

Approved 11/08/2023

Present: Committee Members Mary Jo Holmes, Nancy Murray, Gene Cordes, Gordon Muench, Brenda Beauchain; Town Administrator Heidi Carlson, Secretary Shawn Perreault (Remote). Members Steve Bonaccorsi and Joshua Yokela arrived at approximately 7:05 pm.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Holmes in the basement meeting room at the Fremont Town Hall, 295 Main Street in Fremont. All rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion made by Muench to approve the meeting minutes of October 11, 2023, seconded by Murray. Motion passed with a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstain (Holmes)

4155 Personnel Administration: Carlson started by correcting two typos in the Select Board Recommended column, the Department Request and the Select Board Recommendations numbers should be the same with a total of \$554,437. She stated that increases to personnel costs are based on 3% wage increases (FICA & Medicare) as well as some increases in staffing to include half the year of a Finance Director Salary, the librarian being full-time, and a full year of the 7th full-time police officer approved in 2023.

Carlson indicated the health insurance was the largest increase and the budget reflects the actual census of staff members and there are a couple who do not take health insurance. Workers' Compensation has increased due to an increase in claims within the pool. There are no contribution returns this year so both WC and PL insurances look like even more of an increase. There was a 12.2% increase in the medical insurance, the dental insurance has stayed the same and the dis/life insurance has decreased.

The NHRS retirement rate went down some as of July 2023 to 31.28% but shows the full year of the 7th full-time police officer. For other retirements, the Town contributes up to 3% on a sliding scale but it does not start until an employee has been with the Town for a full year. It starts at 1% after the first year and increases 1% each year up to 3%. The Longevity stipend decreased with the retirement of Mary Pender and the Librarian's would increase from \$500 to \$1,000 if the conversion to full-time is approved.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend function 4155 in the amount of \$554,437. Muench seconded and the motion passed with a vote of 6 Yes, 1 No (Yokela).

Yokela asked Carlson some questions on the default budget numbers. A discussion was held regarding how numbers should be applied based on the law.

4194 General Government Buildings: Carlson stated that this budget reflects the 3% wage increase, the cost of propane slightly decreased and that the Select Board adjusted some numbers based on being over already in the current year budget. The security, firewall, O365 subscriptions, two new computers annually as well as planned training for the two computers are included in this budget. There are some maintenance projects they are trying to complete with this year's budget, which are not reflected in the 2024 budget. This includes doors at the Safety Complex and windows at the Town Hall. Yokela again reviewed the default numbers with Carlson and a few changes were made.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend function 4194 in the amount of \$162,872. Muench seconded. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes, 0 No.

4196 Insurance: Carlson stated that rates are set in mid-October and Primex is the only municipal insurance carrier. The big changes are due to an uptick in post-Covid claimants from Covid that the Town saw in the last few years. This covers all employees in Town operations, the Town's property and the Town's liability. She provided the Board with copies of all the rates with the back-up documentation.

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This also covers cyber security, another area where there have seen significant changes in coverage and costs. Discussion was held on the impact Covid had on rates and the number of claims.

Motion was made by Bonaccorsi to recommend function 4196 in the amount of \$88,606, seconded by Muench. Motion passed with a vote of 7 Yes, 0 No.

4442 Vendor Payments to Social Service Agencies: Carlson stated that she sent the Committee members a scanned copy of all the requests and back up documentation as presented by the requesting agencies. All requests, except for Meals on Wheels, were the same as the 2023 requests. Meals on Wheels increased by \$40 and the deadline for requests to be sent to the Town was August 1, 2023. There were two agencies that did not request their funds, Area HomeCare and One Sky Community Services. If these agencies request their funds, the board can revisit this budget and adjust.

Motion was made by Cordes to recommend function 4442 in the amount of \$33,747. Bonaccorsi seconded. Motion passed with a vote of 6 Yes, 1 No (Yokela).

2024 Warrant: Carlson highlighted the current draft of Warrant Articles to date, which continues to be fluid. There will be a few zoning articles, followed by the operating budget. There are several Capital Reserve Fund requests (Highway Equipment, Fire Apparatus and the Bridge) and Expendable Trust Funds (Library Maintenance, Computers and Parks & Recreation Structural Amenities).

The Bridge CRF is currently proposed at \$100,000 and could be changed at the Deliberative Session. The Martin Road Bridge is in the final design stage, pending NH DOT approval. The construction bid numbers should be in just prior to the Town's Deliberative Session in case the number needs to be changed once the construction costs are known. The Town will get 80% of the cost reimbursed by the State and the goal is only to have enough money on hand to fund the engineering and construction outlay pending the State reimbursement schedule.

There is a Warrant Article for the 3% increase requested by the Town Clerk/Tax Collector for her salary increase because that is an elected position. There is a Warrant Article to fund the mosquito control program as well, in the same amount as last year. In addition, the Conservation Commission is asking to designate parcel 04-077 as part of the Glen Oakes Town Forest. Lastly, Carlson is hoping to place some Warrant Articles to clean up old Capital Reserve accounts, if doing so does not make the Warrant overly cumbersome. There are some CRF accounts to be combined or renamed for efficiency. The deadline for petition article submission is the second Tuesday in January.

2023 Tax Rate: The NH DRA set our tax rate on Tuesday, and it increased by \$0.40. Copies of the DRA documents were distributed to Committee members for review. Carlson is in the process of working on the breakdown information and a press release.

A 2023 expenses and revenue to date report was circulated for members to review.

The School District budget will be presented at the next meeting on November 8th. Muench is going to try and have the binders by November 7th, as some members cannot make the 8th meeting and others want to review beforehand.

The Committee has set additional meetings for November 15th upstairs and November 29th downstairs, which will also be for review of the school budget.

Yokela and Carlson had an additional discussion on the default laws and how to apply them to the default budget. Especially those items that are mandated by law.

The next meeting will be held at 7:00 pm on Wednesday November 8, 2023 in the basement meeting room.

At 7:56 pm Bonaccorsi made a motion to adjourn. Yokela seconded and the vote was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Perreault
Recording Secretary