

Town of Newington, NH  
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, January 25, 2023, Town Hall

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

**Present:** Budget Committee members: John Lamson, Emily Savinelli, Jamie Belanger, Jeff Semprini, Chris Wayss, Maggie Cooke, Alan Wilson, Jennifer Kent Weiner, Rick Stern, Selectman's Rep. Brandon Arsenault and School Board Rep. Jeremy Boston.

**Guests:** Board of Selectmen Chair Ted Connors, Selectman Bob Blonigen, Town Administrator Martha Roy, Town Clerk Doreen Caradonna, Town Engineer Eric Weinrieb, Road Agent Len Thomas, Sewer Commissioners Tom Hazelton and Jack O'Reilly, Fire Engineer Ann Hyland Hebert, Library Trustee Chair Jack O'Reilly.

**Minutes:** C. Wayss moved to approve the minutes of January 18th, 2023. E. Savinelli seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**Sewer Department Increased Budget Request:**

The Sewer Commissioners are asking to increase their budget by \$30,000. They brought this request to the Board of Selectmen on Monday. The Board of Selectmen voted to increase their budget by \$15,000 instead of \$30,000.

**C. Wayss moved to tentatively approve the Sewer Department budget of \$1,305,912. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.**

R. Stern explained that the Board of Selectmen voted to increase the budget by only \$15,000 instead of the \$30,000, but the Selectmen have no authority over the Sewer Commission. The Commission has the same power as the Selectmen and the Sewer Commission really wants to increase their budget by \$30,000. J. Kent Weiner asked what the reason is for the increase. R. Stern said that the major maintenance expense line was overspent by \$30,000 in 2022, so they would like to put more money in it in 2023. J. Kent Weiner asked if they had any back-up funds if they had an emergency. R. Stern said that they had money in the enterprise fund. B. Arsenault said that in 2021, that line had \$80,000 in the budget but only \$20,000 was spent. \$60,000 went back into the enterprise fund, which means the rate payers were overcharged by \$60,000. In 2022, \$50,000 was budgeted and \$80,000 was spent. The extra \$30,000 was not taken out of the enterprise fund, it was absorbed in their 2022 budget. If they overspend this line in 2023, it can be taken out of the enterprise fund. J. O'Reilly said that rates have decreased in the past two years and they anticipate more users coming into town, a new hotel and NHDOT substation, to help reduce the rates going forward. B. Arsenault said that many businesses in town have complained about their sewer bills that are higher

than their tax bills. E. Savinelli asked how much is in the enterprise fund. R. Stern said \$1.3 million. Discussion ensued about the operations contract negotiations, the cost of motors, emergencies draining the enterprise fund, a risk assessment, the sewer running at 30-40% capacity, billing some users four times a year instead of two, eliminating surcharges on bills, the risks if the budget is only increased by \$15,000, increases in the EPA required tests, the ability to absorb overages in the budget. **C. Wayss moved to amend the Sewer budget by \$15,000 for a total of \$1,320,912. There was no second to the motion, the amendment fails.**

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Sewer budget of \$1,305,912. C. Wayss opposed. All others were in favor.**

### **Highway Budget:**

**E. Savinelli moved to tentatively approve the Highway budget of \$570,554. J. Belanger seconded the motion.**

M. Roy said that the Selectmen had encumbered funds from 2022 for crack sealing and paving. The work will be done in 2023. E. Savinelli asked why the salt budget had decreased by \$20,000 when \$101,000 had been spent in 2022. L. Thomas said that they filled the salt shed, plus ice events use a lot of salt. M. Roy explained that \$20,000 worth of 2021 salt bills were received after the 2021 books had been closed, so that expense is in the \$101,000 amount for 2022. E. Savinelli asked why there was money not spent in the culverts and road surface expense lines. E. Weinrieb said that they did a culvert study two years ago and have been following that plan. There are three culverts that will be worked on in 2023: One on Shattuck, one on Patterson Lane and one on McIntyre. J. Kent Weiner asked why the line was 150% higher in 2023. M. Roy said that it was because of the unknown. There has been flooding on Shattuck Way ever since the Route 16 construction was completed, this needs to be addressed in 2023. This culvert can't handle the water and Custom Pools keeps getting flooded. E. Weinrieb explained that the NHDOT is dumping too much water into that culvert. Currently the Town and the NHDOT are not in agreement with the cause of the flooding. Money will need to be spent in order to figure out the solution. The Town is hoping that the NHDOT will pick up the tab. E. Savinelli questioned the amount that was spent on maintenance of the highway vehicles in 2022 and does it make sense to get a new truck that would require less maintenance. J. Lamson pointed out that a CIP for the Highway vehicles is included in their binders. B. Blonigen said that he thought the increased maintenance was working because he sees fewer oil spots on the roads. C. Wayss asked about the fuel expense line that was overspent in 2022 and feels there isn't enough budgeted for 2023. B. Arsenault said that they think that fuel won't be as expensive in 2023 as it was in 2022. C. Wayss questioned why the Highway over expenditures were taken out of the legal line. J. Lamson explained that the Selectmen's budget is their best estimate, and they have the ability to move money around as needed. If a healthy

margin is budgeted in every category, then they are over budgeting. **C. Wayss moved to increase the fuel line from \$9,000 to \$10,500. R. Stern seconded the motion. J. Lamson called for a vote on the amendment. J. Kent Weiner and B. Arsenault opposed, A. Wilson abstained, all others in favor.**

E. Savinelli asked about the Highway staff. L. Thomas said he has 2 people both are part time. R. Stern asked about contracted plowing service. L. Thomas said he has one for Woodbury Ave and sometimes Vincent Taccetta plows for the Town.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the amended Highway budget of \$572,054. B. Arsenault opposed; all others were in favor.**

#### **Executive Office Budget:**

**C. Wayss moved to tentatively approve the Executive Office budget of \$361,952. M. Cooke seconded the motion.**

E. Savinelli asked about the 11% increase in the wage line. M. Roy said it was due to increased hourly wages and more time. All Town employees got a 3.5% COLA in 2023. J. Kent Weiner would like to have a staffing assessment done for the Executive Office. She asked for this last year, and it wasn't done. The assessment would show what we are getting for that 11% increase and if the office is running as efficiently as possible and if full-time employees would be more efficient than part-time employees. M. Roy said the current staff has no benefits, if the Executive Office changed to three full-time people with benefits it would be more than an additional \$100,000 per year. E. Savinelli agrees with J. Kent Weiner. J. Lamson said that the Town is getting real savings on benefits. J. Belanger pointed out that if the Executive Office has four part time people, if one gets sick you still have  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the staff in the office. If you have two full-time people and one gets sick, you lose half of your staff. E. Savinelli asked about the payroll database upgrade for \$6,000. M. Roy said it was new software that is an upgrade with a cloud-based program. B. Arsenault said that the program they were previously using lost its support, forcing an upgrade. Discussion ensued about scanning, the cost of scanning, and the best companies for scanning and storage. J. Kent Weiner questioned the amount of the Selectmen's stipend. In the past it was higher than most surrounding towns because the selectmen had to do a lot of administration for the town. J. Kent Weiner would like to look at other towns' stipends now to see if it is competitive.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Executive Office budget. All were in favor.**

#### **Town Clerk/Tax Collector Budget:**

**J. Belanger moved to tentatively approve the Town Clerk/Tax Collector budget of \$111,038. C. Wayss seconded the motion.**

J. Kent Weiner asked about the general supplies line. D. Caradonna said that the cost of residents stickers increased, plus they got a new work station.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Town Clerk/Tax Collector budget. All were in favor.**

**Elections Budget:**

**C. Wayss moved to tentatively approve the Elections budget of \$8,995. E. Savinelli seconded the motion.**

D. Caradonna said that printing for elections was in two budget lines previously. It was corrected in the 2023 budget.

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

**Town Buildings Administration Budget (\$16,500) and Town Buildings Budget (\$181,700):**

**E. Savinelli moved to tentatively approve the Town Buildings Administration budget and the Town Buildings budget of \$198,200. J. Belanger seconded the motion.**

J. Boston said that most of the town buildings are in good shape. A secure cabinet will be purchased for storing ballots in 2023. Fuel for all buildings was increased by 25% and electricity was increased by 48%. If these amounts end up not being enough then some projects will have to be put on hold. J. Boston said that the Town is looking into the Community s. Discussion ensued about electricity at the Stone School, the method of budgeting for electricity across the different departments in town, lights being left on at night. B. Arsenault pointed out that the Budget Committee had approved the Library budget that included a 270% increase in their electricity budget. E. Savinelli asked about the maintenance and repairs expense lines for the Town Hall, Garage, Old Town Hall and the Meeting House were all overspent, yet the amounts for 2023 are lower. J. Boston said that a lot of maintenance was caught up in 2022, plus the Police Station got a new key fob entry system and the cost was spread across many buildings.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Town Buildings Administration and Town Buildings budgets. All were in favor.**

**Code Enforcement Budget:**

**J. Kent Weiner moved to tentatively approve the Code Enforcement budget of \$174,989. A. Wilson seconded the motion.**

E. Savinelli asked about the vehicle maintenance expense line in 2022; it seems very high. M. Roy said that a lot of maintenance was done in 2022, the previous inspectors didn't use the car. Discussion ensued about the mileage on the car, the cost of

converting a police car to an inspector's car, the cost of a new car and a free car isn't really free.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Code Enforcement budget. All were in favor.**

**Land Management Budget:**

**J. Belanger moved to tentatively approve the Land Management budget of \$61,750. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.**

E. Savinelli asked about the porta pottie expense line. M. Roy said that they have increased in price. Other companies were looked at, but our current company has the best price. The Town has three locations. Two are year-round, the Transfer Station and the Tennis Courts/Ice Rink. There is one at the dock on Fox Point during the summer. C. Wayss asked about the hydrant expense. The Town rents the hydrants from Portsmouth and they are responsible for repair and replacing the hydrants, plus the flushing and testing. B. Arsenault said that the Board of Selectmen will be meeting with Portsmouth Water in 2023 to discuss the water agreement between the two towns that hasn't been changed since 1965. The hydrants will be part of the discussion. J. Semprini asked about the landscaping budget and the cost of fertilizer. J. Boston is going to bid out the weed control service in 2023. E. Savinelli asked about the Fox Point line being overspent in 2022. M. Roy said that the Selectmen had received complaints from residents about the Town docks and stairs, the 2022 expenses are for the engineering and permitting for these projects. Discussion ensued about the maintenance of town fields, the amount spent out of care of trees, the Fox Point trees, consolidation of fertilizing all town fields and lawns.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Land Management budget. All were in favor.**

**Finance & Assessing Budget (\$109,584) and the Legal Budget (\$45,001):**

**J. Kent Weiner moved to tentatively approve the Finance & Assessing and Legal budgets of \$154,585. M. Cooke seconded the motion.**

J. Kent Weiner asked why the Tax Map expense line had increased by 300% for 2023. M. Roy said that the Town would like to digitize the tax maps in 2023. This would allow them to be used for assessment purposes. The 2023 number includes updating the maps and digitizing. J. Kent Weiner asked about the actuarial expense line. M. Roy said that this line was moved out of the Executive Office budget and now appears in the Finance & Assessing budget. It is now a federal requirement to have an actuarial study done once a year. C. Wayss asked about the wages line. M. Roy said that the Town used to have a clerk in the office, but the job is now part of the contracted assessing services. E. Savinelli asked about the trust management fee \$10,000 was budgeted in 2022 but only \$250 was spent. M. Roy said that the Trustees of the Trust Fund did not

move as many funds as they had originally planned to do because interest rates were so low it didn't make sense to move them. E. Savinelli asked about the reduction in the legal budget. M. Roy said that the Selectmen think there is enough in the general legal and Donahue legal budget.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Finance & Assessing budget and the Legal budget. All were in favor.**

**Transfer Station Budget (\$86,076) and the Residential Waste Collection Budget (\$93,368):**

**J. Kent Weiner moved to tentatively approve the Transfer Station and Residential Waste Collection budgets of \$179,444. M. Cooke seconded the motion.**

J. Lamson pointed out that the Transfer Station's 2022 & 2023 were the same amount. B. Arsenault said that it was mostly due to the contracted services remaining the same. C. Wayss asked who pays for the replacement garbage cans when they are damaged. M. Roy said the company does. The Selectmen just approved a new residential waste contract that is \$192,000 for three years. This new contract is lower because of the semi-automated trash pick-up service. New bins will be provided to the residents. However, the residents can choose not to use the new bins and can still put bags of trash at the end of their driveway. The first year of the new contract is \$61,200. **J. Belanger moved to reduce the residential waste budget by \$11,168 for a total of \$82,200. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.**

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Transfer Station budget and the amended Residential Waste Collection budget. All were in favor.**

**Insurance Budget (\$269,488) and the Regional Associations Budget (\$35,649):**

**J. Belanger moved to tentatively approve the Insurance and Regional Associations budgets of \$305,137. C. Wayss seconded the motion.**

R. Stern asked if the Town would get a discount on insurance if the Police vehicles had cameras in them. M. Roy said no, but the Town does get a discount because the Police are CALEA certified, and the Town receives the PRIME discount for best practices.

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

C. Wayss asked why the COAST budget line was 10% lower than the amount requested. B. Arsenault said that they had asked for more but the Selectmen decided to cut all Regional Associations by 10%. C. Wayss asked about the update on the proposed new COAST facility. B. Arsenault said that the new facility will cost \$8 million, they are getting grants to cover 85% and will probably look to Towns to fund

the 15%. B. Arsenault doesn't like the idea of a private company asking for donations and also asking for towns to fund their new facility. B. Blonigen said that the Selectmen had asked for information from Coast about the number of people that ride the buses in Newington, but didn't get any answers. C. Wayss asked if Newington cuts their donation with Coast reduce or cut services to Newington. B. Blonigen said that COAST has a calculation for each communities' donation. B. Blonigen said that New Hampshire is #50 out of 50 states for public transportation.

**R. Stern moved to amend the Regional Association budget to \$36,801. This represents the full amount that the associations asked for but keeps the 10% reduction for COAST and reduces the miscellaneous expense line by \$162.**

**E. Savinelli seconded the motion. All were in favor of the amendment.**

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the amended Regional Associations budget. All were in favor.**

**Street Lighting Budget (\$16,700):**

**E. Savinelli moved to tentatively approve the Street Lighting budget of \$16,700. C. Wayss seconded the motion.**

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Street Lighting budget. All were in favor.**

**Pest Control Budget (\$30,650), the Health Budget (\$1) and the Welfare-Direct Assistance Budget (\$1):**

**J. Belanger moved to tentatively approve the Pest Control, Health and Welfare-Direct Assistance budgets \$30,652. C. Wayss seconded the motion.**

E. Savinelli said that she has a real problem with mosquito spraying. A lot of other towns in the area are pushing for organic spraying because of the run off to the bay. C. Wayss said that even if you say that you don't want your property sprayed you still get chemicals in your yard because they are spraying the neighbors. The spray kills honeybees, plus \$31,000 is an awful lot of money to spend on mosquito control. B. Arsenault said that this isn't really a budget item. This committee can't make the decision whether to have spraying or not. J. Lamson said that it could be brought to town meeting with a petition warrant article. J. Belanger thought that an expert should be consulted about the pros and cons to spraying. Is the spray worse than the diseases you can get from mosquitos and ticks? It's very complicated. J. Kent Weiner thought that the Town should look at more environmentally safer ways to control pests. B. Arsenault said that the Selectmen voted 2-1 for mosquito spraying because he thought it was too much to spend on mosquito and tick control.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Pest Control, Health and Welfare-Direct Assistance budgets. J. Belanger, E. Savinelli, C. Wayss and J. Kent Weiner opposed. All others were in favor.**

**Debt Service Budget (\$27,671) and the Capital Outlay Budget (\$113,666):**

**J. Kent Weiner moved to tentatively approve the Debt Service and Capital Outlay budgets \$141,337. C. Wayss seconded the motion.**

B. Arsenault pointed out that the Town only had one item in debt service, the SCBA equipment for the Fire Department. It speaks to the financial health of the Town.

E. Savinelli asked about the cyber security budget line. M. Roy said that the money budgeted in 2022 was for the assessment study only. The results of the study said that the town needed to step up their security, so updates were done. E. Savinelli asked how long this security upgrade would last. B. Blonigen said that when the report is published it's already out of date. This will be an ongoing issue, studies will have to be done and upgrades put in place. The Selectmen don't have a specific plan but need to move in the right direction. J. Kent Weiner pointed out that this is the cost of doing business and it is critically important. J. Kent Weiner asked if the upgrades would lower the insurance rates. M. Roy said yes. R. Stern asked if the \$19,000 would fix everything the study found. B. Arsenault said yes. M. Roy said that the Police Department has one cruiser in the Capital Outlay budget.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Debt Service budget and the Capital Outlay budget. All were in favor.**

**New Warrant Article:**

M. Roy said that the NHDOT gave the Town an allotment that had to be specifically used for the construction, replacement or repair of municipally owned bridges. B. Arsenault said that the Town had a choice to either take the check and earmark it for bridges in a future budget or put it in a warrant article to create a capital reserve account. M. Roy said that it wouldn't affect the tax rate. B. Arsenault said that it is part of the federal act for infrastructure. M. Roy said Senate Bill 401.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the new warrant article. All were in favor.**

J. Lamson reminded the committee that all their votes are provisional votes contingent upon the public hearing. Two budgets will be voted on at the public hearing, the School budget and the Town budget.

**Adjournment: B. Arsenault moved to adjourn at 8:36pm. M. Cooke seconded the motion with all in favor.**



Respectfully submitted,  
Eleanor Boy, Recording Secretary