

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chair Mary Jo Holmes in the Town Hall Basement Meeting Room and started with the Pledge of Allegiance. Present were Budget Committee Members Mary Jo Holmes, Pat Martel, Steve Bonaccorsi, Gordon Muench, Gene Cordes, Brian McGinn, Jon Benson and Josh Yokela (7:05 pm); Town Administrator Heidi Carlson, Library Director Eric Abney, Library Trustees John Hennelly, Emily Clark and Arlene Nuzzi.

At 7:00 pm Holmes welcomed Library Director Eric Abney and Library Trustees John Hennelly, Emily Clark and Arlene Nuzzi to review of the Library (4550) budget. Everyone introduced themselves and Abney started his presentation by stating the only changes to the budget are wages and contracted increases they couldn't control, such as phones and electricity. There are no big maintenance projects coming up. Abney proceeded to go through the budget line by line. Wages went up 2% and the Trustees would like to do another adjustment to the Director's hourly wage.

The Bookmobile was very popular due to COVID and they expanded it to include some grocery and medicine deliveries as well. Much of this was done with volunteer time. The fuel line is based on the Town's current contract rate. They will not be opening up the irrigation system again this year saving \$500. Light bulbs were replaced with the LED bulbs to try and save. The fire safety systems will all be inspected as well. They are still looking for a maintenance person. Martel asked how much will the LED bulbs effect the cost. Abney stated that it won't effect it much until they can get the whole building done, but they are also replacing things like the printer with ones that are energy efficient. Martel asked for clarification on the Bookmobile wages increase. Abney stated the wages didn't increase just the serves provided. He stated that some people would ask if they could pick up certain items and they did. Holmes asked if the Bookmobile and the Senior shut in service is going well, why do they not need more in mileage? Abney stated most of the people live in Black Rocks and are close.

Muench asked how the budget was looking for funds on replacing equipment. Abney stated it was spent this year and he finds it adequate. He will usually spend the money updating a laptop or one of the public computers. This year they purchased a laser printer. Holmes asked if they were closed at anytime this year. Abney stated no, they offered curbside and then opened the building. Most preferred curbside until the summer months arrived. Abney further stated that the Library usually has a book sale every year. They decided instead to put those books outside the building, when it was closed, for free. They gave away over 10,000 books and DVD's to Fremont residents.

Benson asked about the Director's wage. Clark stated that they looked at what the Directors of the libraries were getting for all the surrounding towns. It was determined that Abney was getting far less as well as the other Library employees. The grid of area towns wage information had been distributed for Committee review. Abney is receiving about \$7 to \$8 less per hour than comparable neighbors. The Trustees would like to increase the Director's wages by \$5 an hour. Clark stated that even the \$10,000 per year will not put the Director equal to the lowest director from the surrounding towns. Clark stated the current rate is \$17.79 per hour. They want to go up to \$22.79 per hour. Clark also stated that our Director is not full time and most of the ones from the other Towns are and they also get benefits. The Trustees are looking to start the process of getting the Director up to where he should be.

With no further discussion, Bonaccorsi made a motion to recommend 4550 in the amount of \$161,247, seconded by Muench. Motion passed with a vote of 7-1(Yokela). The Library Director and Trustees left the meeting.

Holmes moved to approve the 29 September 2021 meeting minutes. Cordes seconded. Motion passed 8-0.

The Committee then reviewed Town Budget items previously circulated. Updated current expense reports were circulated for each. Carlson stated that some additional wage information would be circulated for future review, and in light of that the Committee passed over the Executive budget and went to the next budget in order that was ready.

4197 Advertising & Regional Association: Carlson stated it includes dues for two Associations the Town belongs too. The first being The New Hampshire Municipal Association and the other is Rockingham Planning Commission. These organization do a lot for the Town, legal and legislative advocacy. They both do a lot of training as well. Through the RPC we recently got a grant to update our Hazard Mitigation Plan. Carlson had to estimate on one of them, but this budget is usually pretty close to what is spent. McGinn asked Carlson what the benefits were to the Town by being part of these organizations. Carlson gave him some examples of additional benefits the Town sees. Further discussion was held.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend 4197 Advertising & Regional Associations in the amount of \$8,997. Muench seconded and the vote passed 7-1 (Yokela).

4210 Police Department: Holmes asked if the Committee was ready to vote on the Police budget. She stated it was up about \$45,000. Carlson stated the increase is primarily the full year for the sixth officer, wage matrix increases, and the proposed physical agility stipend. The cruiser payment is in the budget, but the Chief was concerned that, due to the body style changing the current amount might not cover all the expenses. However, due to trade in and other funds the Town can make a down payment that will work for the 3 years of a new lease program.

With no further discussion, motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend 4210 Police in the amount of \$705,386. Muench seconded and the vote passed 8-0.

4220 Fire Rescue Department: Holmes reviewed the budget, stating it was down by \$8,000 from last year. Holmes informed Yokela that this budget includes the 2% wage increase. Carlson reviewed the point/dollar conversation that was done and explained the process used. She stated the numbers didn't change because it is looking like the wages can be increased without increasing the budget due to the ebb and flow of the call volume and such. Yokela asked for clarification on the EMS on-call pay vs. regular shift pay. Carlson stated that the on-call wage is a set amount of \$7.25 per hour (minimum wage) and no change is proposed to that. Once you are called in, the on-call person "clocks out" of that rate and is paid their regular hourly wage. Once the call is completed they go back to the on-call rate.

Motion made by Bonaccorsi to recommend 4220 Fire Rescue in the amount of \$300,921. Muench seconded and the motion passed by a vote of 8-0.

There will be a \$50,000 warrant article for the Fire Capital Reserve Fund. Carlson passed out a very rough draft of the current warrant articles for future review.

4312 Highway Department: Holmes asked how the vehicles that were talked about in the Select Board meeting are going to be placed in the budget? Cordes stated that hasn't been decided yet and those numbers are not in the current budget in front of the Budget Committee for review. Carlson stated that this operating budget has maintenance of those pieces of equipment in the current budget, as if all remains the same. Holmes stated she would like to hold off on this budget. Further discussion was held. A vote on the Highway budget was tabled.

Carlson stated she is interested in the Committee's thoughts on making the replacement part of the budget over placing it on a Warrant Article. There was discussion about budget versus Warrant Articles and the

consensus was to use Warrant Articles as these are capital expenses that are not as frequent as cruisers or the road work which are included in the budget. Carlson stated that lease payments cannot be made from a Capital Reserve Fund. A down payment or a final payment can be made from it.

4442 Direct Assistance: Carlson explained what the budget is and what it covers, discussing the statutes governing assistance. The budget is based on a per case basis. It is assistance to people that are having a hard time making ends meet, generally due to a loss of job or major illness. This program works along with Food Stamps, Fuel Assistance, etc. The Town is required to provide this and we have a Human Services Director to oversee the program. Individuals fill out applications and it is a comparison on a monthly basis of income versus expenses to determine eligibility. Carlson stated that she is a little nervous with how much is left in this budget right now. She can see people still needing assistance. Further discussion was held.

The budget has been the same the past couple of years, and generally gets busier coming into the heating season months about now. Benson asked if there is a cap an individual can receive. Carlson stated there is not, it is based on reasonable requests and needs. These are basic needs. Further discussion was held on how the fund was done and how the tracking was done. The public record will tell what help is given but not who is receiving the help.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend 4442 Direct Assistance in the amount of \$20,580. Benson seconded. The motion passed by a vote of 8-0.

4445 Social Service Agencies: Holmes stated these are done every year and are agencies that are outside of the Town. They generally provide services to individuals in the Town. They are such organization as Rockingham County Nutrition, Lamprey Health Care, The Haven and Red Cross. Carlson stated a lot of these have sliding scales for services as well. Carlson stated that there are two new agencies, So Rock Coalition and Family Promise that will go on as Warrant Articles this year. We put it in a Warrant Article so people can look at them and once they are passed they are added into this budget. Yokela asked if the Town would continue to put the organizations on as a Warrant Article until they are past. So Rock Coalition being used as an example, as it was on the Warrant last year and failed. Carlson stated a new organization would have to request it. The Select Board then makes their recommendation on the Warrant Article, as does the Budget Committee. The groups have indicated their willingness to come before the Budget Committee if the Committee is interested in meeting with them.

Benson asked what So Rock does. Carlson stated they are a group of eight surrounding Towns that focuses on youth education, such as suicide prevention and drug awareness. Their office is located at the Sanborn Regional High School. Muench stated the School has seen a lot of interaction with So Rock. Family Promise's goal is temporary housing, located in Nashua. There are no Fremont families currently in the Family Promise program. Holmes asked why Lamprey Health is at zero. Carlson explained that Rockingham Nutrition had taken over the transportation program previously provided by Lamprey, and found that they needed less (across the county) to support the program. The funds are now combined with Rockingham Nutrition and Meals on Wheels. Holmes stated this budget was all set and doesn't include the two organizations that will be on the warrant articles. Carlson confirmed and stated those will show separately. McGinn asked for clarification on the dollar amounts each agency received. Carlson stated each agency sends a report to the Town asking for a specific amount of support from each Town. Further discussion was held. Muench wanted the Committee to be aware that even if the funding is not provided to these agencies, the agencies still provide the support needed by the Town or it's residents. Further discussion was held on other agencies and the services they provide in this budget.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend 4445 in the amount of \$27,567, seconded by Muench. Motion passed by a vote of 7-1(Yokela).

4520 Parks & Recreation: Holmes stated this was the first time the Budget Committee has reviewed this rationale. Carlson stated that for the first time in several years, the Parks & Recreation Commission is back to it's full five members. The Commission is getting reorganized and looking at programming but is not quite ready to start offering camp at this time. There is currently a private citizen working on a proposal for hiring a part-time recreation director, but that is not included in the current proposal. The citizen met with the Parks & Rec Commission after they had submitted their budget, and has also met with the Select Board. Additional information is still pending and no formal proposal has been submitted.

The current budget proposal covers Committee based programs (Easter, Memorial Day, Halloween and Tree Lighting). Benson stated his understanding was if you had a director, they could find grants and such to off set the Town's cost. The goal of that proposal is that of a self-funded position or programing. Carlson stated the largest part of this budget is the maintenance of the fields and playground. This year the Town has spent a good amount on field maintenance and worked closely with the Fremont Athletic Association on field improvements. There was also money that had been previously encumbered for electrical work (laying conduit for future improvements) and that was recently completed. There are about 16 hours of mowing built into this budget for 36 weeks. Carlson continued to review the budget line by line. Carlson commented that again this year the fields and playground have been heavily used.

Holmes stated that the idea of getting someone to do the summer program is a great idea and she would like to see the program come back. It was very popular. McGinn asked who was doing the mowing and maintenance. Carlson stated there are currently two part-time maintenance employees, one of whom primarily takes care of these areas. The Select Board have been discussing hiring a maintenance supervisor position as it is an area of need. Further discussion was held. The Town is putting everything out to bid to see what it would cost to contract all the maintenance work. Further discussion was held on equipment and cost, time of the work needing to be done.

Carlson also indicated that Fremont was one of the Towns chosen to participate in a grant program through Rockingham Planning Commission relative to Age-Friendly Communities. This is believed to tie into Parks & Recreation programming at some point. This is an ongoing project with a local and regional steering committee being put together now.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend 4520 Parks & Recreation in the amount of \$31,664. Muench seconded. Motion passed by a vote of 8-0.

Carlson asked if there was any further follow-up to the information previously circulated relative to the Land Use Change Tax and Conservation Commission funds, and there were not at this time. Further discussion was held on the different Warrant Articles the Committee will see. She passed out more information for review at the next meeting including: 4155 Personnel Administration, 4195 Cemetery, 4902 Mosquito Control; various wage data point spreadsheets; and a first run DRAFT of the 2022 Town Meeting Warrant.

Muench stated that Nate was currently working on the School District budget. After some discussion, it was decided the Town will be back in two weeks to do as much to finish up as possible, and the School District will begin on November 3rd. It was determined that Nate was only sending Holmes the budget transfers from the School. She will scan them and send them to the rest of the Committee. There are a lot of them and they need to be reviewed. Muench will have Nate send them to the whole Committee moving forward. Holmes feels it is needed information and it makes the understanding the School budget

easier. Holmes asked for everyone to review them. They decided a quarterly report of the transfers would be good. Holmes suggested to have him send from September to current as the “first quarter” review.

Holmes would like to finish the Town budgets before the School presents their budget. Carlson stated that she is waiting for the insurance rates to come in to complete that budget.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday October 27, 2021 at 7:00 pm in the basement meeting room. Then we have November 3, 10 and 17th. Holmes asked Muench to have something for the November 3rd meeting. Meetings will also be posted for December 1, 8 and 15.

Motion to adjourn was made by Bonaccorsi, seconded by Cordes and voted unanimously at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Perreault
Recording Secretary