

Town of Newington, NH
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 15, 2020 Town Hall

Chair John Lamson called the meeting to order at 6:32pm

Present: Chair, John Lamson, Brandon Arsenault, School Board Rep, Jack O'Reilly, Bill Wright, Jamie Belanger, Jennifer Kent Weiner, John Chamberlain, Emily Savinelli, Selectmen's Rep, Ken Latchaw, Chair, Board of Selectmen, Ted Connors, Selectman, Mike Marconi, Fire Chief, EJ Hoyt, Assistant Fire Chief, Patrick Moynihan, Fire Engineer Chair, John Klanchesser, Fire Engineer, Ann Hyland Hebert, Police Chief, Mike Bilodeau, Road Agent, Len Thomas, Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Laura Coleman, Planning Board Chair, Denis Hebert, Building Inspector, Kevin Kelley, Historic District Commission member, Lulu Pickering, Residents Dana Nowell, Derrick Willson and Rick Stern, Martha Roy, Town Administrator and Eleanor Boy, Recorder.

J. Kent Weiner moved to postpone approval of the 1-8-20 Budget Committee minutes until a later date. J. Belanger seconded the motion, with all in favor.

Highway Budget Review:

Road Agent Len Thomas presented the Highway budget to the committee. The increase in the Highway budget is due to the Town taking over the maintenance of Woodbury Ave. The Town has not made the final payment to the State and doesn't plan to pay it until all the outstanding issues are resolved. The Town has hired an outside company to plow Woodbury. It is the same company that currently plows the other part of Woodbury for Portsmouth. J. O'Reilly pointed out that the salt budget line has increased and asked if the outside contractor uses our salt. L. Thomas confirmed they did. B. Arsenault asked how many CDL drivers the Highway Department had. L. Thomas said 7. J. Chamberlain expressed his concern with the application of salt and wanted to make sure that money isn't wasted because the salt isn't applied correctly. L. Thomas explained that the town doesn't use regular salt they use treated salt. It works more quickly and at a lower temperature. J. O'Reilly asked if the price of salt had gone up. L. Thomas said no, the budget line has increased because of the additional salt that is needed to maintain Woodbury Ave. J. Belanger asked if the town will be taking over any other roads in the future. T. Connors explained that the State is always trying to get rid of their roads. B. Arsenault thought that the committee should analyze the salt budget line again after the town has had Woodbury for a full year (carry over). Discussion ensued about the resurfacing budget line. The Town is following the Rockingham County Planning Commission recommendations for road maintenance that is in the report completed last year. The town will be micro-surfacing some roads this year. Micro-surfacing is a road treatment that is in between crack sealing and resurfacing. By using this process it can extend the life of the road between 3 to 5 years.

It is new technology and extends the life of the road. The Rockingham Planning Commission is tracking is going to review the roads next year and give an update to the town about the condition of the roads. Two culverts, McIntyre Road and Fox Point, will be repaired in 2020. The culvert at Little Bay Extension was repaired in 2019. M. Roy explained that a lot of road work is being held up because of the Eversource project. The roads will be analyzed by the same engineer that reviewed them preconstruction. Eversource will compensate the town for any damage their trucks have caused. Road striping has been completed; the bill hasn't come in yet. The Wilcox Way budget line did not get used in 2019. It is included in the 2020 budget. J. Kent Weiner pointed out that \$200,000 had not been spent and asked what would happen to that money. J. Lamson explained that it goes back into the budget to be voted on by the committee. E. Savinelli asked about the over expenditure in the vehicle maintenance line. L. Thomas said it was from the backhoe hydraulic repair of \$12,000. There is a 2020 proposed warrant article for adding funds towards a new backhoe. **K. Latchaw moved to approve the Highway Budget of \$702,398. J. O'Reilly seconded the motion with all in favor.**

Town Buildings and Administration Budget Review:

J. Kent Weiner asked why the maintenance and repairs budget line for the Town Hall was overspent. K. Latchaw explained that a portable generator had been purchased in order to water the pocket gardens in town and the "Pease trees" along Little Bay Road, a "mini split" was purchased for the deRochemont room and a new hot water heater was needed in the Town Hall. E. Savinelli asked why the LED conversion had been taken out of the Town Hall budget. K. Kelley explained that some buildings would be done in 2020 and some in 2021. J. Belanger thought that \$30,000 was too much to pay for electricity for the town and thought that the cost could be cut in half. K. Kelley said the town will be contracting with Eversource to convert several buildings to LED in 2020. K. Kelley explained that the Old Town Hall will have some outside painting done in 2020. The Meeting House had some structural work done in 2019 because the balcony had pulled away from the wall. The Police Station's maintenance and repair budget line increased from \$7,510 in 2019 to \$41,600 in 2020. M. Roy read the list of projects for the Police Station in 2020; Sally Port ceiling repair for \$1,700, purchasing a solid metal door for the detached garage for \$2,733, garage water proofing for \$3,000, brick sealing for \$10,800, evidence locker install for \$4,000, installing a fence around the generator for \$4,000 and LED conversion for \$7,600. The Police Station was built in 1989.

B. Arsenault asked if some of the painting projects could be bid out together to get a better price. K. Kelley explained that getting separate bids worked better so that the contractor would work within the budgets for each building.

E. Savinelli asked about the railroad depot at Bloody Point. T. Connors explained that nothing is being done on the depot now. The town has just begun talks with the State.

B. Arsenault commented that there was a lot of money being put into four buildings; The Meeting House, The Old Town Hall, the Old Parsonage and the Stone School that are not used very much. J. O'Reilly thought that the Town can't neglect these buildings. J. Belanger wanted to know if the Town is doing enough to preserve the buildings. K. Kelley thought the Town was doing enough and commented that the Meeting House and the Old Town Hall are used on a regular basis. J. Kent Weiner asked if the Stone School was secure. K. Kelley said it is locked. **J. O'Reilly moved to approve the Town Buildings and Administration budget of \$198,296. E. Savinelli seconded the motion with all in favor.**

Land Management Budget Review:

J. Kent Weiner asked about the gate maintenance and clicker budget line and how the gate gets damaged. M. Roy explained that cars push the gate open to get through and cars try and sneak through behind other cars and the gate closes on their car damaging the gate. M. Roy explained that there is a camera there and is used to identify cars that damage the gate. E. Savinelli asked about the Fox Point budget line that was overspent. M. Roy explained that the Carriage House drainage project was completed in 2019. E. Savinelli pointed out that hydro-seeding the drainage project right before Septemberfest was a waste of money. B. Wright asked about the maintenance of the tennis courts. M. Roy explained that the tennis courts maintenance comes out of the Recreation budget or the Recreation capital reserve fund. B. Wright is concerned with the drainage around the tennis courts. E. Savinelli asked about the care of trees budget line. There is only \$12,000 in the account and she knows that the Historic District Committee had asked for \$12,000 for their projects in 2020. M. Roy explained that many of the HDC tree projects could be done by the Highway Department and wouldn't affect the care of trees budget line. **E. Savinelli moved to approve the Land Management budget of \$65,726. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with all in favor.**

Code Enforcement Budget:

The Code Enforcement department brought in over \$210,000 in revenue this last year. **K. Latchaw moved to approve the Code Enforcement budget of \$133,817. J. O'Reilly seconded the motion with all in favor.**

Executive Office Budget Review:

J. Kent Weiner asked about the wages line. M. Roy explained that the wages represent the 5 part time employees in the Executive Office. E. Savinelli asked about the town's health insurance, she thought that it was a very high expense for the town. M. Roy pointed out that the Board of Selectmen have been looking at different plans for 2021 and has included that information in the budget packets. The Board is looking at a cheaper plan or increasing the employee contribution amount. At this time employees contribute 10% of their health expense. J. Belanger thought that the employees should be contributing 50% of the cost. E. Savinelli thought the family plan was very

expensive. M. Roy explained that the town is part of a pool of other small towns in the state that get their insurance together for a lower rate. J. Kent Weiner thought that the town should pick a less rich plan and increase the employee contribution. J. Kent Weiner asked what the town's strategy was. M. Roy explained that the rates have been set for 2020 and wouldn't want to change anything until the union negotiations are completed. K. Latchaw assured the committee that the Board of Selectmen has heard their concerns "loud and clear" and will make changes in 2021. The town has 26 employees on the health plan. B. Arsenault thought that M. Roy should look at the SAU's health plans to get some ideas. J. Belanger thought that there were many opportunities to save between the plan selected and the contributions. J. Kent Weiner thought that the committee was being forced to vote on something that they couldn't do anything about. E. Savinelli asked what the Board of Selectmen was doing about the high cost of health insurance. M. Roy explained that the union has the current plan and would continue the current plan until the negotiations are finished. K. Latchaw said that the Board wants to treat all the employees equally. J. Belanger thought that they should treat people equally and maintain the tax rate. J. O'Reilly thought that once the union agreement is reached then the town could have another open enrollment. J. Kent Weiner didn't like the town bringing in the Fire Department and pitting one department against the other. J. Lamson commented that he thought the Budget Committee has sent their message. The bottom line of the budget could be reduced. The Town could give the voters the chance to make the decision. E. Savinelli asked about the equipment maintenance budget line increase. M. Roy said that the executive office has a new maintenance contract for all the printers and toner cartridges for them. E. Savinelli asked about the computer expense line that was overspent. M. Roy said that 4 new computers were purchased in 2019 instead of 2020 as planned because they were at end of life or needed to be replaced.

K. Latchaw moved to approve the Executive Office budget of \$329,098. J. O'Reilly seconded the motion with all in favor.

Elections Budget Review:

The budget is higher in 2020 because there are four elections.

B. Arsenault moved to approve the Elections budget of \$17,648. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with all in favor.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Budget Review:

J. Kent Weiner moved to tentatively approve the Town Clerk/Tax Collector budget of \$73,079. E. Savinelli seconded the motion.

L. Coleman explained that she is working on getting two computers set up in the Town Clerk's office so two people can help residents at a time. J. Belanger asked if two people are needed. L. Coleman said at tax time two people are needed and residents have been asking her to get another computer so two people can work at a time. B. Arsenault asked what the life of a computer is. L. Coleman thought 6 or 7 years. B. Arsenault asked if the increase in wages is due to the four elections. L. Coleman said yes.

J. Lamson called for a vote on the Town Clerk/Tax Collector budget, with all in favor.
Finance & Assessing Budget Review:

M. Marconi stated that the town will be saving \$49,000 in assessing fees in 2020 as they bid out. The Assessing budget has the following components. The Residential assessing piece is \$20,000, clerical data entry that will be up to \$10,000, the Vision assessing software annual license is \$4590, the industrial assessing contract is \$48,000 and the expert testimony is estimated at \$37,000. There are currently two lawsuits for abatements, for the two power plants, with approximately \$90 million at issue. In the past the town has been able to work out a settlement with the power plants for 3 years. These two power plants contribute 52% of the town's taxes. **J. O'Reilly moved to approve the Finance and Assessing budget of \$146,490. E. Savinelli seconded the motion with all in favor.**

Legal Budget Review:

J. Kent Weiner asked why the general legal budget line had increased from \$14,700 to \$20,000. M. Roy explained that there are "donor town" issues and several seacoast towns, including Newington will be hiring a firm to lobby for them. **B. Arsenault moved to approve the Legal budget of \$96,004. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with all in favor.**

Elections Budget Review:

The budget is higher in 2020 because there are four elections.

B. Arsenault moved to approve the Elections budget of \$17,648. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with all in favor.

Insurance Budget Review:

K. Latchaw moved to approve the Insurance budget of \$267,665. J. O'Reilly seconded the motion with all in favor.

Regional Associations Budget Review:

K. Latchaw moved to approve the Regional Associations budget of \$48,399. B. Arsenault seconded the motion with J. Chamberlain opposed and all others in favor.

Street Lighting Budget Review:

B. Arsenault moved to approve the Street Lighting budget of \$20,000. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with all in favor.

Transfer Station Budget Review:

J. Belanger asked what happened to the compactor. K. Latchaw explained that at the beginning of the project the Board was told that there was 3 phase power at the transfer station. As time progressed the Board found out that there wasn't 3 phase power at the Transfer Station, and it would cost \$100,000 to get it there. The project was discontinued at that point. J. Chamberlain moved to reduce the transfer station budget by \$28,000 to eliminate the recycle budget line. J. Chamberlain thought it was an

unnecessary expense. J. O'Reilly seconded the motion for discussion. M. Roy will ask Craig Daigle, the Transfer Station Manager, to write a letter to the committee explaining the fees associated with recycling and how much it costs per bin.

J. Lamson called for a vote on the amended Transfer Station budget. J. Chamberlain in favor and all others opposed. J. O'Reilly moved to approve the Transfer Station budget of \$71,254. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with J. Chamberlain opposed and all others in favor.

Residential Waste Collection Budget Review:

B. Arsenault moved to approve the Residential Waste Collection budget of \$94,500. E. Savinelli seconded the motion with J. Chamberlain opposed and all others in favor.

Pest Control Budget Review:

E. Savinelli asked if the town bid out these services. M. Roy responded yes. E. Savinelli asked if the town could send out emails next mosquito season to let the residents know when the company would be spraying for mosquitos so they could close their windows. E. Boy will do that next summer.

J. Kent Weiner moved to approve the Pest Control budget of \$38,000. B. Arsenault seconded the motion with J. Chamberlain and J. Belanger opposed and all others in favor.

Health Budget Review:

B. Arsenault moved to approve the Health budget of \$2,000. J. O'Reilly seconded the motion with all in favor.

Welfare Budget Review:

J. O'Reilly moved to approve the Welfare budget of \$5,000. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with all in favor.

Debt Budget Review:

J. Kent Weiner moved to approve the Debt budget of \$133,775. E. Savinelli seconded the motion with all in favor.

Capital Outlay Budget Review:

E. Savinelli moved to approve the Capital Outlay budget of \$107,530. B. Arsenault seconded the motion with all in favor.

Town Warrant Article Review

Major Roads Capital Reserve Warrant Article for \$132,000:

T. Connors explained that this \$132,000 came from the Eversource payment to the town for the laydown area. This warrant article would have no impact on the tax rate. This money would be used to build out the Industrial Corridor to Gosling Road. This road would help with the traffic on Woodbury Ave. and it would give access to more private

development in this area. J. O'Reilly mentioned that this extension of the road is in the Master Plan. K. Latchaw said that Newington doesn't offer any type of incentives to businesses to locate in town. B. Arsenault thought that Newington had a lot of good points to offer businesses. J. Kent Weiner asked if the town could offer a different incentive instead of building a road.

J. Chamberlain moved to approve \$132,000 for the Major Roads Capital Reserve Warrant article. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with B. Arsenault opposed and all others in favor.

Langdon Library Building Capital Reserve Fund Warrant Article for \$10,000:

J. O'Reilly pointed out that the Library Trustees had submitted a warrant article for \$80,000 to build a complete parking lot at the Library. In 2013 when the Library addition was completed money had run out and the parking lot was not able to be completed. The trustees deferred submitting a warrant article for a parking lot until the bond had been paid off. M. Roy explained that the Board of Selectmen are very interested in the idea of expanding the parking in the historic area but would like to see a parking lot for the entire historic area. They would like this to be studied by all of the Historic District affected groups. J. O'Reilly explained that this new parking lot would be better because the handicap parking space would be level with the back door of the library. This warrant article would add 10 spaces, double the amount that is there now. The engineering has already been completed. J. Belanger didn't think that parking was a burden at the Library. K. Latchaw explained that the Board of Selectmen support the concept of a parking lot expansion, but one for the whole area. **J. Chamberlain moved to approve \$10,000 for the Library Parking Lot Capital Reserve Warrant article. E. Savinelli seconded the motion with J. O'Reilly opposed and all others in favor.**

Conservation Fund Capital Reserve Warrant Article for \$20,000:

B. Arsenault moved to approve \$20,000 for the Conservation Capital Reserve Warrant article. J. Chamberlain seconded the motion with all others in favor.

Employee Severance Trust Fund Capital Reserve Warrant Article for \$30,000:

J. Kent Weiner asked what the cap was for payout for the employees. M Roy said 240 hours. J. Kent Weiner thought that that number was very high and asked if the town's policy was a use it or lose it. M. Roy said that no time over 240 hours can be carried forward. B. Arsenault thought that the town's policy should be reviewed by the Board of Selectmen. E. Hoyt stated that 240 hours was only 10 days for firefighters. **J. Chamberlain moved to approve \$30,000 for the Employee Severance Trust Fund Capital Reserve Warrant article. J. O'Reilly seconded the motion with all others in favor.**

Highway Vehicle/Equipment Replacement or Major Repairs Capital Reserve Warrant Article for \$25,000:

M. Roy told the committee that this capital reserve account will be split into two capital reserve accounts one for the replacement of highway vehicles/equipment and one for major repairs of highway vehicles/equipment. This \$25,000 will be put in the replacement of Highway vehicles/equipment. The repair of highway vehicles/equipment will be funded next year (carry over). E. Savinelli asked what the amount that qualifies a repair to be a major repair and the money taken out of the capital reserve fund. The department will take the repair out of their regular repair budget line until the department's bottom line would be overspent, then it would be taken out of the capital reserve account. **B. Arsenault moved to approve \$25,000 for the Highway Vehicle/Equipment Replacement Capital Reserve Warrant article. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with all others in favor.**

Town Wide Revaluation Capital Reserve Warrant Article for \$25,000:

The plan is to put \$25,000 in the account for the next 4 years (carry over).

J. Kent Weiner moved to approve \$25,000 for the Town Wide Revaluation Capital Reserve Warrant article. J. O'Reilly seconded the motion with all others in favor.

Historic District Building Restoration Warrant Article for \$20,000:

This is the \$20,000 that Eversource gave the town. There will be no effect on the tax rate. This money must be used for historic district building restoration and must be preapproved by the State Historic Preservation office. It also must be used in the next 5 years. **J. Chamberlain moved to approve \$20,000 for the Historic District Building Restoration Warrant article. E. Savinelli seconded the motion with all others in favor.**

Recreation Facilities Capital Reserve Warrant Article for \$10,000:

The Recreation Committee would like to replace the playground equipment at the Old Town Hall.

B. Arsenault moved to approve \$10,000 for the Recreation Facilities Capital Reserve Warrant article. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with all others in favor.

Town Generators Capital Reserve Warrant Article for \$10,000:

B. Arsenault questioned how much should be put in this capital reserve account. M. Roy said that there are 4 generators in town, one at the Town Hall, one at the Fire Station, one at the Police Station and one at the Town Garage. K. Kelley stated that the Town Hall generator needs to be upgraded because it is 25% below capacity and since the Town Hall is a designated shelter it needs to run at 100% capacity. J. O'Reilly asked if the town had looked at grants for generators. P. Moynihan expressed that after the 2006 ice storm, shelters and generators became very important. J. Lamson asked that if the Town Hall needs to get a new generator, that M. Roy bring it to the Budget Committee first (carry over).

J. Chamberlain moved to approve \$10,000 for the Town Generators Capital Reserve Warrant article. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with all others in favor.

Police Radio/Electronics Capital Reserve Warrant Article for \$5,000:

J. O'Reilly moved to approve \$5,000 for the Police Radio/Electronics Capital Reserve Warrant article. B. Arsenault seconded the motion with all others in favor.

Cemetery Columbarium Capital Reserve Warrant Article for \$4,000:

J. O'Reilly moved to approve \$4,000 for the Cemetery Columbarium Capital Reserve Warrant article. J. Belanger seconded the motion with all others in favor.

B. Arsenault asked the Board of Selectmen to look at the agreement between the Town of Newington and Pease for the Police coverage and the Fire coverage for the wildlife refuge. T. Connors agreed that the contract needs to be reviewed and the amounts increased for today's expenses incurred by the town. If the town wasn't responsible for the refuge, then the Fire Department wouldn't need to have a forestry truck. Discussion ensued about other areas in town where the forestry truck is used. Fox Point had a fire this year and the forestry truck was used.

J. Kent Weiner asked that the Portsmouth Water contract be added to the discussion. The pipe goes through Newington, so Newington should get a break because of this. T. Connors said that Portsmouth water is replacing the pipe going through Newington. J. O'Reilly doesn't think that they should charge for water in public buildings.

K. Latchaw moved to adjourn at 10:11pm. J. O'Reilly seconded the motion with all in favor.

Carry Over List from the 1-15-20 Budget Committee Meeting:

1. Analyze the salt usage after the town has had Woodbury Ave for a year.
2. The Highway repair capital reserve account will be funded in 2021.
3. Put \$25,000 in the revaluation capital reserve for four years, 2020, 2021, 2022 & 2023.
4. Committee asked that if the town decides to purchase a new generator it be brought to them for review.

Respectfully submitted,

**Eleanor Boy
Recorder**