

Town of Newington, NH
Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 7th, 2020 Remote Via Zoom

Attending Meeting by Phone: Chair Ted Connors, Selectman Mike Marconi, Selectman Ken Latchaw, Martha Roy, Town Administrator and Eleanor Boy, Recorder.

T. Connors called the meeting to order at 3:00pm.

Due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this Board is authorized to meet electronically.

Minutes Approval: M. Marconi moved to approve the minutes of November 16th, 2020 and November 23rd, 2020. K. Latchaw seconded the motion. T. Connors asked for a roll call vote: M. Marconi-Yes, K. Latchaw-Yes, T. Connors-Yes. All were in favor.

Manifest Approval: K. Latchaw moved to approve the manifests for \$22,090.45 dated 11/19/2020, \$97,362.92 dated 11/23/2020 and \$625,995.29 dated 12/3/2020. M. Marconi seconded the motion. T. Connors asked for a roll call vote: M. Marconi-Yes, K. Latchaw-Yes, T. Connors-Yes. All were in favor.

Executive Office 2021 Budget:

Overall, the 2021 budget is flat compared to the 2020 budget. The wages line has increased by \$9,000. There are two reasons for the increase. The Town hired Paul Deschaine to represent the Town in the "Donor Town" issue. P. Deschaine has been monitoring the steering committee meetings and the Education Funding Committee meetings. This is a very important issue for the Town of Newington and the Board of Selectmen hired P. Deschaine to monitor the issue for the Town. The Town is going to hire a part time person to record all town meetings. The recordings will then be uploaded to the Town of Newington website. The retirement and health insurance expense lines have been reduced. M. Roy is getting quotes for the Town's computer services. One from the Fire Department's consultant, the Police Department's consultant and one other. A committee will be formed to evaluate the bids when they come in.

Police Department 2021 Budget:

The Police Department's 2021 budget is \$54,000 more than their 2020 budget. The health insurance line has increased. The Police Department will have \$36,000 left over from their 2020 budget that will be returned to the undesignated fund.

K. Latchaw wanted to make sure that all departments understand that the amount that the departments are saving from their 2020 budgets is only expenses that have been saved, not revenues plus any saved money in expenses.

Library 2021 Budget:

The health insurance expense line has increased due to a plan change by one employee. The Library employees will not be taking the COLA increase, but will be giving out merit raises in 2021.

Fire Department 2021 Budget:

The Board has received a summary sheet from the Fire Department showing a \$41,000 decrease from their 2020 budget to their 2021 budget. They were able to save money in the wages and retirement expense lines.

Overall 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget is \$600,000 less than the 2020 budget. There are several reasons for the decrease; Wilcox Way for \$75,000, \$140,000 for the Safety Lane, the Library parking lot for \$80,000, Conservation warrant article for \$75,000, the salt expense line in the highway budget has been reduced, the Fire Department's budget has decreased.

The Donor Town issue is a concern. If this goes back into effect \$2 could be added to the tax rate. In 2001 the tax rate was \$15.88. T. Connors thought that P. Deschaine has been doing a great job working with Jane Ferini and advocating for the Town of Newington. The money that the Town puts into this issue will be well worth it. K. Latchaw thought that the Town should look up the arguments the town used 20 years ago to fight this issue and use them again. T. Connors thought that the most effective action to do at this time would be to reach out to our State Representatives in the house. The Board asked M. Roy to ask P. Deschaine to come to a Board of Selectmen meeting. T. Connors reminded everyone that the last time this was an issue the Board of Selectmen didn't put any money into the infrastructure of the Town and the Town is still paying for it.

Capital Reserve Items in 2021 Budget:

The Capital Reserve items are \$63,000 more than in 2020. This is due to many projects that need to be completed and the 20-year Capital Improvement Plans for the Fire Department and Highway Department that were developed this year. There is a warrant article for a compactor for the Transfer Station. The Town looked into getting a compactor earlier in the year but found out that the compactor requires three phase power and the transfer station doesn't have three phase power. Eversource told the Town it would cost between \$90,000-\$100,000 to bring three phase power to the transfer station. M. Roy has contacted Eversource again for a quote and expects to hear from them by the end of the week. There are no grants available.

Cemetery 2021 Budget:

The Cemetery 2021 budget is \$3,300 less than their 2020 budget. K. Latchaw asked about the trees in the Cemetery that need to be trimmed. There isn't any money in the Cemetery budget for it. T. Connors said that the Historic District Commission and the Cemetery Trustees are going to get together and decide what to do.

Code Enforcement 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget is \$4,000 more than 2020. The increase is due to the COLA increase and the increase in retirement.

Conservation 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget for the Conservation Commission includes \$1,000 in the legal expense line. The Board of Selectmen recommend that the legal expense line be reduced to \$0.

Debt Service 2021 Budget:

The 2021 Debt Service budget is \$22,000 lower than in 2020. This is due to the fire truck lease ends in March.

Economic Development Committee 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget is \$1,000 less than the 2020 budget. K. Latchaw talked about an article that he had read about malls across the country. T. Connors talked about an article he read about the proposed transformation of the Portland Mall in Maine. The EDC is going to sit down with the Planning Board to try and get everyone on the same page.

Elections 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget is \$9,700 less than the 2020 budget because there is only one election next year.

Finance and Assessing 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget is \$152,000 less than the 2021 budget. The Safety Lane has been removed. Assessing has increased in anticipation of expert testimony in the abatement lawsuits.

Fire Department 2021 Budget:

The Fire Department's 2021 budget is \$41,000 less than the 2020 budget. The 2021 budget includes \$6,000 in the legal expense line. The Board of Selectmen recommend that the legal expense line be reduced to \$0.

Highway 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget is \$147,985 less than the 2020 budget. Wilcox Way has been completed and the salt expense line has been reduced.

Historic District Commission 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget is the same as the 2020 budget.

Insurance 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget is \$14,886 more than the 2020 budget. T. Connors explained that claims drive insurance rates. The Town recently came to a settlement with an employee, that settlement will affect the Town's rates for years. Employees will be educated on worker's comp in 2021 to try and bring down the rate in 2022. There will be classes on safety.

Land Management 2021 Budget:

K. Latchaw thought that there wasn't money in the Care of Trees expense line to cover what the Town and HDC wants to do in 2021. M. Roy thought that \$12,000 was enough for everything, but she will confirm the HDC's number with HDC Chair L. Pickering.

Pest Control 2021 Budget:

K. Latchaw asked if all the buildings in town get the pest control service? M. Roy responded yes.

Health 2021 Budget:

The Health expense line has been reduced to \$1 because no residents have asked to have their blood tested in 2 years.

Welfare 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget has increased because there are a lot more requests for help because of Covid.

Planning Board 2021 Budget:

The 2021 Planning budget is less than their 2020 budget.

Police Department 2021 Budget:

The Police Department have included \$1,000 in a legal expense line. The Board of Selectmen recommend that the legal expense line be reduced to \$0.

Recreation Committee 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget is the same as the 2020 budget.

Sewer 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget is a little bit lower than the 2020 budget. K. Latchaw asked about how the collection of sewer fees were going. M. Marconi said that he talked to the Sewer Commission Chair Skip Cole and he said that the revenues were coming in as expected.

Street Lighting 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget is \$3,500 lower than the 2020 budget.

Town Buildings 2021 Budget:

The LED conversion for the town buildings is included in the 2021 budget but may be removed if the Board of Selectmen decide to start the project in 2020 and pay for it with 2020 savings.

Fire Station 2021 Budget:

Asbestos tile removal is included in the 2021 budget. The Board asked M. Roy to ask the Fire Department if they can delay the removal of tiles until the second-floor addition is done. The Fire Chief has shown M. Roy plans for the second floor that was done years ago.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget includes and increase in the Town Clerk's salary to \$45,000. This increase would bring the Town Clerk up to the middle of the pack of Town Clerks. The Board suggested that the Town Clerk's salary be increased in increments over a few years. M. Roy will meet with L. Coleman to explain. The 2021 budget also includes the additional of another clerk to be trained to take over when L. Coleman retires. T. Connors commented that D. Caradonna, the Deputy Clerk, is doing a great job.

Transfer Station 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget has increased by \$16,000. \$7,000 of it is for increased recycling charges and the rest is for hauling. Hauling has increased because during the pandemic everyone is home more, so people are cleaning out attics and basements and doing a lot of year work which increases the amount of stuff that needs to be hauled away. In the past the town was able to bring yard waste to the Eversource wood burning plant to be burned, but that option doesn't exist anymore. T. Connors mentioned that many towns have done away with recycling because of the increased costs.

Residential Waste 2021 Budget:

The 2021 budget is \$3,000 more than the 2020 budget.

Special Warrant Articles 2021:

There are three special warrant articles. One for \$15,000 for new gym equipment for the Fire Department, one for \$50,000 for a Fire Department pick up truck and one for \$47,000 for a compactor at the Transfer Station.

2021 Budget-Board of Selectmen Recommendations:

The Conservation Commission legal expense line be reduced to \$0.

The Fire Department legal expense line be reduced to \$0.

The Police Department legal expense line be reduced to \$0.

The Town Clerk/Tax Collector salary line be reduced by \$4,000.

The trash compactor special warrant article be put on hold until the town hears from Eversource about Phase 3 power at the Transfer Station.

K. Latchaw moved to bring forward the 2021 budget with the recommended changes listed above. **M. Marconi seconded the motion. T. Connors asked for a roll call vote: M. Marconi-Yes, K. Latchaw-Yes, T. Connors-Yes. All were in favor.**

M. Marconi commended all the departments and committees for stepping up and doing their part to reduce the 2021 budget. K. Latchaw thanked everyone for all their efforts.

Facility Use Request:

M. Marconi moved to approve the following request.

Marcia Merchant-Old Town Hall-December 28th-Wedding

K. Latchaw seconded the motion. T. Connors asked for a roll call vote: M. Marconi-Yes, K. Latchaw-Yes, T. Connors-Yes. All were in favor.

Adjournment: M. Marconi moved to adjourn at 4:09pm. K. Latchaw seconded the motion. T. Connors asked for a roll call vote: M. Marconi-Yes, K. Latchaw-Yes, T. Connors-Yes. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eleanor Boy
Recorder