

Municipal Budget Committee Meeting  
Community Center  
8 Whitten Street  
Allenstown, New Hampshire 03275  
November 8, 2018

**Call to Order**

The Allenstown Municipal Budget Committee Meeting was called to order at 6:08 pm by Chairman Keith Klawes.

Chair Klawes called for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call**

Present on the Board: Kris Raymond, Chad Pelissier, Dave Coolidge, Keith Klawes, Tiffany Ranfos, Carol Angowski, Melaine Boisvert, Deb Carney (arrived late)

Absent: Jeff Venegas, Ron Cox

Allenstown Staff: Derik Goodine, Town Administrator; Debbie Bender, Finance Director

Others present: Chris Gamache, Tri-Town EMS Director; Lieutenant Mike Stark, Sergeant Beth Tower, and Detective Sergeant Dawn Shear of the Allenstown Police Department.

**Ambulance Budget**

Mr. Gamache presented his 2019 proposed budget, which has been approved by the Tri-Town EMS Board of Directors and reviewed by the Board of Selectmen. He said that 2019 will be a maintenance year, the first since 2014. Call volume has been rising steadily, he reported, increasing by about 200 calls each year and is expected to be between 1,300 and 1,400 in 2019. Calls requiring transport result in ambulance revenue. The higher this revenue the less Allenstown and Pembroke must contribute. For this budget, Allenstown's contribution is \$118,189, down from \$180,333 in 2018, which is a \$62,144 decrease. The most significant number in the 2019 proposed budget is \$365,000 moving through the budget to the CIP line for equipment replacement. This amount is excess revenue which has accumulated over the past four to five years and fully-funds the next replacement cycle when the ambulance and all equipment are scheduled for replacement in 2022 or 2023. He said that the ambulance purchased this year did not affect the tax rate because it was funded entirely from fund balances.

Ms. Boisvert moved to discuss the Tri-Town EMS budget. The motion was seconded by Ms. Angowski.

Ms. Boisvert asked about the number of full-time paramedics.

Mr. Gamache responded that the four full-time employees are all paramedics. The other 19 employees work part-time. He said that they are one of only two of the 27 communities in the Capital area which guarantees a paramedic on every call. They operate 24/7.

Ms. Angowski asked about the Director's salary, referencing Tables 6 and 7.

Mr. Gamache explained that Table 6 shows the Director's salary and Table 7 shows the range which Pembroke has in play for the position. He added that the average EMT hourly rate is \$15.03. He said that,

in addition to the \$365,000 being placed in the CIP line, there is another \$40,000 in excess revenue which can offset what the two towns pay.

Ms. Boisvert asked if this is a 50/50 split for the towns.

Mr. Gamache said that the split is based on a three-year average call rate. For this budget, Pembroke is 56.12% and Allenstown is 43.88%. Mutual aid is not part of this calculation because the two towns don't pay for it.

Chair Klawes asked if mutual aid calls are gratis.

Mr. Gamache responded that they bill the patient.

Chair Klawes asked about the Tri-Town's rate schedule.

Mr. Gamache explained that there are three rates: The Basic rate applies when routine vital checks and assessments are done, and this constitutes about 25% of calls. A majority of calls are at the Advanced Life Support (ALS)-1 level, when more advanced care is provided such as IVs and medications. The third is ALS-2 for critical situations, including when patients are put on a ventilator because of advanced airways blockage and cardiac arrest. He added that they also charge \$20 per mile for transport. ComStar, he said, does their billing.

Mr. Coolidge said he read that when Medicare patients are treated without being transported, there is no charge.

Mr. Gamache said that is true for all patients, not just those on Medicare. He said that most communities have learned that too much time is spent trying to collect small amounts for these calls.

Ms. Boisvert asked about the statistic showing that 72-75% has been collected.

Mr. Gamache responded that this is after the various reductions. Medicare has a 52% reduction; Medicaid's reduction is 82%. For patients with no insurance, they do not collect much. He said that they have billed one million dollars this year and expect to collect about \$400,000.

Ms. Boisvert added that there is a cost associated with collection efforts as well.

Mr. Gamache stated that they are allowed to write-off amounts because of being a municipal operation. He said that Medicare pays 80% of the allowed amount and the patient is responsible for the other 20%. Residents of Allenstown and Pembroke without insurance are billed at the Medicare allowable rate. They receive three bills, and if no payment is received, the bill is written off.

Ms. Angowski asked about the part-time employees.

Mr. Gamache said they have 19 now and are hiring a few more very soon.

Ms. Angowski asked about the on-call staff.

Mr. Gamache responded that they have no on-call staff now, but have a goal to regularly deploy a second ambulance. This would require on-call staff. As the second largest community in the Capital area, Pembroke and Allenstown combined, they should have a second ambulance going out on calls but need staff to be able to do that.

Ms. Angowski asked where Tri-town is located.

Mr. Gamache said they are at the Pembroke Fire Station.

Ms. Boisvert asked about employee turnover.

Mr. Gamache said the rate is three to four per year.

Ms. Boisvert asked if Tri-Town's rates of pay are competitive.

Mr. Gamache replied that between 2014 and 2016, their employees were being paid below a competitive rate. He said they are now being paid at a higher, more competitive rate. He mentioned an MRI study released just yesterday with recommendations regarding pay scales. He said that the Tri-Town EMS Board would have to review the study, determine what the study means to Tri-Town and explore what could be done in 2019 as a result of the study's recommendations.

Ms. Boisvert asked if they hire fully-trained people who could take an ambulance out right away.

Mr. Gamache responded that paramedics are ready to go when hired, but when they hire new EMTs, they are required to obtain a license, so there is about three months between the time of hire and when they can be on the truck.

Ms. Angowski made a motion to table the discussion on Tri-Town until the end of all budget presentations. Ms. Boisvert seconded the motion.

### **Police Department Budget**

Lt. Stark began his presentation, saying that the only increase in the Police budget is in salaries. He said he has been working in the Department for ten years, and during the ten years prior to that, 54 officers came through. Full staff is ten officers. The cost of getting a new officer on the road ranges from \$30,000 to \$50,000. Since those years of high turnover, there has been a long-standing retention plan, and they have lost only two officers in the past four years. He claimed that Allenstown now has the police department it deserves; the officers know the town well.

Ms. Angowski made a motion to discuss the proposed Allenstown Police Department budget. Ms. Boisvert seconded the motion.

Ms. Angowski asked if they replace a cruiser every year.

Lt. Stark said that they did.

Ms. Angowski asked if the \$37,000 budget was for the three leases.

Lt. Stark said that it did. He explained that there are six vehicles in the fleet, and they are paying for three of them at a time in three annual payments. The amount includes the additional cost of upfitting these vehicles to make them police cars. When taken out of service, these vehicles go to other departments who put less mileage on vehicles. For example, a Tahoe was recently turned over to the Fire Department to be used as a command vehicle. He said that, for many years, virtually all police vehicles were Ford Crown Victorias. The fleet now consists of the following six vehicles: one pick-up truck, one unmarked black SUV, two regular black SUVs, one white sedan, and the Chief's blue Chevy Impala. He continued, saying that, with the help of Finance Director Debbie Bender, they have realized cost savings in their cell phone line and fuel cost savings because of having a choice of filling up at the DRED facility at Bear Brook or at Irving – whichever is cheaper at any given time.

Ms. Angowski asked about salaries.

Lt. Stark stated that a year ago they began with a step increase system. These are not automatic. They don't try to compete with cities like Nashua, Manchester and Concord. A few years ago, an officer could earn three dollars more per hour by going to Hooksett. Allenstown is now competitive with other towns in the area. In general, he said small towns can be more flexible to the needs of officers to have time off for various reasons. He explained that it would require 4.5 officers to cover 24-hour service, but more are needed so that officers can have time off as needed for various reasons. The goal is a better work/life balance, which he sees as highly important.

Ms. Boisvert asked about the Records Management line.

Lt. Stark explained that the Department, until recently, was working with an antiquated database program called CrimeStar. It was cumbersome and did not tie into other communities. He said that their best technological advance was made when they moved to the Incident Management Center (IMC), a Tri-Tech company. This system is used by 90 -95% of police departments in the Northeast. It is a live system with interoperability. They have the capability of tying into a multi-agency link. Now police reports from other communities can be searched to see if someone has a previous record. This is not about judging, he said; it is about knowing what they are dealing with. Warnings issued used to be stand alone but are now part of this multi-agency link.

Ms. Angowski asked if there are concerns about hacking.

Lt. Stark assured her that this is a highly secure database, governed by the Criminal Justice Information Service (CJIS) and requires two passwords. Everything is tracked, and anyone using the system illegally is fired. It is secured by a Virtual Private Network (VPN).

Ms. Boisvert offered kudos to the Police Department for its efforts during the Active Shooter exercise.

Ms. Raymond also expressed praise for the Active Shooter exercise for which Detective Tower received recognition from the company that put on the Training. Detective Shea is the one who was recognized by the NH PIE for her work she's done on Emergency Planning for the Allenstown schools. Ms. Raymond went on to mention that it is Detective Shea doing the Active Shooter training drills in the schools. She said that the students know and trust Detective Shea and therefore were not inclined to anxiety during the exercise. Lt. Stark said that this is what you get when you have officers who stay.

Chair Klawes asked about variations in revenue between 2017 and 2019.

Lt. Stark responded that revenue projections are wild guesses because of unknown events. They are not a money-making operation. He said that in 2017, Eversource did extensive tree trimming, requiring police details. The Police Department, he said, bills Eversource for the cost of the details. Most of this revenue is paid to the officers; small amounts cover the cost of the vehicles and administrative costs.

Chair Klawes asked about the DUI patrols.

Lt. Stark said that they did not have enough staff to work that.

Mr. Goodine added that these DUI patrols require extra staff; this is not the regular patrol.

Ms. Boisvert asked about out of town details.

Lt. Stark said that Allenstown pays its officers and then bills the contractor to cover the officers' salaries, the cost of the vehicle and administrative costs. Allenstown taxpayers do not pay anything.

Chair Klawes said that the taxpayers are paying when it is road construction.

Ms. Bender said that money for police details come from the Revolving Fund. At the end of the year, the operating budget is gone and the Revolving Fund continues.

Lt. Stark said that pistol permits are down 50% because they are no longer legally required. Some people obtain them for reciprocity with other states. He said that most money collected by fines go to the State; only those for violations of local ordinances are kept by the town.

Ms. Ranfos made a motion to table discussion on the Police budget until the end of all budget presentations. Ms. Angowski seconded the motion.

### **Budget Directive/Overview**

Mr. Goodine first referenced a July 2018 BOS budget directive and an update on November 5, 2018. It asked departments to keep their budget proposals at or below the level of the 2018 budget as originally proposed, allowing for a 2.5% COLA in the payroll step scale. The Board expressed willingness to work with individual needs. Mr. Goodine said that he and Ms. Bender were allowed to use the 2018 proposed budget (\$4,003,181) as a guide, which was about \$45,000 above the default budget. He said that they set a goal of presenting a budget as close as possible to the default amount. The final budget proposal is \$21,463 or (.48%) below the 2018 proposed budget and only .54% above the 2018 default budget. Also, non-property tax revenue is projected to increase \$37,288,

Ms. Angowski stated an assumption that the \$3.984 million does not include warrant articles.

Ms. Boisvert asked about the proposed warrant articles.

Ms. Bender said that the proposed warrant articles total \$155,400, as compared with \$123,567 last year. This is the amount which is proposed for placement in the various capital reserve funds. She noted that these are funded from the Undesignated Fund Balance and therefore will have no impact on the tax rate. She said they are proposing two warrant articles in addition to those from 2018: One is \$16,800 to be reserved for the next revaluation in 2022. The second is \$15,000 for the Economic Development Committee (EDC), which has been working hard to encourage commercial development in Allentown. The revaluation in 2022 will cost about \$64,000, so setting aside \$16,800 each year for four years will essentially cover that expense. The EDC has met with people from the State to gather ideas for spurring growth and job creation. The EDC is hoping to have new welcome signs for the Town. Each of the two items will require two warrant articles: one to establish the Capital Reserve Fund and another to request funding.

Chair Klawes asked about the apparent change in philosophy regarding keeping budget increases in line with the CPI versus level funding in order to avoid spikes.

Mr. Goodine responded that they are proposing an honest budget. He and Ms. Bender provide two new sets of eyes and have been motivated by a desire to avoid another default budget. He said that some towns borrow money, but it is nice to not have debt. He said that the School Department is struggling and he and Ms. Bender are doing their best to control the Town side of budget. He pointed out that they have funded a full-time equivalent for the Fire Department and that the Police Department is fully staffed. He said that he appreciates the patience of the Board of Selectmen and the Budget Committee as he and Ms. Bender work through their first budget in Allentown.

Chair Klawes put forth the idea of looking at the possibility of housing the Fire and Police Departments in one Safety Center for more efficiency. He noted that the Fire Department has fewer trucks and perhaps there is room there for the Police Department as well.

Mr. Goodine said he didn't know if it would fit, saying that perhaps they could expand at the end of the parking lot.

Mr. Coolidge said that the Police Department is prime real estate and would have to be sold to make this work.

Ms. Boisvert asked about the school consolidation project.

Ms. Raymond said that the report of the architectural firm is due in December or January.

Mr. Pelissier said that he is not speaking for the BOS, but he feels that they can't constantly increase the budget when so many residents are on fixed incomes. He added that they have kept up with things needed such as repairs and vehicle replacements.

Mr. Goodine said that in 24 years working for various towns, he has never planned budgets based on the CPI. He praised Ms. Bender for her work on the budget process, including her reformatting of the spreadsheets and accompanying documents. He said that he and Ms. Bender have similar philosophies and think the same way 90% of the time.

Ms. Raymond next asked about the new highway garage project. She noted that this has been discussed for a long time, and the economy is decent now.

Ms. Ranfos asked if they were any closer to having a plan for this.

Mr. Goodine said that they are looking at insulating the existing building and putting on an addition. He said that they were anticipating funds from the sale of town-owned land to Holiday Acres, but that project is in a holding pattern.

Ms. Ranfos asked if the idea of a new garage is off the table.

Mr. Goodine responded that it was not off the table but has not been discussed.

Ms. Boisvert asked about the idea of a new building on the same or adjacent property.

Mr. Pelissier said that they were negotiating with Allenstown Aggregate for a parcel which they own, but the discussions fell through. He said it is important to stay close to the current location because of the equipment. It is cheaper to improve there, he said.

Ms. Ranfos said that they were told that the existing building was unsalvageable.

Mr. Pelissier said that the building is structurally sound but needs a lot of work.

Ms. Boisvert asked about IT personnel. She asked if the Town should consider hiring just one person, rather than having a separate IT expense for each department. The IT budgets for Administration, Police and Fire, she said, total about \$40,000.

Mr. Goodine said that a full-time IT person would cost at least \$100,000 per year for salary and benefits. He added that it is helpful when brainstorming/troubleshooting to have more than one person to consult.

Mr. Goodine told the Budget Committee members that the 2019 proposed department budgets are on the Town website, as well as the total budget.

Mr. Pelissier said that he likes seeing the averages.

Ms. Raymond told Mr. Goodine that if they would be preparing a Voters' Guide, the School had a section last year and would like to have one this year as well.


Ms. Bender said that she is working on a summary page showing the biggest increases and decreases and explaining them.

Ms. Raymond made a motion to accept the minutes of the November 1<sup>st</sup> Budget Committee meeting. Ms. Carney seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved, with Ms. Ranfos and Mr. Pelissier abstaining because of absence.

Ms. Ranfos made a motion to adjourn at 7:54 pm. Mr. Coolidge seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

TOWN OF ALLENSTOWN  
Budget Committee  
16 School Street  
Allentown, New Hampshire 03275  
**Signature Page**

**Budget Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**November 8, 2018**

Original Approval:	
	12/03/2018
KEITH KLAUES, CHAIRMAN	DATE

Amendment Approvals:		
Amendment Description:	Approval:	Date:
	KEITH KLAUES, CHAIRMAN	DATE

# Signature Certificate



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**Keith Klawes**

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2018-12-03 10:22:16 -0800

2018-12-03 10:21:00 -0800

2018-12-03 10:17:22 -0800

## Audit

All parties have signed document. Signed copies sent to: Keith Klawes and Derik Goodine.

Document signed by Keith Klawes (chefkk@comcast.net) with drawn signature. - 50.237.188.146

Document viewed by Keith Klawes (chefkk@comcast.net). - 50.237.188.146

Document created by Derik Goodine (dgoodine@allentownnh.gov). - 64.222.96.214



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