

Municipal Budget Committee Meeting  
Community Center  
8 Whitten Street  
Allentown, New Hampshire 03275  
November 15, 2018

**Call to Order**

The Allentown Municipal Budget Committee Meeting of November 15, 2018 was called to order at 6:11 pm by Chairman Keith Klawes.

Chair Klawes called for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call**

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

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

Also present: Ronnie Pelissier, Road Agent

**Highway Department Budget**

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier began his presentation saying that the proposed Highway budget is the same as last year's. He said that he and Ms. Bender moved some numbers around, based on recent budget history and expected activity in 2019. They are down one full-time and one part-time driver, but have adjusted the payroll to include future hiring.

Ms. Angowski asked about the salt for the roads.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier said they took a gamble a few years ago and lowered the salt budget. Over the next two year they went over budget so it is back to the higher amount.

Ms. Angowski asked about tree trimming, which has no dollars budgeted.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier said that tree trimming is part of the road reconstruction budget, and often a company is willing to trim the trees and take the wood in payment. He continued, saying that Webster Street needs to be topped. It should have one more inch but that might wait a year because he would rather do Lafayette Street.

Ms. Angowski asked about staff.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier said that there are four full-time employees, including himself. The others are Marc Boisvert, Joe Curcio and Dave Bouffard. They are short two employees.

Mr. Cox asked about the vehicle line, which has dropped from \$13,000 to \$7,000.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier explained that two larger trucks have been replaced with smaller trucks, which are nimbler and more fuel efficient.

Mr. Venegas asked if drug testing is random and if it is budgeted for a full crew and not just the four current full-time employees.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier responded that testing is random, and this line is budgeted for the worst-case scenario. There is a company which figures this out and they call the day they want to test someone.

Mr. Venegas asked about the cell phone line.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier said that is for his cell phone only.

Mr. Cox asked why we do not pay for their cell phones if they use them for work.

Mr. Chad Pelissier said that the employees were given a choice and they opted to use their own phones for privacy considerations.

Ms. Angowski asked if there is a plan for road signs and if they kept track of the dollars spent.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier said that there is no specific plan. Sometimes the Police Department lets them know that a road sign needs to be fixed or replaced. The expense sometimes comes out of the road construction line. He said it is not part of their CIP.

Ms. Angowski asked about the plowing contractor.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier explained that when they lost full-time employees, they hired Advanced Excavation to plow dead-end streets and small areas.

Mr. Venegas asked if they have attempted to hire employees for the vacant positions.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier said that no one is available because the economy is strong.

Mr. Cox asked about hiring someone with this 2019 budget by offering a competitive wage, perhaps \$19 or \$20 per hour.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier expressed concern because he has one employee who has been grossly underpaid for three years. They have been working to bring this employee's hourly rate up, and it wouldn't be right to hire someone new and pay that person more than what they pay an existing employee.

Ms. Bender said that they pushed the budget amount up a couple of months ago and are hoping to get more responses to their ads.

Mr. Venegas asked about helping someone get a CDL.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier responded that they did that recently, and the guy failed the test.

Mr. Cox asked how they manage to retain the existing employees.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier said that two of them are very near retirement.

Mr. Klawes confirmed that winter is this department's busy time, so he suggested hiring laid off construction workers in the winter.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier said that those people are paid \$25 an hour to work 60 hours per week during the construction season, and they earn a decent annual salary during that time. They are not going to sit in a plow truck. He added that Tom Irzyk has been plowing parking lots for them and is a great plow driver.

Chair Klawes asked if the Highway Department plows the schools.

Ms. Raymond responded that they do not.

Chair Klawes asked if a cost analysis has been done, comparing the hiring of two employees at \$20 per hour and one at \$26 per hour, with the latter being more apt to stay long-term.

Mr. Cox asked if they might attract applicants by offering \$23 per hour.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier noted that the benefits and retirement plan Allentown has are the best, and many people care enough about this to work at a slightly lower wage. He added that Ms. Bender has made great progress with the pay scale.

Mr. Bender said that she will continue her work on the pay scale so that Allentown is competitive with other communities.

Mr. Cox asked about the benchmark used for comparisons.

Ms. Bender said that she is using a recent wage study. Allentown is at the mid-range, with the bonus of excellent health insurance and a great pension.

Chair Klawes asked Ms. Bender to provide the range of salaries for the Highway Department employees, including overtime.

Ms. Bender agreed to get this information for the Budget Committee.

Chair Klawes said that it is important to look at the total package offered; the gross, not the net.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier said that he has one employee who is off the pay scale. They are looking at some sort of longevity bonus – an extra week of vacation or a salary bonus each year.

Chair Klawes asked about getting temporary help during busy times.

Mr. Cox said that this could cause the regular workers to lose overtime work, which is not fair.

Ms. Raymond said that many Allentown students walk to school and the sidewalks need to be cleared for them.

Ms. Ranfos asked about hiring students to shovel or use a snowblower during storms.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier said that insurance requires them to be 18 years old.

Ms. Ranfos offered to provide Mr. Pelissier with contact information for one of her seasonal employees who is over 18 and who she highly recommends for snow blowing.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier mentioned a problem regarding sidewalk snow removal. That is, the State plows the roads, pushing snow onto the sidewalks which have already been cleared once.

Mr. Cox said that he has no problems with the proposed budget and recommends increasing labor by 8-9%.

Ms. Ranfos made a motion to table discussion of the Highway budget until the end of all budget presentations. Mr. Cox seconded the motion.

### **Street Lights Budget**

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier said that the new LED lights have resulted in cost savings. Money is being placed in a capital reserve fund for when they need to be replaced.

### **Solid Waste Budget**

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier said that the amount of \$9,000 in the salary line is for the transfer station attendant who works three days a week, totaling about 20 hours. He reminded the Committee that Allenstown does not pay for recycling. A ten-year contract with Casella expires in 2024, and the agreement requires Casella to pick up recyclables at no charge. However, if a load of recyclables is spoiled, the entire load must be disposed of as trash at a high cost. This is causing a big problem because many residents are not recycling according to the guidelines.

Mr. Chad Pelissier said that people are putting yard waste and small appliances into recycle containers and spoiling loads.

Mr. Cox asked about enforcement.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier said that there is no ordinance and therefore no authority to enforce.

Ms. Ranfos said she has been hearing that the recycling industry is in trouble because the market for recyclables is declining. She asked if a letter to the residents reminding them of the guidelines would be warranted.

Mr. Ronnie Pelissier said it would, but they missed the deadline to include a note with the property tax bills, which is a cost-efficient way to send it.

Chair Klawes asked about a procedure for identifying the perpetrators.

Mr. Goodine said they will be doing a test soon to pinpoint the section(s) of town causing the problem.

### **Storm Water Budget**

Mr. Chad Pelissier stated that this activity is governed by federal laws which mandate certain actions. The cost cycle is up and down, so it is a challenge to budget for this

Ms. Angowski made a motion to table discussions of Street Lighting, Solid Waste, and Storm Water budgets until the end of budget presentations. The motion was seconded by Ms. Carney.

### **Finance, Town Clerk, Tax Collector, and Assessing Budgets**

Ms. Bender first pointed out that the Municipal Agent budget has been combined with the Town Clerk budget because vehicle registration is the responsibility of the Town Clerk.

Mr. Cox asked about the advertising budget of \$50.

Ms. Bender said that would be for legal notices.

Mr. Venegas asked if the Town has a choice as to who prints ballots.

Ms. Bender responded that the State prints the ballots for State elections and bills the communities. She continued, saying that Assessing has the biggest changes. A warrant article will be proposed to establish a capital reserve account for the next revaluation, setting aside funds each year to avoid paying the entire amount at once. She said that there are no salaried personnel. \$32,900 is budgeted for Assessing services.

Ms. Raymond asked what the Assessing Department does during the four years between revaluations.

Ms. Bender said that they deal with changes in property ownership, added values from additions to properties, abatements, credits, and exemptions. She said that Mr. Roberge could perhaps attend a future meeting to answer further questions about revaluation and the tasks for which his office is responsible.

Ms. Ranfos moved to table discussion of the Finance, Town Clerk, Tax Collector and Assessing budgets until the end of all budget presentations. Mr. Cox seconded the motion.

### **Parks & Recreation Budget**

Mr. Goodine said that the Community Center and the two recreation fields at Volunteer Park are the responsibilities of Parks & Recreation. He said that \$16,000 goes to the Boys and Girls Club.

Mr. Cox asked about the changes in amounts in the repairs line.

Chair Klawes said that there was a significant water leak a few years ago, so the repairs showed as expenses; the payments by the insurance company show as revenue. He then asked Mr. Goodine about progress with looking into a solar installation for the Community Center.

Mr. Goodine responded that the former town administrator told him they would be contacting him. If he does not hear from them soon, he will make a phone call.

Chair Klawes said that better installation prices are available in December and January.

Mr. Cox asked if a cost analysis was done regarding the use of solar in the Town.

Mr. Goodine said that net metering determines their savings.

Mr. Chad Pelissier said there was no cost for the installation and therefore no outlay. He said the previous town administrator felt this was the best way to go.

Ms. Bender stated that there is no Parks & Recreation Committee at this time.

Mr. Venegas said that he and others are interested in some projects which a Parks & Rec committee could undertake. As a member of the EDC, he has pursued the possibility of a skateboard park to be installed in the parking lot behind the vacant convent building. He said that there is equipment from the previous park which is stored on Highway property. The Highway Department has agreed to move this equipment into the garage, and students from Pembroke Academy will be used to refurbish the equipment as a community service project. He said the insurance aspect does not present a problem, as long as they post that people use the park at their own risk. He said the biggest expenses will be for fencing and signage. He said that the ground is smooth in the parking lot. One essential part of the this project, which in its early stages, is permission from the Church.

Mr. Chad Pelissier said that the church has been wanting to get rid of the convent building for a while.

She asked if they should put some money in the budget for Parks & Rec.

Ms. Bender said that they could budget \$10,000 and still be under the 2018 proposed budget. \$20,000 would put them slightly over.

Mr. Venegas said he would like to get a quote from American Fences.

Ms. Raymond commented that they are very expensive.

Mr. Cox said he has a neighbor who works there and he will talk with him and get back to Mr. Venegas.

Mr. Goodine said that security cameras would be important for the long-term success of this project because they would deter undesirables.

Mr. Chad Pelissier added that lighting is important too.

Ms. Ranfos moved to table discussion of the Parks & Recreation budget until the end of all budget presentations. Ms. Angowski seconded the motion.

Ms. Raymond made a motion to adjourn at 8:11 pm. Ms. Carney seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

**TOWN OF ALLENSTOWN**

Budget Committee  
16 School Street  
Allentown, New Hampshire 03275

**Signature Page**

Budget Committee Minutes

November 15, 2018

| <b>Original Approval:</b> |            |
|---------------------------|------------|
| <br><br>:                 | 12/03/2018 |
| KEITH KLAUES, CHAIRMAN    | DATE       |

| <b>Amendment Approvals:</b>   |                        |              |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Amendment Description:</b> | <b>Approval:</b>       | <b>Date:</b> |
|                               |                        |              |
|                               | KEITH KLAUES, CHAIRMAN | DATE         |

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Keith Klawes

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Digital Fingerprint Checksum

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### 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. - 24.34.66.143

Document viewed by Keith Klawes (chefkk@comcast.net). - 24.34.66.143

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



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