

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm in the basement meeting room at the Fremont Town Hall. All rose for the Pledge of Allegiance. Present were Budget Committee members Mary Jo Holmes, Pat Martel, Gene Cordes, Gordon Muench, Jon Benson, Brian McGinn, Josh Yokela and Steve Bonaccorsi. Also present was Town Administrator Heidi Carlson.

Road Agent Leon Holmes Jr was present for a review of Highway Department (4312) budget. The Committee decided to ask questions instead of reviewing each line item. Chair Holmes asked Holmes Jr to highlight the changes to the budget. He said there were changes to wages (FT staff supervisor from \$23.03 to \$25 per hour; and the other FT staff member from \$19 to \$20 per hour. Part-time wages are proposed with a 2% increase, and a \$5 per hour increase in the contracted rate for plow and sander contractors. There is a decrease to engineering in the separate line item. This now only includes the planning for the following FY (2023); and the engineering for each of the road projects is included in the paving number. (Carlson retrieved the separate engineering estimates for each of the road proposed for paving in 2022 and circulated copies for all members).

Holmes noted gas and maintenance cost increases and outlined the three main pieces of equipment the Town owns. This includes a 2004 backhoe (purchased used in 2011 for \$45,000); and a 2001 International 6-wheeler (purchased used in 2016 for \$16,000); and a new 2022 one-ton truck. He detailed out looking at pricing to replace the backhoe and six wheel dump truck, after a conversation with the Select Board with concerns on aging equipment, that if we blow an engine, we will get into some significant repair costs. He noted looking at estimates for various pieces of equipment and the financing options. He feels it is time for the Town to start looking toward the future. If new equipment is purchased, in future years (2023) the maintenance would go down. He received 3 separate prices for each, and estimates it would be a total of \$50,000 to \$55,000 per year for 5 years on a lease/purchase arrangement a truck and backhoe.

The options, financing, and use of Capital Reserve monies was discussed. *Editor's note: there is approximately \$36,000 balance in the Highway Equipment CRF.

Chief Twiss came into the meeting at 7:23 pm.

There was discussion about the amount of paving money in the budget and discussion was held, including how long the new improvements last, and how the budgeting process changed in 2021 for inclusion in the operating budget versus doing a few Warrant Articles annually. Prior Budget Committees felt that if we are spending that much money on roads as an annual expense, it should be in the budget.

Holmes Jr left the meeting at 7:40 pm and Chief Twiss sat down with the Committee. He discussed some work done today to firm up the cost of the new cruisers which are included in the budget for 2022. The numbers are beginning to firm up, and the total of the PD Detail Revolving Fund (to fund cruiser replacement) will help support the purchase and keep the operating budget within the \$25,000 current line item.

The dealer told Twiss that once ordered, the new units would be 18 weeks out. Twiss added that the answer varies depending on who you ask. Suppliers for the cruiser equipment have told him that it could be 6-12 months out.

The radio, radar and light bar are likely able to be moved to the new cruisers (which had a body style change in 2020). Much of the other equipment including center console, computer mount, trunk case, rear seat, cage, etc., will not fit in the new style Ford.

Twiss is proposing to keep one of the old (2016) cruisers for other uses within the Department. This would result in only one of the 2016 units being traded in. There was discussion about the other options (Chevy Tahoe – larger and a V8 engine, Dodge Charger – smaller), the Chief is recommending the Ford Interceptor Explorer as it has a 6 cylinder engine, is more maneuverable and better on gas.

Martel noted the increase in the wage line and highlighted the physical agility incentive that is included. The Chief outlined the benefits to the Town and the Department of having such an incentive. This includes an attraction to get people to come to Fremont, as well as to keep them in shape (less liability). There was general discussion about wages and the changes in personnel over the past year.

Chief Twiss left the meeting at 7:57 pm.

Committee members reviewed the minutes of 22 September 2021. A motion was made by Bonaccorsi to approve the minutes of 22 September 2021. Muench seconded. The vote was approved 7-0-1 (Holmes abstaining).

The Committee then reviewed Town Budget items previously circulated with current expense reports.

4130 Executive: The total budget request is \$135,418. Cordes highlighted a change to the Town Administrator's salary. The Department request came in with a 2% increase. The Board has been adjusting this over time to get more in line with market rates. Yokela asked when the Select Board would feel this was adequate, reviewing the history of recent years and would it still be increased again next year. Cordes said that the Board is picking away at it. Yokela said it is hard to explain to the voters why we are outside the pattern of 2% and suggested that the Board propose what they think it needs to be instead of incremental increases.

There was discussion about having enough money in the budget to recruit when it is needed, as well as the overall state of wages for employees in Fremont and the need for overall market adjustments. The Board was asked to gather more data on bringing this salary in line with the current rates in other towns.

4141 Election & Registration: The budget proposal is \$17,056. There was discussion about the number of elections next year, and the costs for each. There are three (Town Elections in March, State Primary in September and State General Election in November) and it includes 2% wage increases for employees. There was discussion about the process for elections and who staff were and their duties. Motion was made by Bonaccorsi and seconded by Muench to recommend \$17,056 for 4141. The vote was approved 8-0.

4151 Financial Administration Other: There is no change from 2021 in the budget proposal, which totals \$21,400. After brief review a motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend \$21,400 for 4151. Muench seconded and the vote was approved 7-0. (Benson was not in the room).

4313 Bridges: Carlson explained this is the cost of the Engineering inspection that will maintain the warranty on the Sandown Road overflow bridge that was rebuilt in 2019. There is still ongoing work for the Martin Road bridge, which will be addressed in a Warrant Article for the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund. Bonaccorsi motioned to recommend \$1,500 for 4313 and Muench seconded. The vote was approved 8-0.

4316 Street Lights: Carlson explained this is the cost for our street lights electricity usage. Bonaccorsi moved to recommend \$6,000 for 4316 and Muench seconded. The vote was approved 8-0.

4323 Solid Waste Collection: Carlson stated that the market conditions are improving and pricing for recycling is trending down. Relative to the collection contract, there is a 3% annual increase, but fuel costs decreased. Bonaccorsi motioned to recommend \$313,602 for 4323 and Muench seconded. The vote was approved 8-0.

4324 Solid Waste Disposal: This includes a contracted increase for tipping fees, and the rest of the usual expenses for Bulky Day and annual dues. Bonaccorsi motioned to recommend \$136,450 for 4324 and Holmes seconded. The vote was approved 8-0.

4415 Health: There was no change in budget request of \$1,435. Carlson highlighted that the stipends for Health Officer and Deputy were increased. Muench motioned to recommend \$1,435 for 4415 and Benson seconded. The vote was approved 7-1 (Yokela).

4610 Conservation Commission: Carlson distributed information on the Land Use Change Tax and Conservation Commission in Fremont for Committee review.

4723 Interest on Tax Anticipation Notes: Carlson stated this is a budget function line, the Town works with the School and has not had to borrow money in a few years. The Town feels this should be kept open. Cordes motioned to keep \$1 in 4723 and Benson seconded. The vote was 7-1 (Yokela).

The following Town budgets were circulated for review at a future meeting:

- 4442 Direct Assistance
- 4520 Parks & Recreation
- 4197 Advertising & Regional Association
- 4445 Social Service Agencies
- 4550 Library (Trustees will be here October 13th at 7:00 pm)

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday October 13, 2021 at 7:00 pm in the basement meeting room.

With no further business Bonaccorsi moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 pm. Benson seconded and the vote was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Clement
Recording Secretary

Heidi Carlson
Town Administrator