

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm by Holmes on the Main Floor of the Town Hall and started with the Pledge of Allegiance. Present were Committee Members Mary Jo Holmes, Pat Martel, Steve Bonaccorsi, Gordon Muench, Gene Cordes, Brian McGinn, Jon Benson and Josh Yokela; Town Administrator Heidi Carlson, Recording Secretary Shawn Perreault, and FCTV Operator Greg Fraize.

Muench moved to approve the meeting minutes of 17 November 2021. Bonaccorsi seconded and motion passed 8-0.

Tax Rate Release and information: Carlson stated that the bills went out last Wednesday and the tax rate did go down to \$22.32. She presented the Committee with a report of the break down and a 5-year comparison. The taxes rate is down by \$0.81 cents from 2020. She plans to place the informational guide on FCTV and the website so all the residents can see the information. Carlson said that residents have been great about the long wait, that this was the latest the tax rate has ever come in. The residents have until December 30th to pay but have been coming in to pay their bills already. She stated that the Town's Cash Flow is in a good place at the moment.

Town Budget items

A current expense and revenue summary report (for the end of November 2021) was circulated for members to review.

There are three operating budgets remaining for Committee recommendation. They were reviewed as follows:

4155 Personnel Administration: Carlson stated that the Health Insurance rate is down 8%. The biggest change in this budget is the full year of the police officer positive voted in 2020 and for $\frac{3}{4}$ year salary of a full-time maintenance position. There is the 2% increase in the majority of wages, and a few other salary adjustments. Holmes stated that this budget has not changed since they reviewed it last. Carlson stated the new maintenance (FT) job has not been posted, she is waiting for the money to be approved. Holmes stated this budget is up about \$60,000 from last year. Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend 4155 Personnel Administration in the amount of \$496,197. Muench seconded. Motion passed 7-1 (Yokela).

4194 General Government Buildings: Carlson stated that the largest change in this budget is again the $\frac{3}{4}$ year maintenance position and adding another 20 hour per week supervisory maintenance position for approximately 20 hours to oversee all the buildings. This person would be monitoring the day to day needs of the buildings, overseeing projects (replacing windows and other overdue work), safety checklists, etc. At the present time, everything is handled like crisis-management. The Town is looking to be current and not reactionary on the maintenance. McGinn asked if having this position come in, is this were there would be savings on other budgets. Carlson stated that there would be some changes in other line items. This will cost more than the current various part-time positions, but it is anticipated that the full-time position will be much more productive in the long run. The seasonal position within the Parks and Rec budget is the same because this is not attended to take care of the fields as it would be too much. She also left the library budget alone. Carlson feels if the position is filled, it will take a year to see the benefit in the other budgets. Carlson did a huge RFP looking for a company that could take care of all the Town property and plowing. They did not get one proposal in response. The one company that she thought would bid, got the deadline wrong. Even if we get someone, we will still need other help depending on the amount of snow and the plowing/shoveling needs and how often the company comes back.

There was some discussion about Covid funding the Town has received relative to work recently done at the Safety Complex. The Board has been talking for several years about correcting the pavement issues and improving the parking lot, which is now 24 years old. There have been grants and other project money received. The current ARPA funds (approximately \$495, 000) is currently being considered for a variety of projects, some of which may help to alleviate future tax impacts. The ARPA money has to be spent and competitive bidding must be followed. The ARPA money will fund just over \$80,000 of the recent work, and the other \$30,000 will come from operating budgets. This has been discussed as a Warrant Article over the past couple of years.

Yokela clarified his understanding on the money for the maintenance position and leaving some other maintenance in other budgets. She suggested we need a year to figure out what will be paid for out of this budget as opposed to the other budgets. Yokela wanted to know if the Select Board considered a Warrant Article for this. Cordes stated yes, but only for a short time. This maintenance needs to be done, the building and Town need to be taken care of and therefore it is needed in the operating budget.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend 4194 Government Buildings in the amount of \$137,694. Muench seconded. The motion passed 7-1 (Yokela).

4195 Cemeteries: Carlson confirmed that the money encumbered from last year for a shed at the Leavitt Cemetery has been installed. The fence money that has been encumbered has been reflected as well. Bonaccorsi asked why the mowing went up. Carlson stated that the pay rate went from \$12.00/hour to \$15.00/hour. Trustees originally increased the line item thinking that we may need to go to a contracted service based on lack of help and new applicants. This was part of the bid process discussed earlier. It may be rebid as a stand-alone item. Carlson reviewed the loss of staffing and difficulty recruiting. She further stated the Trustees are looking to repair the stonewalls for both Village and Leavitt cemeteries. Carlson informed the Committee about the tree work being done in the Village Cemetery right now. This is to avoid continued damage to the stones. Perreault informed the Committee that the cemeteries are closed as of today. Carlson stated the tree work has been reflected in the budget well.

Yokela is concerned about the rate this budget is increasing. Carlson explained the perpetual care money and how it works, in that only interest can be spent. There is also a newly voted Cemetery Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund, which was set up and intended, in the long run, to cover much of the maintenance. The interest that was accrued on these accounts years ago used to pay for the maintenance, but interest earned now is not what it used to be. Years ago it covered about \$7,000 and now it's \$2,000.

Yokela is concerned that we are falling further and further behind on the maintenance. He asked about the Trustees plan for the future and all of the work that may be necessary and what it would cost. There was extensive discussion about what may be needed over the next 5 to 6 years. Cordes stated the goal is a good goal, but there hasn't been a lot of stability in the past. The current Trustees have really spent a lot of time on the properties and what is needed. They are also trying to be more comprehensive than past Trustee Boards. Perreault discussed how the new rates on the cemetery lots work and the addition of requiring the cornerstones to be purchased through the Town at the time the lots are sold. She also discussed her recollection of the repair needs and bids that were received for the stone walls at both cemeteries. Ongoing projects and needs of Leavitt cemetery were also discussed. Further discussion was held.

Muench asked what the Trustees are paid, and Carlson stated \$150 each per year. Muench stated these are fellow residents volunteering their time with no training. Muench stated the Town must be realistic on what the Trustees can present to the Committee. They have the qualifications that they have, they are doing their best and this is a reactionary situation. He agrees we need a plan, but the Town needs to make

sure we see the big picture. The walls are not going to stop eroding and will continue to even after they are repaired. Further discussion was held.

Carlson stated the current Trustee Board has been stable for a few years now and they are working really hard. She feels the capital improvements have been talked about, and it will be included in the Town's CIP improvements project this next year.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend 4195 Cemeteries in the amount of \$41,860. Muench seconded and the motion passed 6-2 (Yokela, McGinn).

Holmes asked Carlson if the Town Operating Budget would be ready for next week. Carlson said she could have this evening now that the final operating votes have been taken by the Committee, but Holmes said next week was fine. Holmes asked Carlson to provide the numbers to Cordes if she was unable to attend. Holmes stated the Committee goal was to finish the Town by next week and then return the School budget on December 15th.

Town Meeting Warrant 2022

The Committee Reviewed the following Warrant Articles (numbering is subject to change):

Article 5 – Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund: There was discussion about the future needs of fire apparatus. Bonaccorsi moved to recommend Article 5 to raise and appropriate the sum of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) to be placed in the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund. Muench seconded and the vote was approved 6-2 (Yokela, McGinn).

Article 6 – Bridge Construction and Reconstruction Capital Reserve Fund: Carlson stated we became eligible in July for this reimbursement from the State. She stated that she is trying to maximize the timing in spending, to minimize the impact to taxpayers. We must have the design engineering completed with bid documents and a bid-ready project before we are eligible for our first reimbursement, which NH DOT believes is a year away. Further discussion of the project and money spent to date was held.

Bonaccorsi moved to recommend Article 6 to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) to be placed in the Bridge Construction and Reconstruction Capital Reserve Fund. Muench seconded. Motion to recommend passed 7-1 (McGinn).

Article 7 – Computer Equipment Expendable Trust Fund: Carlson stated this is for the servers that are housed in the Town Hall and at the Safety Complex.

Bonaccorsi moved to recommend Article 7 to raise and appropriate the sum of four thousand dollars (\$4,000) to be placed in the Fremont Computer Equipment Expendable Trust Fund previously established. Muench seconded. Motion to recommend passed 7-1 (Yokela).

Article 9 – New Caterpillar Backhoe: Carlson stated this includes trading in the old equipment.

Bonaccorsi moved to recommend Article 9 to authorize the Select Board to enter into a five-year lease agreement for \$133,400 for the purpose of leasing a new Caterpillar backhoe for the Highway Department, and to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-seven thousand eight hundred thirty dollars (\$27,830) for the first year's payment. The lease agreement contains an escape clause. Muench seconded. Motion to recommend passed 7-0-1 (Holmes).

Article 10 – New Dump Truck: Bonaccorsi moved to authorize the Select Board to enter into a five-year lease agreement for \$151,798 for the purpose of leasing a new six-wheel dump truck and equipment for the Highway Department, and to raise and appropriate the sum of thirty-two thousand fifty-four dollars (\$32,054) for the first year's payment for that purpose. This lease agreement contains an escape clause. Muench seconded. Motion to recommend passed 7-0-1 (Holmes).

Article 11 – Mosquito Control: Bonaccorsi moved to recommend Article 11 to raise and appropriate the sum of thirty-five thousand dollars (\$35,000) to continue the Public Health Mosquito Control Program. Muench seconded. Motion to recommend passed 6-2 (McGinn, Benson).

Carlson provided some additional information on the remaining Warrant Articles:

Articles 12 and 13 were for new social service groups seeking funding from the town. So Rock asked in 2021 and it was not approved, and Family Promise is a new request for 2022.

Article 14 is seeking the 2% raise for the Town Clerk.

Article 15 is not seeking any monetary funds, just Town Forest designation of a parcel the Town recently acquired.

Article 16 is seeking money for the Capital Reserve Fund for a future Historic Museum addition.

Finally, there was a Petition submitted that is seeking to ban the use of the voting machine. This would have a tax impact to the town, which Carlson hasn't calculated out yet. This would mean the Town would need to hire additional people after the votes were cast to hand count all ballots. Carlson further stated the Town pays approximately \$250.00 per year to maintain the current voting machine.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday December 8, 2021 in the Town Hall basement meeting room.

Motion to adjourn was made by Bonaccorsi, seconded by Muench. Meeting adjourned at 8:28 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Perreault
Recording Secretary