration
4215 Ambulance – new contract
4196 Insurance

Warrant articles will be review again at the next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 11 November 2020 at 6:30 pm in the Town Hall Basement Meeting Room.

At 8:04 pm a motion was made to adjourn by Yokela, seconded by Bonaccorsi. The vote passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Perreault
Recording Secretary