

Municipal Budget Committee Meeting  
Allenstown Fire Station  
I Ferry Street  
Allenstown, New Hampshire 03275  
November 14, 2019

**Call to Order**

The Allenstown Municipal Budget Committee Meeting of November 14, 2019 was called to order at 6:10 pm by Chair Keith Klawes. He called for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Introductions**

Present on the Committee: Keith Klawes, Melaine Boisvert, Carol Angowski, Michael Juranty, Julie Keane, Tiffany Ranfos, Deb Carney, Dave Coolidge, Jeffrey Venegas, Bobbie Laflamme, Jim Rodger; Maureen Higham, Selectboard Representative

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

Others present: Armand Verville, Old Allenstown Meeting House, Michael Stark, Chief of Police, Paul St. Germain, Fire Chief

**Old Allenstown Meeting House Budget**

Mr. Verville stated that the Old Allenstown Meeting House budget has been \$1,300 for several years, but with increased costs for the telephone and modem, he is requesting \$1,400, an increase of \$100.

**Police Department Budget**

Chief Stark began his budget presentation, saying that the Department has had much less turnover recently, which is a good thing for operations but increases the salary line. He said he wants to keep Allenstown competitive with other communities in the salary offered. Staff salaries are up \$7,300. The Training Hours line has been zeroed out and now is part of the Salary line. The IT line is the regular contract. The Department has a new copier, he said, but the lease cost is still \$2,000, and it has FAX capability. The Department's radar equipment is World War II technology, he said, but they can still fix it. They are looking at grants for laser, which is newer technology but can't be used while in motion. He said the Vehicle Repair line is \$11,000, including \$7,000 to \$8,000 for regular repairs and the rest as a cushion in case of a large expense such as a transmission failure. The Telephone and Modem line is down \$1,000. The Cell Phone line is \$4,600. The Recruiting line is \$2,000. The Chief said he hopes that goes down as they continue to have less need to hire new employees. The Dues and Subscription line is level at \$3,000. He said they added \$1,050 to the Tuition and Training line because employees want opportunities to train and learn, and the longer they are with the department, the more opportunities they need. This benefits the Department. Police Academy courses are free, but as they are offering fewer courses, the cost shifts to the Police Department, each course adds \$300 to \$800 to the budget. Office Supplies and Training Supplies are level funded. General Supplies are up \$500 and Postage is down. Gas and Fuel is down \$6,000, but Chief Stark mentioned two concerns: DRED might shut down the old State pump where they fill up unless Irving is cheaper, and conflicts in the Middle East could drastically increase prices at the pump. The Uniform line is up \$50 because it was rounded up. The

Department has ordered a new style of uniform. Unfortunately, they are back-ordered until February. The Chief said that full-time salaries have increased due to COLA and merit adjustments. Overtime is difficult to budget, he said, because it spikes when they are understaffed. The Special Ops line is flat. Regarding Dispatch, he said the bill for the County is \$2 million per year, 50% of which is paid by the County and the rest is prorated to the towns, based on calls taken. They are looking at a way to separate the calls which require assistance versus those that do not. Both Sewer and Water are down. The Maintenance line reflects the cost of painting, which is being done by five prisoners who are supervised by their corrections officer. This is free labor but that extends the time a lot. Chief Stark said they are proud to show the prisoners that the police are not 'out to get them,' and it is a great plan.

Ms. Angowski asked if the prisoners were from MSU.

Chief Stark said no, they are from the State prison. He continued, saying that Heat and Electricity are level-funded. Grants, he said, are a wash.

Ms. Boisvert asked about the number of police officers.

Chief Stark said they have ten full-time officers.

Ms. Carney asked about the population of Allentown.

Chief Stark said it is just under 5,000.

Ms. Angowski asked if they operate 24/7.

Chief Stark affirmed that they do.

Ms. Boisvert asked about the other staff.

Chief Stark said it is 1.3 employees.

Ms. Angowski asked about the number of vehicles.

Chief Stark said they have four marked and two unmarked vehicles. Vehicles #1, #2 and #3 are SUVs and #4 is a pickup, which is used to carry the ATV. There is one unmarked SUV and the Administration car.

Mr. Rodger asked how often they rotate vehicles.

Chief Stark said they purchase new vehicles on a three-year lease-to-own basis. The vehicles have a five-year cycle and then are available to other departments who tend to put on less mileage, such as the Fire Department.

Mr. Rodger asked about the choice of colors.

Chief Stark responded that Homeland Security recommends black and white; they have black with blue stickers.

Ms. Angowski asked about Animal Control.

Chief Stark said they have no Animal Control officer. Expenses incurred because of stray dogs are in the Supply line. If a dog has to be taken to the SPCA, the owners pay that organization directly for expenses.

Chair Klaves asked if the support staff includes the prosecutor.

Chief Stark said it does. The prosecutor is an attorney and preparation for court takes a long time. He added that for the last three years the State has been settling speeding violations with pre-trial hearings to save time and money.

Ms. Angowski congratulated Chief Stark on retaining a full staff and on the promotion of two women.

Chair Klawes asked about retirements.

Chief Stark said they average one retirement per year. With the Step system, he said, they can count years worked elsewhere when calculating salary, which is a plus. Potential hires must submit to a polygraph test, which is free if it can be done by Merrimack County but costs \$300 to \$500 if done elsewhere. If the individual has recently had a physical, that saves the \$300 cost for that.

Ms. Boisvert asked if all new hires must have a polygraph test.

Chief Stark said yes. He added that this is just a tool. If an applicant lies or has sold drugs in the past, he or she is automatically disqualified.

Ms. Angowski asked, regarding recently purchased Sic Sauer weapons, if the officers had to be trained at Sic Sauer to use them.

Chief Stark said they do not, that all firearms work the same. He said that if an officer is firing a weapon, he or she has been shot at. He said that in his tenure, no officer has fired at a person.

Chair Klawes asked how many times a year an officer pulls a weapon.

Chief Stark said it would be about ten times.

Ms. Ranfos made a motion to table this budget until all budgets have been reviewed. Ms. Boisvert seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

### **Administration Budgets**

Ms. Bender began her presentation, saying that Finance includes her office, the Town Clerk, the Tax Collector, Assessing and part of Patricia Caruso's salary. She said the Salary line is up a bit, due to merit and COLA increases. She said that the Town Clerk/Tax Collector budget allocated 70% to the Town Clerk function and 30% to the Tax Collector. The Software line is level. The Conferences and Dues line is up \$50 because the deputy in the office will have some certification training. The Supply line is level. The Supervisors of the Checklist budget has increases reflecting the extra elections this year. Voting machines are up \$50; \$50 is slated for required advertising. Because of the extra elections, the Ballot Clerk line shows an increase. The amount budgeted for the transcription of the Deliberative Session minutes is the same. Election Printing is level-funded at \$5,000. This is for the printing of ballots. Election Supplies is up \$300 for office supplies and meals at the elections.

Ms. Boisvert asked why the ballot printing does not show an increase with the extra elections.

Ms. Bender said she would check with the Town Clerk on that. She continued, saying that Postage is for the absentee ballot process. The expense for Booths is the same at \$1,000; the Moderator's salary is increased because of extra elections. She said that her salary and software, which are shared with the Sewer Department, are down a bit. She said that she does accounting and auditing for the Sewer Department. Payroll processing is the same. Checkmate is the software used for this. The Dues and

Subscriptions line is for conferences. Bank fees are down and auditing fees are level-funded at \$20,000. The Tax Collector's salary shows a slight increase; contracted services for lien releases, title searches and Avitar software are level funded. The Treasurer receives a monthly stipend. Assessing is a contracted service with Avitar and includes CAI Mapping & Internet Access for residents and the Avitar Assessing Software, including the on-line program.

Chair Klawes asked about the difference between a salary and a stipend.

Ms. Bender explained that a stipend individual does not have a regular schedule and does not have regular hours. He or she agrees to certain duties.

Mr. Goodine began his portion of the presentation. He said that the Selectboard is flat, as is the Transportation line. The Administrative Salaries line is his salary and the five hours of Patricia Caruso's time allocated to Welfare activities. He reported having a new copier lease with Canon. It has color capability but the cost is the same. He noted that the Police Department also has a new lease, but they are staying with Ricoh.

Ms. Boisvert raised the issue of printing Town Reports. Since it is available online, perhaps they could print fewer in future years.

Ms. Ranfos suggested printing them this year and have postcards available for people to fill out if they want to continue getting a paper copy.

Chair Klawes said he and his family sometimes get two or three at the polls. Many people throw them away, while others insist upon having a paper copy.

Mr. Goodine noted that the School reimburses the Town for its share of the cost. He continued, saying that the Phone & Modem line is for the Internet connection and the alarm service and is level-funded. His cell phone, he said, is down \$30. Office Supplies, Postage and Training are flat-funded. He said that the IT contract shows an increase of \$40, the cost of which is low versus the cost of having an inhouse IT person. The Equipment and Repairs line is cut in half to \$500. Dues and Subscription reflect his memberships and is down \$200. Advertising is also down \$200. The Website fee is up \$50, which is for domain registration. The Budget Committee line, which is mostly for transcription of minutes, is down \$20. Mr. Goodine said that the Legal line is up to \$60,000 from \$50,000 because of legal work associated with the 79e-related changes to the town ordinance, the Heinz Corporation lawsuit regarding town-owned property and the Eversource case. Mileage, he said, is level-funded and is based on the federal rate of \$0.58 per mile. As an example, he and Mike Frascinella traveled to Franklin, Bristol and Concord this year as part of the Main Street Academy program, and they hope to continue participation in that.

Ms. Bender took up the narrative, saying that Health Insurance premiums are down \$10,000. Dental is up a bit to \$21,000. Life and Disability insurance costs the town \$14,000 but represents no cost to employees. The town has not had a bill for Unemployment Compensation for a couple of years because of credits earned, but will start to see some charges this year. Workers Comp is down a bit. The health reimbursement account is down \$38,000. This account cushions the higher deductibles of low premium health insurance plans.

Ms. Boisvert made a motion to adjourn at 8:13 pm. Ms. Angowski seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.