

TOWN OF ALLENSTOWN
Selectboard Budget Review Special Meeting
16 School Street
Allenstown, New Hampshire 03275
October 15, 2019

Call to Order

The Allenstown Selectboard Budget Review Special Meeting of October 15, 2019 was called to order by Vice Chair Sandy McKenney at 5:50 pm, following the dedication of the Boat Launch at the end of Ferry Street in memory of Ron Pelissier, long time Allenstown Road Agent who passed away this year.

Vice Chair McKenney called for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Present on the Board: Sandy McKenney, Maureen Higham

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

Others Present: Paul St. Germain, Fire Chief; Jeffrey Venegas, Library Trustees Chairman; Marc Boisvert, Acting Public Works Director

Regular Agenda

▪ **Review Library Budget**

Mr. Venegas, Library Trustees Chairman, stated that he would like begin by sharing some of the library's activities, along with some statistics indicating growth of library use. He said that they have received \$6,425 in grants so far this year. The largest is a \$5,000 grant for repair of the handicapped ramp, which is deteriorating. The person doing the repair said the rebar is starting to rust. Last year new computers were purchased for the Director and Assistant Director as well as for the Library patrons. He said that they are getting the word out about Library programs and services. As of October 1st, there were 2,475 patron visits, up 118 visits from 2018. As of October 11th, there were 97 new patrons this year, an increase of 57% over last year. Using a tablet, the Library staff is able to issue library cards on the go, and they registered six new patrons at the recent concert. They now have 1,462 patrons. So far in 2019, 2,159 books have been checked out, 1,109 DVDs and 1,650 audio books. Since 2013, use of home audio books has increased 174%. Summer programs totaling 18 events drew 534 attendees, up 28% from last year. These included an Audubon Society presentation. Mr. Venegas said that the budget as a whole is level-funded, but amounts within the lines have been shifted. He said that, with the support of Town Administrator Derik Goodine and the Economic Development Committee, they are planning to have state park passes available for one-day usage free of charge for patrons. The passes are for Bear Brook State Park and other state parks. He said that Bear Brook is a large part of Allenstown and is here to stay, so they are looking for ways to embrace it and have good communications and a sharing of information regarding events with the Park Director. Continuing with the Library budget, Mr. Venegas said that the FAX line has been removed, since it is not used.

Ms. McKenney asked if the downstairs rooms are used.

Mr. Venegas responded that they are used and they hope to do some maintenance and repair work so that they can be used more. One more thing he said he would like to do is have a drop off box at the school for library books.

- **Review Fire Budget**

Chief St. Germain began his presentation, saying that there is a small drop of \$80 in the full-time salary line and a small increase in the IT Services line, which is the Fire Department's portion of the town's cost. The lines for Computers/Software, Cell Phones, Dues & Publications, Office Supplies, Postage and Food are level-funded. Part-time salaries are up due to pay scale adjustments and regular increases.

Mr. Goodine said that they would like to look at adding a full-time person to the Fire Department via a warrant article.

Ms. Bender said that the cost of this would be partially offset by reduced hours for per diem workers.

Mr. Goodine noted that shifts are not always being filled.

Chief St. Germain said that this is true for a lot of days.

Mr. Goodine asked what is not getting done when these shifts are not filled.

Chief St. Germain said that a variety of tasks get put off when shifts are not filled.

Mr. Goodine also asked what happens when an active call comes in and a shift is not filled.

Chief St. Germain responded that the on-call person goes to the scene and waits for mutual aid. He added that it is not good for a firefighter to be alone during the day. Night is a different story. He said that they do not have the call force they used to have. They have some trouble nights and weekends.

Mr. Goodine said that, according to Chris Gamache, Tri-Town EMS Director, Pembroke Fire doesn't automatically go out on calls. He asked Chief St. Germain to comment on this.

Chief Gamache said that Allenstown Fire has had a rescue squad since the 1960s, and changing this would be a step backward.

Ms. Higham asked about possible savings from going to another full-time firefighter, as opposed to using per diem employees.

Ms. Bender said that the full-time firefighter would add about \$80,000 to the budget, offset by about \$50,000 in savings on per diem pay.

Chief St. Germain said that a second firefighter would not be another captain; it would be a lower level employee. He added that, with two full-time firefighters, he could stagger their shifts so that one would cover extra hours early in the morning and the other could start later and work later into the evening. The second firefighter would also make it easier to schedule needed training.

Mr. Venegas asked if there was money left over in the budget because of not filling shifts.

Chief St. Germain responded that it varies greatly; sometimes there is and sometimes no.

Mr. Venegas suggested that the budget could be solidified or stabilized with one more full-time person.

Ms. Higham asked if more of the budget goes to night versus day activity.

Chief St. Germain said that he could crunch some numbers to get that information.

Ms. Bender said that three per diem employees, with no benefits, would be equal to one full-time employee.

Chief St. Germain said they are now saving money because they are not filling shifts, unfortunately. He said that mutual aid is great to a certain point, but it is for 'over and above' not 'instead of.' He continued, saying that the Overtime line is up \$1,000, mainly because overtime is now paid for hours in excess of 45 hours versus 53 hours. He said that Captain MacIntosh is a fan of comp time. He said that the Personal Protection line is up \$1,500 because he tries to buy three or four sets of pants and coats each year. He said they do not have spares, which is a problem with back-to-back calls because the clothes have to be washed between calls. He continued, noting that paid In House Training is down \$1,000, while Outside Instruction is down \$100. Radio Maintenance, Telephone, Vehicle Repairs, Municipal Hydrants, Physicals/Shots, EMS Supplies, Water, Building Maintenance and Repair, Heat and Electric all are level-funded. Sewer shows a small decrease of \$100. He said that pagers have been removed, as they are no longer used. The Dispatch line is up \$1,710. This is based on previous year mutual aid calls. He said that Equipment Testing is the same amount as the 2019 budget. Gasoline/Diesel is down \$100. Uniforms, Fire Supplies and Public Education are level funded.

Ms. Bender summarized the Fire Department's 2020 proposed budget, saying that the total is \$332,530, up \$9,330 (2.89%) over the 2019 budget of \$323,200. There are three significant increases: part-time salaries and overtime, personal protection, and the dispatch contract with the State EMS.

Review Highway Budget

Mr. Goodine commented on the first line, Drug Testing. He said that they could save \$400 to \$500 per year by joining a pool with perhaps 20 other towns because the two or three employees with CDLs would not be tested as frequently as they are now.

Mr. Boisvert added that they have fewer large trucks now and more smaller ones, which don't require a CDL. Looking at Vehicle Repairs, the increase is \$1,000. An Explorer used by the former Road Agent was used by the Police Department for a trade. They have taken a 2001 vehicle off the road and plan to take a 1997 Ford and a 2000 Sterling off the road as well. He said that the vehicle replacement program has helped to keep repairs down. He said they would have to decide how to dispose of the three vehicles they are taking off the road. The State auction is in the spring, which is a long time to wait.

Mr. Goodine said that he and Ms. Bender would like to establish a revolving fund so that proceeds from sale of old vehicles could be applied to new purchases upon Selectboard approval.

Mr. Boisvert said that discussions about a new building should be put off until a new Road Agent is elected in March. However, he said that they should have wider doors on the existing facility. These would cost about \$7,000 each, and it would be a good investment because the current facility is well-constructed and could be used for storage later, if and when a new garage is built.

Ms. Bender said that Building Maintenance is under-budgeted, given the age of the garage. She continued, saying that the Cable, Internet and Phone line was increased because it has been running over budget. She said that even though, for two vehicles, gas is being replaced by diesel fuel, the decrease of \$1,000 in the Diesel line will be okay.

Mr. Boisvert said that the increase of \$300 in the Personal Protection Equipment is warranted, due to Department of Labor and OSHA requirements. The increase in part-time salaries is due to the hiring of a new employee working 20 hours per week. The Plowing Contractor line is increased by \$2,500. We don't know how the new Road Agent will handle snow plowing, he said, so this and other lines are just educated guesses.

Ms. Bender said that she and Mr. Goodine would like to establish a capital reserve fund for Roads and Bridges to avoid the encumbrance process. Lapsed funds could go into this capital reserve account.

Mr. Goodine stated that they would soon have a Road Service Management Program in place. This will provide important data for proper and timely maintenance, saving money in the long run.

Mr. Boisvert said that Pembroke has a Road Service Management Program up and running. He reported that it is a great program – easy to use and easy to understand.

Ms. Bender said that some Construction Supplies were inadvertently charged to Construction Services in the current budget, but Construction Services is decreased by \$21,000 for the 2020 budget and Construction Supplies is increased by \$3,000.

Mr. Boisvert said that Winter Sand and Salt are increased by \$1,500 and \$1,000 respectively but these are impossible to predict accurately, due to the impact of weather. All other lines are level-funded, including the following: Water, General Supplies, Heat & Oil, Gasoline, Plow Maintenance & Repair, Signs, Uniforms, Overtime, IT Services, Small Equipment Repair and Small Equipment Purchases.

Mr. Goodine said that they have scheduled the Stormwater budget and the Police Department budget for the next meeting. As they do not have the tax rate yet, the capital reserve accounts and warrant articles are not ready for presentation. The delay is because the State budget was not passed until very late.

Non-Public Sessions

Ms. McKenney made a motion to enter non-public session at 8:10 pm in accordance with the provisions of RSA 91-A:3, II (c). Ms. Higham seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken: Ms. McKenney – aye; Ms. Higham – aye.

Ms. McKenney made a motion to return to public session at 8:23 pm. Ms. Higham seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken: Ms. McKenney – aye; Ms. Higham – aye.

Ms. McKenney made a motion to seal the minutes of the non-public session because they discussed matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of a person not a member of the public body itself. Ms. Higham seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken: Ms. McKenney – aye; Ms. Higham – aye.

Ms. McKenney made a motion to enter non-public session at 8:23 pm in accordance with the provisions of RSA 91-A:3, II (c). Ms. Higham seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken: Ms. McKenney – aye; Ms. Higham – aye.

Ms. McKenney made a motion to return to public session at 8:40 pm. Ms. Higham seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken: Ms. McKenney – aye; Ms. Higham – aye.

Ms. McKenney made a motion to seal the minutes of the non-public session because they discussed matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of a person not a member of the public body itself. Ms. Higham seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken: Ms. McKenney – aye; Ms. Higham – aye.

Ms. McKenney made a motion to adjourn at 8:40 pm. Ms. Higham seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

DRAFT

TOWN OF ALLENSTOWN
 SELECTBOARD – BUDGET REVIEW
 SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

OCTOBER 15, 2019

Signature Page

Original Approval:	
RYAN CARTER, Chair	DATE
SANDRA MCKENNEY, Vice Chair	DATE
MAUREEN HIGHAM, Member	DATE

Amendment Approvals:		
Amendment Description:	Approval:	Date:
	RYAN CARTER, Chair	DATE
	SANDRA MCKENNEY, Vice Chair	DATE
	MAUREEN HIGHAM, Member	DATE