

Town of Newington, NH  
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, January 5, 2022 Town Hall

Chair John Lamson called the meeting to order at 6:30pm

**Present:** Budget Committee members: John Lamson, Chair; Brandon Arsenault, Vice-Chair, Ted Connors, Rick Stern, Jamie Belanger, Emily Savinelli, John Chamberlain, Jennifer Kent Weiner, Chris Wayss

**Guests:** Selectmen Bob Blonigen and Mike Marconi via Zoom, Conservation Commission Chair Jane Hislop via Zoom, Fire Engineer Ann Hyland Hebert, Planning Board Chair Denis Hebert, Sewer Commission Chair Skip Cole, Sewer Plant Manager Denis Messier,, EJ Hoyt Fire Chief, Sheryl Bagley, Finance Director and Martha Roy, Town Administrator.

**Minutes:**

C. Wayss asked for two changes to be made to the December 8, 2021 minutes. He asked that his question to the Library about percentage that employees were utilized during Covid and the Director's reply that they were 60% utilized. He also asked the Fire Chief if there was any increase to PPE and the Chief stated "No" **J. Kent Weiner moved to approve the minutes of December 8, 2021 as amended. C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor.**

**Planning Board Budget:**

**B. Arsenault moved to tentatively approve the Planning Board budget of \$171,865. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.**

D. Hebert presented the Planning budget to the Committee. The 2022 Planning Budget is level funded from 2021. D. Hebert explained that many items in his budget, such as legal fees, engineering fees and some of the contracted Planner expense is reimbursed back to the Town by the developers. The Planning Board was \$40,000 under budget in 2021 and returned that money to the General Fund. D. Hebert explained that the Planning Board never knows what projects will be processed in a year, so budgeting is difficult. J. Lamson asked why the contracted planner expense line had increased. D. Hebert said that his hourly rate went up according to his contract. He has a three year contract, 2022 is the third year of the contract. C. Wayss asked if the legal fee expense line is only 60% expended because the Town gets reimbursed. D. Hebert explained that all the reimbursements go to a revenue line. They do not offset the expense line. The expense line reflects the actual expenses. B. Arsenault asked what the Planning Board's process was for hiring legal and engineering consultants for jobs. D. Hebert explained that there isn't really a process but if the Town's engineers or lawyers don't have the expertise in a certain area, then they will call someone else.

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

**Conservation Commission Budget:**

**E. Savinelli moved to tentatively approve the Conservation Commission budget of \$8,842. R. Stern seconded the motion.**

Jane Hislop presented the budget to the committee. The \$8,842 includes \$5,500 in encumbrances from 2021. J. Hislop explained that the encumbrances were for items in 2022. The money was not used in 2021. J. Lamson asked if the \$5,500 encumbrances should be included in the budget. B. Arsenault said that these were not actual encumbrances. This is money that was not used in 2021 and should be returned to the general fund. If the Conservation Commission doesn't have a contract for the work in 2022 then the \$5,500 should be added into the 2022 budget. J. Hislop explained that she would like to have \$500 added to the Community Education expense line (01-4611-49-321) and \$5,000 added to the Consultant expense line (01-4611-49-865).

**E. Savinelli moved to add back to the Conservation Commission 2022 budget \$500 in the Communiity Education expense line and \$5,000 in the Consultant expense line for a total 2022 budget of \$8,842 and to decrease the encumbrance line to \$0. R. Stern seconded the motion. All were in favor.**

Discussion ensued about encumbrances and where they should appear in the budget.

**Sewer Commission Budget:**

**J. Kent Weiner moved to tentatively approve the Sewer Commission budget of \$1,369,491. R. Stern seconded the motion.**

D. Messier presented the budget to the committee.

The 2022 budget is higher than the 2021 budget due to an increase in the principal and interest expense lines for the Force Main bond. The testing expense line has increased due to more federal required testing.

J. Lamson asked about the management contract at the sewer plant because it is a large part of the budget. D. Messier said that it is a 5 year contract that was signed in 2020 for another five years. There is a 1% increase requirement in the contract each year. The increase could be more depending on the cost of living etc.

All money not spent in the budget goes back to the Sewer Enterprise Fund which is similar to the Town's undesignated fund. R. Stern explained that the enterprise fund has over 1 million in it at the moment. The State requires this fund in case a major repair needs to take place at the Sewer plant. J. Lamson asked if the Sewer Commission has to have a Town Meeting before they spend any money out of the enterprise fund. R. Stern

said no they send a letter to the Chair of the Trustees of the Trust Fund and she writes them a check. E. Savinelli asked how much money goes into the fund each year. R. Stern said he didn't know. B. Arsenault asked if there was a cap on the amount in the fund. D. Messier didn't know. D. Messier said that there is 1.3 million in the fund and it earns \$118 a month. D. Messier said that the commission was considering using some of the fund to lower the sewer rates for some businesses.

J. Kent Weiner said that she needed more information before she could vote to approve the sewer budget. J. Lamson agreed and would like a report on the enterprise fund about how much is spent out of it each year and what the money is spent on. The amount that the sewer spent in the 2021 budget doesn't match up with the amounts that are being asked for in 2022. B. Arsenault pointed out that at some point some of this money could be used to offset rates. What is the minimum that could be kept in the account if only \$100,000 is spent out of it each year? E. Savinelli pointed out that there is information in the packet about the enterprise fund and what was spent out of it from 2013-2020. D. Messier said that last year the Sewer Commission did take some money out of the enterprise fund to offset rates. J. Lamson would like a more steady rate each year instead of taking money out to lower rates for one year and then rates go back up the next year. The average sewer customer pays between \$2,000-\$3,000/year. Restaurants and some industries pay more. B. Arsenault asked if the rates will be lower when the bond is paid off. D. Messier said that the bond started in 2018 and is for twenty years.

D. Messier said that the sewer plant has plenty of capacity and the more flow the town gets then the rates will decrease. J. Belanger would like to see "bullet points" of how the sewer could reduce rates. R. Stern said that the 2021 sewer rates are based on the 2020 flows.

J. Belanger asked how much PFOAs are in the sludge. D. Messier said they were low. The majority of the water used at the sewer plant comes from the City of Portsmouth's drinking water. C. Wayss asked why there is a testing expense line and a nitrogen testing line. D. Messier explained that the nitrogen testing is for Great Bay and Newington is one of 17 towns that all pay a portion of this testing. The other account is for all the other required testing. B. Arsenault pointed out that \$2,000 had been budgeted in 2020 and 2021 and nothing had been spent, so \$4,000 went into the enterprise fund. J. Lamson said that lines shouldn't be funded unless it will be used.

The Sewer budget will come back to the Budget Committee on January 19<sup>th</sup> with an update on the enterprise fund.

**No vote was taken on the Sewer budget.**

#### **Other Business:**

B. Arsenault thought that having departments talk about their own wages is not productive. J. Lamson agreed that it should be a member of the supervisory board. J. Belanger thought that all wages should be talked about on the same day so that the

committee treats all departments equally. J. Lamson agreed that the committee needs to be consistent. The committee would like to get a report showing every town employee and their wages. Labor costs are always a town's greatest expense. J. Belanger thought that the committee should focus on the management of the budget, not wages. J. Lamson agreed that the Budget Committee should keep clear of personnel issues.

**Adjournment: B. Arsenault moved to adjourn at 8:01pm. C. Wayss seconded the motion with all in favor.**

Respectfully submitted,

Eleanor Boy  
Recording Secretary