

Call to Order at 7:00 pm in the Fremont Town Hall Basement Meeting Room with the Pledge of Allegiance. Present were Budget Committee members Mary Jo Holmes, Jon Benson, Emily Phillips, Steve Bonaccorsi, Gene Cordes, Pat Martel; Town Administrator Heidi Carlson, Recording Secretary Shawn Perreault, Library Director Eric Abney, Library Trustee John Hennelly. Fire Chief Rich Butler, Captain Vincent O'Connor and Firefighter Seth Wood arrived at 7:30 pm. Budget Committee member Josh Yokela arrived at 7:43 pm.

Approval of meeting minutes for 28 September 2022 was tabled until the next meeting.

Library Budget: Abney started the meeting with a review of the Library budget. The employee wages reflect the recommended 5% increase from the Select Board (to begin April 1). The Library will be switching over to electric usage with a heat pump, converting from the current oil systems. These line items have been adjusted accordingly.

Access to the Library and its programming has increased by 19%. Some of the programming has been covered by donations raised by the Friends of the Fremont Library, reducing increases to the budget. Discussion was held on what is covered under the replacement equipment line, as well as some specific increases and decreases in certain lines. In addition, there was further explanation given on the reasons for switching over to electric and looking into solar panels in the future. The long-term goal is to make the Library an emergency shelter and have a standby generator. The community room has been extremely popular and booked almost every night.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend function 4550 in the amount of \$168,364. Benson seconded and the motion passed with a vote of 6-0.

Fire Rescue Department: Chief Butler opened the budget discussion by reviewing the areas of increase in the Fire Rescue Department budget. All wage lines reflect the 5% wage increase. The on-call wage will also increase from the current minimum wage (\$7.25) to \$8.50. Captain O'Connor stated the data he has been able to collect for the on-call times, has helped immensely in looking at what the Department can do. The Town has been covered about 90% of the time and even when there is not an EMS on-call crew, the calls for service are being answered. Further discussion was held on how the on-call works, the requirements, coverage, responding to calls, and on-call vs. full time station coverage. Chief Butler stated that a lot of vehicle maintenance has happened and the budget reflects the increase. Current staffing levels are 28 active members with approximately 17 EMT's (some EMT and 4 AEMT's).

Wood took over to discuss the Warrant Article the Department will be placing on the March ballot. After receiving bids for a new Tanker truck, Wood got together with Captain O'Connor, head of the rescue truck replacement committee, and requested more bids adding in a new rescue vehicle in addition to a new tanker. After doing more research, it was determined the fire department can get both vehicle for the same cost of just the Tanker (when considering all the pricing and custom versus stock vehicles).

The vehicles being replaced are a 1989 tanker and the 2003 Chevy Suburban EMS response vehicle. The Committee's will continue to gather information and presenting the Warrant Article when they have the final numbers.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend function 4220 in the amount of \$284,769. Benson seconded and the motion passed with a vote of 7-0. (Yokela had entered the meeting).

4195 Cemetery: Carlson explained the wages will reflect a 5% increase but she doesn't see the need to increase the budget because it can be absorbed in the current recommended budget. The mowing wages were moved to a contractor line because the Town is not using Town employees to do the work. Due to

using a contractor for the mowing, the fuel line and equipment repair line have been decreased and the Town has had a lot less burden to oversee the work, which has been excellent this year. The Trustees will be placing a Warrant Article on the March ballot seeking to increase their stipend by \$50 each.

Motion was made by Phillips to recommend function 4195 in the amount of \$36,693. Benson seconded and the motion passed with a vote of 6 Yes – 1 No (Yokela).

4415 Health: This budget was brought back before the Budget Committee because the stipends for the Health Officer and Deputy Health Officer were raised by \$150 by the Select Board. Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend function 4415 in the amount of \$1,585. Benson seconded. The vote passed by a vote of 6 Yes – 1 No (Yokela).

4130 Executive: Carlson reviewed the budget including 5% wage increases. She also stated that the Clerical wages will be raised to a higher hourly rate before the 5% is added. This is based on trying to better align with comparable Towns.

The other modest increase is the every three year Quickbooks update. Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend function 4130 in the amount of \$154,023. Benson seconded and the motion passed by a vote of 6 Yes – 1 No (Yokela).

There was other discussion about how the final year end expenses would close out, though it is too early to tell. Carlson's recommendation to the Select Board would be to use and excess operating funds to offset the cost of the new fire vehicles via appropriation from unreserved fund balance.

Bonaccorsi suggested the Town conduct a more comprehensive wage comparison to retain current employees and becoming competitive if the need to replace employees arises.

4290 Emergency Management: This budget was brought back to the Budget Committee due to a \$200 stipend increase. Discussion was held on the differences between stipends, wages and salaries. Carlson reiterated that no elected officials stipends are included in the 5% calculation.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend function 4290 in the amount of \$6,632. Benson seconded. Motion passed with a vote of 5 Yes – 1 No (Yokela). Phillips had stepped away from the meeting.

4199 Other General Government: Carlson stated this budget covers the printing and mailing of the Town Report. Carlson stated they received 3 bids based on printing 600 copies. The Budget Committee suggested reducing that by 100 copies. Benson suggested having a business advertise on the back page and cover this budget line. Carlson will look in to this option.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend function 4199 in the amount of \$2,775 (a \$200 reduction). Martel seconded. Motion passed by a vote of 5 Yes – 2 No (Benson, Cordes).

4197 Advertising & Regional Associations: Carlson brought this budget back before the Committee because she received the exact amount of the membership due to RPC after it was originally voted on.

Motion was made by Phillips to recommend function 4197 in the amount of \$9,061. Benson seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 6 Yes – 1 No (Yokela).

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday October 26, 2022 at 7:00 pm in the basement meeting room.

At 9:00 pm motion was made by Bonaccorsi to adjourn. Philip seconded and the vote was unanimously approved 7-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Perreault
Recording Secretary