

Town of Newington, NH  
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, January 19, 2022 Town Hall

Chair John Lamson called the meeting to order at 6:00pm

**Present:** Budget Committee members: John Lamson, Chair; Brandon Arsenault, Vice-Chair, Rick Stern (Budget Committee member and Sewer Commissioner), Jamie Belanger, Emily Savinelli, John Chamberlain, Jennifer Kent Weiner, Chris Wayss, Selectman's Rep. Ted Connors and School Board Rep Chris Russo.

**Guests:** Selectman Bob Blonigen, Police Commission Chair Brenda Blonigen, Police Commissioner Bill Wright, Police Commissioner Jack Hoyt, Police Chief Mike Bilodeau, Police Admin Assistant Taylor Fiori, Police Consultant Keri Wearing, Fire Chief EJ Hoyt, Assistant Fire Chief Pat Moynihan, Sewer Plant Manager Denis Messier, Sewer Secretary Gail Klanchesser, Newington School Principal Peter Latchaw, SAU50 Superintendent Salvatore Petralia, SAU50 Business Administrator Susan Penny, HDC Chair Lulu Pickering, Fire Engineer Ann Hyland Hebert, Finance Director Sheryl Bagley, Martha Roy, Town Administrator.

**Minutes:**

**E. Savinelli moved to approve the minutes of January 5, 2022. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion. All were in favor.**

**Police Department Budget:**

**B. Arsenault moved to tentatively approve the Police Department budget of \$1,912,389. R. Stern seconded the motion.**

M. Bilodeau presented the police department budget to the committee. The air show took place in 2021. Everything went smoothly but was taxing on the police personnel. M. Bilodeau thanked residents that lent their off road vehicles for the department to use during the air show to get personnel back and forth. The department achieved national accreditation in 2021. M. Bilodeau thanked the residents for their support during this process. The department will get evaluated each year and get an in house evaluation every four years. Motor vehicle stops increased by 50% in 2021, arrests increased by 10% and vehicle accidents decreased. E. Savinelli asked why health expenses increased when insurance actually went down by 8%. M. Bilodeau said that it was because of the health plans that were picked by the officers. J. Lamson asked about the 3% COLA and the step increases for the department. B. Arsenault asked about the leave taken for officers that have contracted covid. M. Bilodeau said that if the officer contracted covid

during a call then administrative leave would be used, if they got covid from gathering with friends etc, then it would be sick time used. E. Savinelli asked why the telephone budget line had increased. M. Bilodeau explained that the department was getting a new phone system similar to the systems in the Fire Department and the Town Hall. M. Bilodeau said that the police phones went down two times in 2021. The new phone system will go directly to dispatch after three rings, if the internet goes down the officers will get a message on their cell phones and if a resident calls the department after hours it will go directly to dispatch. B. Arsenault asked how the \$20,000 would be used. M. Bilodeau said that \$6,000 of that \$20,000 is a one time charge so the budget line will be \$6,000 less in 2023. J. Kent Weiner asked about the increase in the uniform expense line. M. Bilodeau said that the increase is due to 4 or 5 officers need to have new vests this year. Each vest is \$1,400. The department must purchase the vests first and then they will get 50% reimbursed. C. Wayss asked about the increase in the fuel expense line and if the state contract was for multiple years or one year. M. Bilodeau said that he took an average of how many gallons they had used over the last three years and came up with 94,000 gallons. The department uses a WexBank card that allows them to get fuel at the state bid price of \$2.90/gallon and it is tax free. J. Kent Weiner asked about the dues expense line increase. M. Bilodeau said that they didn't have a negotiator or operator this year so they didn't receive the discount for dues. They will be adding one to the team this next year. B. Arsenault questioned why the department was asking for \$170,000 more for the budget in 2022 and is 10% more then they spent in 2021. M. Bilodeau said that everything is more expensive this year.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Police Department budget. All were in favor.**

#### **Emergency Management Budget:**

**E. Savinelli moved to tentatively approve the Emergency Management budget of \$19,893. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.**

M. Bilodeau explained that the emergency food supply for the town needed to be replaced. They had replaced half of it in 2021 and will replace the second half in 2022. They also need to buy more traffic cones and traffic equipment. They realized during the air show that they needed these items and the air show is coming back every two years. E. Hoyt is looking into grant money for these items. B. Arsenault asked why no money had been spent out of the secretary line in 2021. M. Bilodeau said she hasn't been paid yet.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Police Department budget. All were in favor.**

### **School Budget:**

J. Lamson spoke about how important it is to have a school board member on the budget committee.

The committee will discuss warrant article #2 first. This warrant article is for the new CBA agreement for the district. The current contract expires on 6/30/2022. The employees that are not on salary will get the following increases each year of the contract. Year one 3%, year two 3%, year three-five 3.1%. The employees that are salary will get the following increases; 2.8% for years one and two and 2.9% for years three, four and five. The warrant includes anticipated increases for the current staff. J. Lamson asked if the school board thought that this was the best deal they could get. C. Russo said yes.

**The budget committee voted to recommend the school warrant article #2 10-0.**

**B. Arsenault moved to tentatively recommend the school warrant #1 for \$2,398,777. E. Savinelli seconded the motion.**

S. Penny said that the overall budget has decreased by \$13,662. The budget would decrease the school portion of the town's tax rate by \$.01, the CBA would increase it by \$.03 for a net of a \$.02 increase. P. Latchaw said there are 52 students in the school, 7 of them are tuition students and he expects the same numbers for the 2022-2023 school year. E. Savinelli asked for the teacher breakdown in the school. P. Latchaw said that K-2 all have separate classrooms with their own teacher in the morning and then they are combined in the afternoon. Grades 3 & 4 are together in one classroom and grades 5 & 6 are together. J. Chamberlain asked how much the tuition is and how they came up with that number. P. Latchaw said that it is \$7,900. They look at the tuition for three private schools in the area and take the average. J. Chamberlain asked about the SAU50 budget. S. Petralia said that Newington has 12.5% of the SAU50 budget at \$437,955. The 12.5% is based on Newington's valuation and the average daily attendance. They combine the two numbers and multiply by the \$1,900,000 SAU50 budget. B. Arsenault asked where the valuation came from. S. Penny said the town's tax assessment. C. Wayss asked if it is all of Newington. S. Penny said yes. B. Arsenault noted that Newington's portion went from 8% to 12%. S. Penny said that is because of the valuation increase. J. Kent Weiner asked when the town changed assessors. M. Roy said in 2020. J. Chamberlain asked about the SAU50 office staff and the role of the SAU. S. Petralia said that there is a staff of 11 and the role of the SAU is to provide support to the schools in the SAU, Greenland, Newington, New Castle and Rye. The SAU follows the Plan for Effective Teaching to monitor and evaluate the staff at the four schools. B. Arsenault thought it was important to understand the effect the valuation going up has on the town's portion of the SAU budget. C. Wayss asked about the asbestos budget line. P. Latchaw said that they are testing the surfaces at the school. C. Wyass asked

why the budget line ending in 430 had gone up 113%. P. Latchaw explained that several budget lines had been combined into that 430 budget line. Other lines have gone to zero because they are transferred to 430. E. Savinelli asked about the health insurance line increase of 14.8%. S. Penny said that they have to budget for the maximum increase, they are hoping that it will be lower. J. Belanger asked if it makes sense to send Newington students to Portsmouth in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade instead of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. S. Petralia said that Newington is in the middle of its agreement with Portsmouth and could be considered by the school board when that agreement comes to an end. J. Lamson reminded everyone that the school board decides some budgetary decisions. J. Chamberlain thought that the custodial supplies expense line is too high at \$9,000. P. Latchaw explained that includes all cleaning supplies and items for building maintenance. J. Chamberlain asked about the computer expense line. It is high because they purchased new computers last year. P. Latchaw said that the computer replacement is on a 4 year rotation of devices. This insures that all units are in good working order for teaching and learning. Every Newington student has an IPAD and students in grades 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> have Macbooks. The SAU50 Tech Director is called if there is a problem with these devices. Before the SAU had a tech director, if the server went down then an outside vendor had to be called and it could take 24 hours. Now the tech director can be there in 20 minutes. B. Arsenault asked if the server had gone down this year. P. Latchaw said it did yesterday morning. A joint board meets quarterly to discuss issues and approve the budget. B. Arsenault asked what the maintenance objectives expense line for \$10,000 would be used for. P. Latchaw said they are replacing windows. B. Arsenault asked why this expense wouldn't come out of the capital reserve account. P. Penny said that there is \$81,645 in the capital reserve account, nothing was spent out of it this year. C. Wayss asked what would qualify as a major expense. P. Latchaw said that the last time money was used out of the capital reserve account was to put the new roof on the school, it could also be used to replace a boiler, pave the parking lot. C. Wayss asked how much the tempered glass windows cost. P. Latchaw said \$1,000 each.

**B. Arsenault moved to amend the school budget by reducing it by \$10,000. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.** E. Savinelli asked if they had gotten quotes for the windows. P. Latchaw said they received two, both were for around \$10,000. C. Wayss pointed out that there was an expense line for window repair for \$2,000. S. Penny said that that line was used for repairing windows not replacing them. C. Russo said that the capital reserve fund could be used for unanticipated expenses that come up and need to be addressed. The school board has a capital improvement plan for the building that they follow. B. Arsenault understands that planned expenses should be in the budget but is concerned that millions of taxpayers dollars are being raised and put into capital reserve accounts and are not being used. **J. Lamson called for a vote on the amendment. B. Arsenault and J. Kent Weiner in favor. All others opposed. The amendment fails.**

**The budget committee voted to recommend the school warrant article #1 10-0.**

### **Sewer Budget:**

J. Lamson reminded everyone that R. Stern is making the sewer presentation but can still vote on the sewer budget as a member of the budget committee.

R. Stern presented a video of the sewer facility to the committee showing every room in the plant including the two floors that are underground. It also showed what the water looks like coming into the plant and what it looks like after it goes through the plant.

J. Lamson said that the Enterprise fund is funded by an annual assessment that is added on top of the sewer rates. The rate payers pay it. If there is an unexpected major expense then it is paid out of the enterprise fund, sometimes it gets reimbursed. They recently replaced pipes that will hopefully last a long time. J. Belanger asked how much they would like to keep in the fund. R. Stern said they like to have at least one year's budget amount in there. The enterprise fund is used for emergencies in case something major fails and needs to be fixed immediately. The sewer checkbook pays for all their normal expenses. The way to get the rates to go down is by getting more users. The plant has plenty of capacity, we need more users. R. Stern said that they could have a good plan to reduce rates, but then new tests are required and new EPA standards that have to be complied to. They don't tell us ahead of time. E. Savinelli asked how many more users do we need to make the rates go down? Would a full mall do it? R. Stern said that it is very hard to figure out because usage varies so much. R. Stern said that the Sewer Commission looked at the budget again and reduced it by \$77,000. J. Kent Weiner said that she would be willing to pay more if it benefits the bay. Newington has a Class A plant that has won awards and we have to pay for it but it helps the bay so it is worth it. R. Stern said that they are done with the upgrades for now. Newington did the upgrades before most other towns in the area. J. Kent Weiner said that Newington has a great tax rate, the sewer rates may be high but it balances out. Some businesses are affected more than others. R. Stern said there would be no surcharge this year and he would like to see the surcharge go away. The upgrades to the plant will mean a decrease in the maintenance fund. C. Wayss asked if there was another way that money gets into the enterprise fund. R. Stern said it is funded for large projects. C. Wayss asked what the EPA upgrade expense line was used for. D. Messier said it is used for testing for PFOAs and sludge. That line used to be \$100,000 and it has been reduced to \$50,000.

**B. Arsenault moved to approve the Sewer budget of \$1,292,491. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion. All were in favor.**

**Article A: To add \$200,000 to the Replacement of Vehicles Operated by the Fire Department Capital Reserve Fund.**

No Discussion.

**E. Savinelli moved to recommend Warrant Article A. C. Wayss seconded the motion.**

**J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend Article A. J. Chamberlain opposed all others in favor 8-1.**

**Article B: The Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Fire Union and the Town of Newington. \$181,872 in 2022, \$51,749 in 2023, \$54,062 in 2024, \$56,628 in 2025 and \$58,991 in 2025.**

P. Moynihan explained that there were a couple of big things in the agreement. One was to have different wages depending on the firefighter's EMS certifications and the other was a wage adjustment to keep the department competitive with other departments in the area. There is an 8% wage increase in year one because the union firefighters haven't received any COLA or step increase since 2019. In the second, third, fourth and fifth years the COLA will be 2%. E. Hoyt said that if the town's COLA is 3%, the union will only get a 2% COLA. J. Lamson asked if the Board of Fire Engineers approved this contract. A. Hyland Hebert said that they had. She and BOFE Chair John Klanchesser were on the negotiating team. The new contract also includes a vacation buy back policy that is also being extended to town employees. Discussion ensued about the number of vacation days per year and holiday pay.

**J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend Article B. All were in favor 9-0.**

**Article C: To add \$100,000 to the Major Road Work Capital Reserve Fund.**

**E. Savinelli moved to recommend Warrant Article C. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.**

E. Savinelli asked about the current balance in the account. M. Roy said \$368,000. E. Savinelli asked about any grant money that was put in this account. M. Roy said that the Town had received \$50,000 from Eversource in 2021 and that money was used in 2021 to pave part of Nimble Hill Road. J. Kent Weiner asked the amount added to this fund last year. M. Roy said \$132,000. M. Roy went on to say that the Town has a capital improvement plan for primarily the 4 major roads in town, Shattuck, Gosling, Woodbury and Piscataqua. Shattuck Way is the next major road that will be paved, this money will be used for that project in the future. B. Arsenault asked about the paving expense line in the Highway Department's budget. M. Roy said that money is used for paving the roads in the residential part of town. J. Lamson explained that this capital reserve fund is like a savings account for the future projects. E. Savinelli said that one

road in town had been crack sealed and then paved over and she thought that it was a waste of money. T. Connors said that a section of Little Bay Road was crack sealed but then went on to deteriorate quicker than anticipated and needed to be paved for safety reasons.

**J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend Article C. All were in favor 9-0.**

**Article D: To add \$50,000 to the Replacement of the Town Ambulance and Any Major Medical Equipment Capital Reserve Fund.**

**B. Arsenault moved to recommend Warrant Article D. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.**

The current balance in the fund is \$236,424. The cost of a new ambulance is \$425,000. E. Hoyt said that they might be able to push out purchasing a new ambulance another year, but will have to evaluate it when the time comes. R. Stern asked if they would consider buying a diesel ambulance. P. Moynihan said that they are considering it but is concerned with the upkeep of a diesel vehicle. C. Wayss asked what the qualifier is for major medical equipment. P. Moynihan said that it is usually equipment that is over \$5,000; life pads, IV pumps, monitors.

**J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend Article D. All were in favor 9-0.**

**Article E: To add \$20,000 to the Library Building Capital Reserve Fund.**

**E. Savinelli moved to recommend Warrant Article E. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.**

The current balance of this fund is \$12,000. The Board of Selectmen voted to recommend this article 3-0 at their meeting last night.

**J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend Article E. All were in favor 9-0.**

**Article F: To add \$15,000 to the Replacement of Vehicles Operated by the Highway Department Capital Reserve Fund.**

**E. Savinelli moved to recommend Warrant Article F. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.**

The current balance in this fund is \$429. The balance is low because the Highway Department purchased a backhoe in 2021.

**J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend Article F. All were in favor 9-0.**

**Article G: To add \$10,000 to the Town Recreational Facilities and Equipment Capital Reserve Fund.**

**E. Savinelli moved to recommend Warrant Article G. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.**

The current balance in this fund is \$36,000. B. Arsenault questioned why the Recreation Committee would need \$46,000 in this account. M. Roy said that this fund is used to repair the tennis court and baseball field when needed. B. Arsenault asked if the town had quotes for those repairs. The Recreation Committee will be asked for details.

**B. Arsenault moved to table the recommendation for this warrant article until the town receives bids for the projects. C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor.**

**Article H: To add \$10,000 to the Police Computer Equipment Capital Reserve Fund.**

**B. Arsenault moved to recommend Warrant Article H. E. Savinelli seconded the motion.**

There is currently \$10,000 in this fund. M. Bilodeau said that this fund would be used to replace the server at the Police Station in the next couple of years. The cap for this fund is \$35,000.

**J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend Article H. J. Chamberlain opposed. All others were in favor 8-1.**

**Article I: To Establish a Capital Reserve Fund Known as the Historical Preservation Capital Reserve Fund.**

**J. Chamberlain moved to recommend Warrant Article I. C. Wayss seconded the motion.**

L. Pickering said that this warrant article is for the preservation of historical archives. This would be to scan documents and get them up on the internet. There are over 400 photos that need to be scanned so that residents would be able to look at these at anytime. This project could take 2-4 years. J. Kent Weiner said that there are companies that will do this work for much less than \$10,000. L. Pickering said that they haven't gotten to that point yet and will get several bids when the work is ready to be done. The \$3,500 that was added to the HDC budget was for creating a list of items and this warrant article money is for the actual scanning and archiving of items. L. Pickering thinks the amount for this will be \$35,000. J. Kent Weiner thought it would be a lot less. B. Arsenault thought that there needed to be more clarity on what the money would be used for and what the total amount would be needed. J. Lamson thought that the HDC



could start with \$10,000 and then evaluate. E. Savinelli said that she thought when the Budget Committee voted to add \$3,500 to the HDC budget that it was a middle ground to get the project started and now you are asking for more. J. Kent Weiner thought that the \$3,500 was good seed money to start and then the HDC could talk about more money next year. J. Kent Weiner could not support this article. B. Arsenault wanted to know what happens in the future with the new equipment. It is not a one time cost to the town. B. Arsenault is concerned about funding new IT projects because of the future costs to the town. L. Pickering didn't think \$10,000 was a lot of money considering that the other warrant articles add up to over \$650,000. J. Belanger thought that this project should be done while we have residents that have the expertise to do this project. The library staff could help with it. We should utilize the experts we have on the town staff to help with this project. J. Belanger thinks it is a missed opportunity to not use the library staff's skill set. J. Kent Weiner would like to hear other alternatives before moving forward, use the library to help and develop a system for preservation that is efficient and cost effective. J. Chamberlain said that every minute that we don't do this project we could lose this information. Historians can't access Newington's historical records so they use it in their articles etc. The Town needs to start doing this immediately. If there is a fire we loose everything. Every time the HDC goes through a box looking for an item they are damaging the materials in the box. C. Wayss asked about how much money the HDC spent out of their 2021 budget. L. Pickering said that they spent every penny. C. Wayss thought that the \$10,000 is an important start and if the project is more than \$10,000 then it could be analyzed then. When the HDC came before the Budget Committee L. Pickering asked about a warrant article and the committee told her to bring one forward. C. Wayss thought if the cost of the project costs \$40,000, it is better to spread out the cost over several years.

**J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend Article I. 4 members opposed and 4 members in favor 4-4.**

**Article J: To Raise \$10,000 for a Seasonal Recreation Director.**

**J. Belanger moved to table Warrant Article J until members of the Recreation Committee can be at a meeting. E. Savinelli seconded the motion.**

T. Connors said that the Board of Selectmen did not recommend this warrant article because the YMCA has agreed to run the program in 2022. It is better to have professionals run the summer camp.

**J. Lamson called for a vote to table Article J. All were in favor 9-0.**

**Article K: To Add \$5,000 to the Police Department Radio/Electronics Capital Reserve Fund.**

**E. Savinelli moved to recommend Warrant Article K. B. Arsenault seconded the motion.**

There is \$15,000 in this account and a \$25,000 cap.

M. Bilodeau said that this money would be used for electronics in cruisers. They are talking to the State about available grants.

**J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend Article K. J. Chamberlain abstained, all others were in favor 8-0.**

**Article L: To Add \$5,000 to the Replacement of Major Fire Department Equipment Capital Reserve Fund.**

**B. Arsenault moved to recommend Warrant Article L. E. Savinelli seconded the motion.**

There is \$5,000 in this account and a \$25,000 cap. E. Hoyt said that this account would be used for equipment over \$5,000. The equipment line in their budget with \$8,500 is for smaller parts and equipment.

**J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend Article L. All were in favor. 9-0.**

**Article M: To Establish a Capital Reserve Fund known as Body Worn Cameras and Cruiser Mounted Audio and Video Equipment Capital Reserve Fund.**

**E. Savinelli moved to recommend Warrant Article M. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.**

M. Bilodeau explained that this equipment could be mandated in the near future. There could be grants out there to help but the total cost would be approximately \$95,000-\$120,000. J. Belanger asked if the mandate goes away then what happens to the money. M. Roy said that it goes back to town meeting for the residents to vote if it goes back into the general fund.

**J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend Article M. B. Arsenault opposed. All others were in favor. 8-1.**

**Article N: A Petition Warrant Article for \$25,000 for Playground Equipment.**

**E. Savinelli moved to table warrant article N until Jessica Morgan can come to the meeting and talk about it. C. Wayss seconded the motion.**

C. Wayss spoke about the frustration of people not showing up to talk about their warrant articles and making the process more difficult by postponing items.

**J. Lamson called for a vote to table Article N. Five members were in favor of tabling this item. Four opposed. This item is tabled.**

**Adjournment: B. Arsenault moved to adjourn at 9:55pm. E. Savinelli seconded the motion with all in favor.**

Respectfully submitted,

Eleanor Boy  
Recording Secretary