

Chair Mary Jo Holmes called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the basement meeting room at the Fremont Town Hall, 295 Main Street in Fremont. Present were Committee members Mary Jo Holmes, Jon Benson, Gene Cordes, Nancy Murray and Brenda Beauchain; Library Director Eric Abney, Library Trustees John Hennelly, Arlene Nuzzi and Emily Clark. Member Steve Bonaccorsi arrived at 7:04 pm. All rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Librarian Eric Abney and Library Trustees John Hennelly, Arlene Nuzzi and Emily Clark met with the Committee to review the proposed 2024 Library budget. Abney did the presentation, noting line items of change. The Trustees had initially proposed a 5% wage increase but understood the Select Board's 3% recommendation. In addition, they have budgeted for one new Library Aide for 16 hours (\$11,000 in new funds). There are seven additional hours for the Children's Librarian (the current 22 hours is not enough for the activities that take place four days per week, activities 4 days a week right now plus her duties of cataloging, visiting Ellis once a week; and two additional hours to make the Librarian position full-time.

Abney noted that they are 22% over in circulation from last year, indicating they are busier and busier each year. He stated the library does a PFOA compound test every other year at a cost of \$600.

Steve Bonaccorsi joined the meeting at 7:04 pm.

He noted all of the HVAC costs have been put into the electricity cost. The heat pump system conversion is complete and working well for them. Abney noted turning heat and AC on later in the respective seasons, hopefully saving some money. He also noted the software they use is cloud-based and the e-book reader support is up a total of about \$500. There are no new major purchases planned.

The Committee discussed wage numbers at 3% which were recalculated and the two wage lines affected were adjusted. Murray noted the increased use of Library services and the Community room usage. Abney said there are 10,000 books per month circulated and about 13,000 audio and digital pieces last year, which is about 1/3 of their total circulation.

Carlson noted the additional costs of the Library Director position being full-time, which will appear in the Personnel Administration budget coming later this year. The incumbent does not need all the Town's insurance and benefit offerings, but if the position is full-time, that could affect future budgets. Currently it is estimated that there will be an increase of approximately \$2,500 for benefits.

Bonaccorsi moved to recommend \$190,622 for Library and Murray seconded. The vote was approved unanimously 6-0.

Trustees and Abney left the meeting at 7:17 pm.

Benson moved to approve the minutes for September 13, 2023. Cordes seconded and the vote was approved 4-0-2 with Holmes and Bonaccorsi abstaining.

At 7:20 pm Fire Rescue Department Chief Butler and Captain O'Connor met with the Committee to review the 2024 Fire Rescue Department budget proposal. Chief Butler noted the budget is down overall from the 2023 total. He highlighted the line items that have changed including Dues and Memberships to include the Seacoast Haz Mat team. Their request for funding has been reconfigured based on population of towns, with moderate increases based on that.

The EMS supply line is up, partially based on a decision to purchase epi-pens for the most efficient delivery of this medication. They plan to purchase at least one set per year of the epi pen as they have come down slightly in cost.

Despite the new equipment coming on line in the next year, the maintenance line has increased. The annual inspections and service in older equipment are most costly. Two of the fire trucks just came back from such service with a combined bill of over \$5,000.

The dispatch service is down to \$1 because we have changed over to Rockingham Dispatch. There was discussion about how the 911 call process works and the Town's study last year and communications difficulty that resulted in the change from our long-standing relationship with Raymond Dispatch.

The Chief noted the new EMS truck is due to be delivered December/January timeframe and the new fire truck by late summer or early fall 2024.

There was discussion about the existing LP12 cardiac monitor, purchased about 10 years ago as a refurbished model. O'Connor was notified this year that the model is at the end of life and further service or repairs will not be available. Currently it is working fine, but it is time to consider a replacement. O'Connor has been working on quotes for new and refurbished LP15 units. Pricing ranges from about \$22,000 (refurbished) to \$41,000 (new). With the savings in dispatch services and some potential other under expenditures, it is hoped that this may be purchased with end of year funds sooner than end of the year. If not, the Department may ask to bring it forward as a Warrant Article for 2024 voter consideration.

With no further discussion, Bonaccorsi moved to recommend Fire, (4220) at \$279,476. Benson seconded and the vote was unanimously approved 6-0.

Fire Rescue Chief Butler and Captain O'Connor left the meeting at 7:53 pm.

There was some discussion about additional information circulated for members to review on the Executive budget relative to the finance positions. Holmes moved to table Executive. Benson seconded and the vote was approved 6-0.

The Financial Administration (4151) budget was circulated with a one-year audit included. Members wanted to review this more with the finance position discussion and Holmes moved to table Financial Administration. Benson seconded and the vote was approved 6-0.

Carlson circulated and discussed the Reappraisal of Property (4152) budget, which totals \$59,365. This includes the annual cost of all assessing work. The contract with MRI includes a 2.8% CPI increase. All other costs remain the same aside from about a \$500 increase in the software and support hosting contracts with Vision.

Carlson also noted that the Board may consider closing out the Capital Reserve Fund for Reappraisal of Properties as it will be depleted with approximately \$1,500 in existing funds used in 2024 to offset the budget. It was further explained that the costs of revaluations (required every five years) are now included in the annual contract with our assessing firm, to balance them out over time. This has kept data up to date more frequently (constantly on a rotating basis); and kept costs more even each year.

With no further discussion, a motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend Reappraisal of Property at \$59,365. Benson seconded and the vote was approved 6-0.

The Committee then reviewed the Animal Control (4414) budget, totaling \$10,254. The wage line has been decreased based on an average of 12 years of history, reduced by 8 hours per week to 6 hours per week.

With no further questions or discussion, Bonaccorsi moved to recommend Animal Control at \$10,254. Benson seconded and the vote was approved 6-0.

Carlson distributed other Town budgets for future review to include the Police Department (4210). Chief Twiss will be here 10/11/2023 as well as the Road Agent.

The next meeting dates are October 11 and 25. Bonaccorsi noted he will not be here for the October 25 meeting. Members were asked to consider their schedules so the November meeting dates can be set at the next meeting as well as the date the school budget would be reviewed.

With no further business, Bonaccorsi moved to adjourn at 8:10 pm. Benson seconded and the vote was unanimously approved 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Carlson  
Town Administrator