

Municipal Budget Committee Meeting
Allenstown Fire Station
I Ferry Street
Allenstown, New Hampshire 03275
December 5, 2019

Call to Order

The Allenstown Municipal Budget Committee Meeting of December 5, 2019 was called to order at 6:05 pm by Chair Keith Klawes. He called for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Introductions

Present on the Committee: Keith Klawes, Carol Angowski, Michael Juranty, Bobbie Laflamme, Julie Keane, Tiffany Ranfos, Dave Coolidge, Jim Rodger, Maureen Higham, Selectboard Representative; Kris Raymond, School Board Representative; Jeffrey Venegas

Excused: Melaine Boisvert, Ron Cox, Deb Careny

Allenstown Staff: Derik Goodine, Town Administrator

Presenters: Jeffrey Venegas, Chair of the Library Board of Trustees; Marc Boisvert, Acting DPW Director and Road Agent

Library Budget

Mr. Venegas stated that when he began serving as a Library Trustee a couple of years ago, they had no grants, and this year they have received grants totaling \$6,425. He commends the staff for their work in this and many other areas. Betsi Randlett is the Director and Gwen McGee is her assistant, both part-time. Betsi's mother, Joy, fills in as needed. The grants received are as follows: \$500 for a New Vision Summer Reading Program; \$275 for a Kids Books presentation; \$550 from Walmart; and \$5,000 for the new ramp. He said that the ramp was in very bad shape. It had been patched several times, but had rusted underneath and had to be rebuilt. He said that, as of December 4, 2019, the Library has had 2,169 patron visits this year, up by 512 over 2018. 102 residents have new library cards, up 76% over last year. The Library has 7,773 books and 1,466 DVDs. So far this year 2,424 books and 1,275 DVDs have been checked out. The Library has a collection of eBooks and Audio Books, which has increased by 174% since 2013. Of these, 1,659 have been checked out this year. He said they have used word of mouth and Facebook to increase Library patronage. The Summer Reading program had 56 people, an increase of 14% over last summer. Special Events, of which there were 18, have included wildlife encounters, magicians and Lego demonstrations, to name a few. 534 people attended these events, an increase of 28% over 2018. Mr. Venegas reminded the Committee that the Library serves all economic groups, and for some, it provides resources they cannot afford or find elsewhere. He said that the Director is now a Notary Public and she provides this service free of charge. The 2020 budget, he said, is flat. Some amounts have been moved around among the lines. He said \$500 has been added for Training. They got rid of the FAX line on the telephone because it is not used, which is a savings. New computers were purchased last year, so there is no expense for that this year. A small amount was added for the summer programs.

Ms. Angowski asked about the downstairs area, saying that when she used to visit the Library, no one was allowed to go down there.

Mr. Venegas said that the Girl Scouts now use a room in the basement. They would like to develop a Teen Room.

Ms. Angowski asked about a second egress.

Mr. Venegas verified that there is a second entrance/exit. He continued, saying the Trustees are planning a paint party because the Library badly needs that. He said that the basement holds a safe where the Historical Society items are kept.

Ms. Angowski asked about donating books.

Mr. Venegas said there is a box for donations. Books that are taken from circulation because they are not checked out often are used for Book Bingo. He said that the Director has set up an Amazon Smiles account so that a percentage of certain purchases from Amazon goes to the Library, if so designated.

Ms. Raymond said that there is a big white box in back of the Library for book donations. She asked about expanding the Library hours and the impact that would have on the budget.

Mr. Venegas said that is something they are looking at now. They are doing a Facebook survey.

Ms. Raymond said it would be great if the Library were open on Saturdays. She said they should advertise heavily if they do extend the hours. She asked if the Trustees, when walking through the building, have noted things such as windows, the roof, or the heating system, which need repair. She asked if that would be part of the town CIP.

Mr. Venegas said the ramp was a major repair; he said any major repair would be the responsibility of the Library, not part of the town CIP.

Ms. Angowski made a motion to table the Library budget until all budgets have been reviewed by the Committee. Ms. Ranfos seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Highway Department Budget

Mr. Boisvert stated that he is serving as the Interim Road Agent until after the March Town Meeting. He has worked for the Highway Department for 31 years, he said, but is now working on tasks like the budget, with which he is not very familiar. He said that Mr. Goodine can help to answer questions.

Mr. Goodine said that the Drug Testing line reflects the fact that there are only two CDL employees, and they are the ones who must be tested. He said the tests are quarterly, and since there are only two in the pool, each has a 50/50 chance of being chosen every quarter. He said the cost could be reduced if they joined a larger pool of 100 to 300 people. For the first three quarters of this year, plus dues, the amount spent is \$546.

Mr. Boisvert said that there were five CDL employees at one time.

Mr. Goodine said that the State is going to require towns to query the drivers on a regular basis about traffic violations and arrests. This is a result of the seven Marines killed in Franconia Notch this past summer.

Ms. Ranfos asked about the vehicle fleet and anticipated vehicle repairs.

Mr. Boisvert said they have three one-ton F 150s – 2019, 2018, and 2016. He said these smaller vehicles are why they don't have as many CDL drivers. They have a 2014 International with six wheels, a 2004 backhoe, a 2013 loader, a 1997, six-wheel plow truck and a 2000 Sterling six-wheel plow truck. They also have a small Bobcat for snow removal and for occasional use at construction sites, and they have an old police cruiser. He said they do not anticipate any major repairs. He said they will be getting a new vehicle in 2020.

Ms. Angowski asked about the new vehicle.

Mr. Boisvert said it will replace the two oldest vehicles – the 1997 and the 2000. These old vehicles, he said, are costly to repair at inspection time. He noted that the vehicle replacement plan helps reduce maintenance costs because they aren't trying to keep 20-year old vehicles on the road. Also, it is safer.

Chair Klawes noted part of the narrative which might need to be reworded, as it says that vehicle maintenance costs are reduced, yet the budget is going from \$12,000 to \$13,000.

Mr. Goodine said he would have Ms. Bender look at it.

Mr. Juranty said that vehicle repairs have been going down over the past several years. A couple of years ago, it was \$17,000.

Mr. Boisvert next addressed Building Maintenance. He said that the long-term goal is a new Highway Garage. He said there is about \$200,000 in a capital reserve account for this, and the new Road Agent will be addressing that. He said that they have cable, internet and two televisions to monitor the weather. He said that no one has a cell phone now, but the new Road Agent will need one.

Chair Klawes asked if there is anything they need to look at during the interim.

Mr. Boisvert said the major concern is the condition of the building. He said that Mr. Pelissier had been looking at possible sites and had concluded that the best option is to construct a new building on the existing site, the main reason being that it would be nearly impossible to get a permit for a transfer station elsewhere.

Ms. Angowski referred to General Supplies and asked how often they used prison laborers.

Mr. Boisvert said they use these transitional workers every day. He said that Mr. Pelissier spearheaded this program. They must be watched closely, but they do a good job.

Ms. Ranfos asked if the Highway Department feeds them lunch every day.

Mr. Boisvert said that they do.

Mr. Coolidge noted that this is free labor.

Mr. Boisvert said that they are sent with a lunch every day but it is not fit for human consumption. He feels they appreciate the lunch and perform better because they get a decent lunch.

Ms. Angowski asked about the Part-time Salary line, which is up from \$14,000 to \$26,000.

Mr. Goodine said that this represents two part-timers. They are down one full-time person, and Mr. Irzyk does not plow for them anymore. One does snow plowing and performs many repair tasks for town departments. He has a CDL but he is not paid at that rate.

Ms. Ranfos asked about the Salt line. She said that actual costs were \$40,000 for both 2017 and 2018, yet only \$29,000 is being budgeted.

Mr. Goodine said that only \$28,000 has been spent so far in 2019. He said there is some salt left over, but he would have liked to have it budgeted at \$36,000.

Ms. Ranfos said she assumes that if this line goes over, it can be made up from other lines.

Mr. Boisvert said that some of this work is contracted out to Advanced; they do not use their own salt.

Chair Klawes asked if it were possible that Advanced sometimes uses town salt for its own customers.

Mr. Boisvert responded that they would not do that. He said they have a great relationship and he is sure they do not do that. They have only one truck.

Mr. Juranty asked about Road Construction Costs, where the narrative indicates that only high priority work is done, and the budgeted amount is reduced from \$191,000 to \$170,000.

Mr. Goodine said they are instituting a Road Surface Management Program whereby town roads will be systematically evaluated and designated as excellent, good, and fair. He said that once a road is designated as fair, the repair costs escalate two, three or four-fold. Roads, he said, are also ranked in terms of importance. Road Surface Management also allows planning and coordination with sewer and water departments so that work can be scheduled efficiently. He said that eventually, this line might be pulled out of the regular budget and dealt with as part of CIP or warrant articles.

Mr. Venegas asked if people could get involved and see the whole plan. He said this would help residents make decisions about approving or not approving paving projects.

Ms. Raymond noted that people tend to drive faster on newly paved roads, and that potholes actually slow them down, which is safer.

Mr. Goodine said there are always some people who want new pavement and some who do not.

Mr. Coolidge asked about striping at the end of Deerfield Road from Podunk to the town line. He said this is a very dangerous area and has been for many years.

Chair Klawes asked Mr. Boisvert to get an estimate of the cost to stripe this area for the Committee.

Ms. Ranfos said it should be a double yellow line using high-visibility paint.

Ms. Ranfos made a motion to table the Highway Department budget until all budgets have been reviewed by the Committee. Ms. Angowski seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Administrative Budgets (continued)

Mr. Goodine first presented the Health Officer budget. This position pays a \$5,000 stipend. Mr. Goodine said that this Health Officer is busier and more dedicated than any he has worked with. Regarding IT, he said the Health Officer has an old computer and may need a new one in the next budget. Training and

Mileage, he said, are up a bit because this Health Officer is actively involved in training activities. The deputy is a volunteer but also benefits from training. Equipment and Cell Phone lines are level-funded. The Welfare function is an Administration function and represents five hours per week of the salary of one Administration employee. Overtime is budgeted in case there is a weekend emergency - someone running out of fuel or having electricity shut off. The town has helpful software which tracks other types of welfare residents receive, as well as information as to whether the recipients have applied in another community. Rent is down from \$29,000 to \$22,000, based on actual costs, and food is increased from \$500 to \$600. There is also an amount budgeted for two or three burials per year. Turning to Social Services, Mr. Goodine said that the total budget request is \$23,000, made up of \$500 for the Court Appointed Child Advocate program; \$3,500 for Child and Family Services, and \$19,000 for CAP (fuel assistance). Turning to Parks & Recreation, he said that the amount for the Boys & Girls Club is \$16,000.

Mr. Rodger noted that this started out as \$1,000 several years ago, then went up to \$6,000 and now is \$16,000. He said it is a huge program.

Mr. Goodine said that this helps families who cannot afford the fees during the school year and in the summer. He continued, saying that sewer is up a bit because it was underbudgeted last year. Water is the same. Building Repairs & Maintenance is \$7,000. Equipment Repair and Maintenance is up from \$1,000 to \$1,600. He said there is always something that needs to be fixed. Heat is level-funded and Electricity is up a bit, based on actual costs.

Chair Klawes asked which vendors are used for General Supplies.

Mr. Goodine said they use three, depending on which is less expensive when they need to order. The three are Sam's Club, WB Mason, and Staples.

Chair Klawes suggested contacting the Boys & Girls Club at the state level to inquire about opportunities to save money by buying in a group or about discounts for non-profits.

Mr. Goodine said that the Patriotic, Old Home Day, and Christmas in Suncook Budgets are level-funded. He said that he is proposing an increase in the Economic Development Committee budget from \$900 to \$3,000. The Committee, he said, did not ask for this, but they are doing some great things. They have focused on 'quality of life and place' activities, which have been shown to boost economic development. They have sponsored concerts on the lawn at Town Hall, with participation of the Library, Student Council, and the Fire Department Auxiliary. They are sponsoring a holiday decorating contest and a tree-lighting activity, with the school chorus performing and the Student Council providing hot cider or cocoa and snacks. They have coordinated with the Hometown Heroes organization to offer banners for sale to family and friend of veterans, the banners to be displayed on School Street. They are also planning to purchase other banners using capital reserve funds for display in other areas of town. These will feature the bears who appear on the new welcome signs, another of the Committee's projects. The last budget item is the Tax Anticipation budget of \$15,000, rarely used but necessary in case property tax revenue does not come in when needed for expenses.

Ms. Angowski made a motion to table the Administration budget until all budgets have been reviewed by the Committee. Ms. Ranfos seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Review of Minutes

Ms. Angowski made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2019 Municipal Budget Committee meeting as amended. Ms. Keane seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Ms. Keane made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2019 Municipal Budget Committee meeting as written. Mr. Juranty seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Next Meeting

Chair Klawes announced that the next meeting will be Thursday, December 12, 2019, location to be determined.

Adjournment

Ms. Angowski made a motion to adjourn at 8:21 pm. Mr. Venegas seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

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