

Approved 10/25/2023

Present: Jon Benson (Vice Chair), Joshua Yokela, Nancy Murray, Gordon Muench, Gene Cordes, Brenda Beauchain, Steve Bonaccorsi, Chief Twiss, Sergeant Buckley, Heidi Carlson, and Shawn Perreault.

The meeting was called to order by Benson at 7:00 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

4210 – Police: Chief Twiss reviewed the police budget with the Committee. He went through each line noting the increases, which included the following: 3% wage increase for people not on the matrix, internet and printing costs, office supplies, training wages, supplies and certification renewals, equipment, and computer software. There was a slight decrease in the fuel line, but this is volatile at the moment.

The biggest change was in the pay matrix for uniformed officers. The Chief would like to move from the current ten step to a five-step matrix. His biggest reason is retention. He is hoping this will make Fremont more competitive in retaining the great officers we have. New officers sign a three-year contract, however, even that is not preventing them from leaving. One such officer left for a higher paying job and paid out the rest of his contract to the Town of Fremont. If officers are not new to law enforcement (and do not need the academy or as lengthy a training program) there is no contract being signed holding them to a required number of years in Fremont. The Town is paying a lot of money to train and equip officers, so if we can retain those we have, the Town would save money. The Chief called a lot of similar towns to gather information on their pay matrix, which was shared with the Committee.

Road Agent Leon Holmes Jr arrived at 7:30 pm.

There was significant discussion amongst Committee members, the Chief and Sergeant, about the pay Matrix, the research, Fremont's retention issue and turnover numbers. Committee members questioned what would happen after someone reached the five-year mark. Chief Twiss stated it would be something to look at, however, right now we don't have officers making it to the five-year mark. Chief Twiss discussed a potential for a Master Patrolman position or changes to the current longevity bonus to attract people to stay longer.

Bonaccorsi made a motion to recommend 4210 Police Department in the amount of \$899,923. Benson seconded and the motion passed with a vote of 6-1 (Yokela).

Chief Twiss and Sergeant Buckley left the meeting at 7:47 pm, thanking the Committee for their time.

4312 – Highway Department: Road Agent Leon Holmes Jr began by telling the Committee that his goal was to level fund the budget, but still be able to take care of our roads. Overall, the budget is up \$34,000 from the current year. There is a \$14,000 wage increase as he is looking at an increase in hourly wages for his position and the full-time assistant, which is currently vacant. As with the Police, we are having trouble recruiting and keeping staff.

The winter maintenance line has increased by \$20,000 due to new roads being added to inventory, causing one new truck (contracted) being added to the route schedule. Overall, virtually half of the budget is for paving and the other is day to day maintaining the Town's roads. It is his hope to pave Copp Drive, Martin Road (if the bridge is completed), Riverside Drive and Tibbetts Road. This list will change depending on the Martin Road Bridge being completed. He would like to coordinate work around the bridge work. Yokela asked if Holmes would begin including in the budget narrative the roads he hopes to work on throughout that year. Discussion was held on the reason for the increase of the Equipment Hire line. Holmes discussed the need for small trucks vs. large trucks, especially on the roads that just can't take the large truck without breaking them up; the contractor renewal rates vs. the need for an additional truck because of additional roads.

There was an issue after Mast Tree Estates was paved with a utility company wanting to put fiber in. The company ended up walking away, but it led to discussion about keeping ahead of improvements and utilities knowing the Town's plans, so this doesn't happen in the future. After a suggestion from Cordes, Holmes is going to start reaching out to the utility companies with his plans to see if this will help improve any utility company work.

Bonaccorsi made a motion to recommend 4312 Highway Department in the amount of \$1,029,085. Muench seconded and the motion passed with a vote of 7-0.

Yokela moved to accept the September 27, 2023 meeting minutes as written. Muench seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 5-0-2 (Yokela, Muench abstaining)

4130 – Executive: The Committee discussed the need for the additional Finance/HR position. There was discussion about how the position would be advertised and that the \$35,000 in the budget is half a year's salary. Cordes went over the fact that a number of needs have been put on the back burner. The new position would spread out the demands placed on certain parties based on skill set. Benson made a motion to recommend 4130 Executive in the amount of \$189,376. Bonaccorsi seconded and the motion passed with a vote of 5-2 (Yokela, Beauchain).

4151 – Financial Administration: Carlson stated the cost of the audit increased by \$1,000 and the other increase in the audit line is for the bi-annual update of the GASB 75 (Post Employment Benefit) report. Relative to the audit, the Town extended the contract with our current vendor for one year in hopes the new Finance Director would be here next summer and do a full RFP process for the next audit cycle. Bonaccorsi made a motion to recommend 4151 Financial Administration in the amount of \$23,300. Benson seconded and the motion passed by a vote of 7-0.

4197 – Advertising & Regional Association: Carlson stated these are annual dues for the two organizations that the Town belongs to. They provide the Town with a lot of training, legal advice and a wide variety of other resources. Bonaccorsi made a motion to recommend 4197 in the amount of \$9,372. Benson seconded and the motion passed by a vote of 6-1 (Yokela).

4323 – Solid Waste Collection: Discussion was held on the cost of finding another company and the downside of doing so. Cordes stated they reached out to Waste Management to see what the numbers would be to extend the current contract, which has been a provision on all our WM contracts. The increase proposed was only 3%, which the Board felt was a great deal. They had come to the Town early in 2023 asking for a 7% (unplanned and unbudgeted) increase just to cover their costs, which the Board did not agree to. There was discussion about the cost of new equipment and the lead time needed for ordering.

Additionally, one of the contract extension provisions is that they will provide all households with a new recycle toter. This has been widely requested by residents. There are currently no plans for a take back collection of recycling bins, but they may be stacked and collected at a future Bulky Day. Murray asked if the Town would be doing a mailer informing residents, and Carlson said the Town could look at that further. Bonaccorsi made a motion to recommend 4323 Solid Waste Collection in the amount of \$357,408. Benson seconded. Motion passed by a vote of 7-0.

4324 – Solid Waste Disposal: Bonaccorsi made a motion to recommend 4324 Solid Waste Disposal in the amount of \$150,662. Benson seconded. Motion passed by a vote of 7-0.

The next meeting will be on October 25, 2023 at 7:00 pm and one more date was set for November 8, 2023 at 7:00 pm in the basement meeting room.

At 8:41 pm Bonaccorsi made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Benson. It was voted all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shawn Perreault
Recording Secretary