

Town of Newington, NH  
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, January 8, 2020 Town Hall

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

**Present:** Chair, John Lamson, Brandon Arsenault, School Board Rep, Jack O'Reilly, 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, Police Commission Chair, Brenda Blonigen, Police Commissioner, Jack Hoyt, Resident Joe Mitchell, Martha Roy, Town Administrator and Eleanor Boy, Recorder.

**K. Latchaw moved to approve the minutes of December 18th, 2019. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion, with all in favor.**

**Police Explosives K9 Program Review:**

M. Bilodeau has been working with the Finance Director, Cindy Saklad, to determine which type of account would be the best one for the K9 program. After consulting the auditor and the attorneys, C. Saklad and M. Bilodeau determined that a trustee account would be the best. Other departments in Town, Cemetery and Library, currently have trust accounts. The K9 program currently has enough donations to keep the program going until 2025.

J. Lamson pointed out that there will be no line item in the budget for this program. All costs will be covered by donations and the money will be managed by the Trustees of the Trust Fund. The Finance Director will develop the checks to the vendors for services.

J. Kent Weiner asked if the account was an interest-bearing account. M. Bilodeau responded yes. J. Kent Weiner expressed concern about the overtime line increasing in the Police budget when the K9 is deployed after hours. M. Bilodeau explained that he has the discretion about deploying the dog after hours and would consider the overtime line balance when making that decision.

Carry Over-J. Lamson would like M. Bilodeau to come to the budget meeting in September with a list of days when the K9 unit is performing out of Town and the overtime that has been spent in 2020 on the K9 program. J. O'Reilly asked if Newington could charge other towns for the K9 services through Homeland Security program. M. Bilodeau thought they might be able to.

B. Arsneault asked about the choice of a trust fund. M. Roy explained that the town's attorney had recommended a trust fund. J. Lamson said that the town is currently managing several trust accounts.

B. Arsenault asked about the contract with Officer Wood. M. Bilodeau explained that the contract is for the life of the dog, about 7 years. If Officer Wood left the department the dog would stay, and another officer would be trained to work with the dog. The training is free, but there is a cost to travel and stay in a hotel during the training.

J. Belanger asked about the veterinarian care. M. Bilodeau explained that the department will receive 25% off care. They will use the veterinarian located behind the old KMart.

### **Fire Department Warrant Articles:**

**Article 2:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$640,000 to purchase a new fire engine to replace Engine 5. This article is not recommended by the Selectmen.

J. Lamson asked K. Latchaw to comment on the reason that the Selectmen didn't recommend this warrant article. K. Latchaw explained that the amount is too high and would add to the Town's tax rate. The Board of Selectmen have to be diligent on keeping the tax rate low especially because the fossil fuel plants in town are losing their value each year. The Board of Selectmen support adding \$100,000 to the Fire Vehicle Replacement Capital Reserve account to save money for the purchase of a new vehicle in the future. Fire Chief, EJ Hoyt said that he was 100% ok with not funding this warrant article. He thought that the Fire Department could get another lease to purchase agreement for a new vehicle in the future. E. Hoyt commented that he thought Engine 5 could last another 2 years. The life expectation for Engine 5 is 25 years, due to be replaced in 2021. There is a 16-month lead time to order a new engine and costs increase 5% each year. E. Hoyt reminded the committee that the price of a new vehicle increases by 5% each year. E. Hoyt agreed to withdraw the warrant article. **The Budget Committee concurred to not recommend warrant article #2.**

**Article 4:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of One Hundred Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$125,000) for the purpose of building a Fire Station addition. This article is recommended by the Selectmen. K. Latchaw explained that the Fire Department asked the Selectmen about adding a negative pressure room to the Fire Station. The negative pressure room would have washers and it would be used to decontaminate gear. The Selectmen hired an architect in 2019 to produce a plan for a 15 X 30-foot addition and an upgrade to the bathrooms. E. Hoyt explained that he is not in favor of the addition and thought the town shouldn't spend the money on the addition. The Chief can do a temporary climate controlled negative pressure room cost

effectively until a needs analysis is conducted. T. Connors added that the Fire Department came to the Selectmen a couple of years ago about the urgency to add a negative pressure room for the life safety of the fire crew. He is surprised to hear that it is no longer wanted. J. Kent Weiner asked if it would be possible to add a temporary negative pressure room. The Chief said he could do an interim solution in lieu of \$125,000 expenditure. E. Hoyt doesn't want to do a cheap band aid on the Fire Station. J. Lamson added that he could see where this conversation was going, the Fire Department would be asking for a new 10-million-dollar station. Board of Fire Engineer, Chair John Klanchesser added that the Police got a new station, the library got an addition and the Highway Department got a new garage and it's the Fire Department's turn.

**J. O'Reilly moved to table this warrant article until a later date. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion with all in favor.**

**Article 5:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000) to be placed in the Replacement of Vehicles Operated by the Fire Department Capital Reserve Fund. This article is recommended by the Selectmen. This year it has been proposed that the Fire Department Capital Reserve Fund for the Replacement/Repair of Vehicles be changed to two separate accounts, one for the replacement of vehicles and one for the repair of vehicles. This account has a balance of \$176,000. E. Hoyt wanted the balance of \$176,000 to stay in the replacement and have \$100,000 added to the repair capital reserve account. J. Lamson suggested splitting the \$176,000 balance between to two accounts. A. Hebert pointed out that the money in the capital reserve account went to repairs instead of saving it for a new vehicle. J. Belanger liked the idea of separating the accounts because it would lead to a more predictable schedule for replacing fire vehicles. E. Hoyt pointed out that new vehicles have a 10-year warranty. J. Lamson asked what an accurate number the Fire Department would need in the repair account E. Hoyt thought between \$37,500-\$40,000. (Carry Over Item) **J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend Article #5, \$100,000 to be added to the Fire Department Replacement of Vehicles Capital Reserve account. All were in favor.**

**Article 6:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000) to be placed in the Replacement of the Town Ambulance and any Major Medical Equipment Capital Reserve Fund. This article is recommended by the Selectmen. There is currently \$152,000 in the account. The current ambulance is six years old and in good shape. P. Moynihan pointed out that the ambulance is a "top of the line" ambulance. J. O'Reilly stated that the ambulance brings in \$77,000 in revenue each year. Carry Over Item-The ambulance will need to be replaced in 4 years, if \$50,000 is added to the account each year for 4 years (2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023) there will be \$352,000 when a new ambulance is needed. **J. Kent Weiner moved to recommend adding \$50,000 to the Replacement of Town Ambulance and any major**

**medical equipment capital reserve account. E. Savinelli seconded the motion with all in favor.**

**Article 7:** To see if the Town will vote to establish a Fire Department Vehicle Major Repair Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 for completing major vehicle repairs and to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty Five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000) to be placed in this fund. Further, to name the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend from said fund. (Majority Vote Required). This article is recommended by the Selectmen. In addition to this \$25,000, the Fire Department has \$40,000 in their vehicle repair budget expense line. E. Savinelli asked where the amount of \$25,000 come from. M. Roy responded it was the Board of Selectmen. E Savinelli asked what the Fire Department's recommended amount was. E. Hoyt responded that he would be more comfortable with \$50,000. J. Kent Weiner was on the fence about recommending \$25,000. M. Roy pointed out that in 2017 & 2018 no funds from the Capital Reserve account had been needed. J. Lamson suggested that \$25,000 be added in 2020 and 2021 and put a \$50,000 cap on the balance of this capital reserve account. (Carry forward item). **J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend Article #7, \$25,000 to be added to the Fire Department Major Repair Capital Reserve Fund. All were in favor.**

**Article 9:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Seventy-Five Thousand Dollars (\$75,000) to purchase (2) new fully outfitted vehicles to replace both Forestry 1 and Car 2 from the Fire Department. This article is not recommended by the Selectmen. E. Hoyt explained that the Forestry Truck needs tires that cost \$7,600 and the old police car is not in good shape. B. Arsenault pointed out that when the Fire Department got the forestry truck, the committee was told that it wouldn't cost the Town anything and now the department wanted to replace the free vehicle with a new truck and the free car they got from the Police Department with a new truck. E. Hoyt explained that the new trucks could tow the new boat and one truck would have a cap on the back so gear and equipment could be carried around. B. Arsenault asked if the current 2013 truck could tow the new boat. E. Hoyt said it could. Discussion ensued about the different types of vehicles and which ones would be best, used or new, cars or trucks. J. Belanger asked if the department could get one truck instead of two. B. Arsenault pointed out that the Fire Department's budget has a 10% increase and they have asked for many warrant articles. J. Chamberlain suggested that the Fire Department stop their Forestry capability and use the extra space in the station for other vehicles. J. Belanger asked what the Fire Department's ideal vehicles would be. E. Hoyt said that a ¾ ton truck with a cap on the back would be ideal. B. Arsenault asked if they could use the 2013 truck as the Forestry truck like they did years ago and the use the free Ford Explorer as the Assistant Chief's car for a year. **J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend a reduction in Article #9. The warrant would be for one truck for \$37,500. J. O'Reilly moved to recommend a reduction in Article #9 to one truck for \$37,500. E. Savinelli seconded the motion with K. Latchaw opposed and all others in favor.**

**Article 12:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty-Eight Thousand Dollars (\$28,000) for the purpose of purchasing a Fire Boat. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance. No amount to be raised from taxation. (Majority Vote Required). This article is recommended by the Selectmen. J. Lamson explained that the committee was told that the boat was going to be donated to the town and now there is a \$28,000 balance owed on the boat, so the Town will have to vote on the final payment on the boat. M. Roy explained that there would be no effect on the tax rate because the Fire Department has saved \$28,250 from their 2019 budget for the payment. The department saved money by not appointing an assistant chief for 4 months. J. Kent Weiner pointed out that the town needs a boat, we are surrounded by water. It could have been handled better. B. Arsenault asked what would happen if the Town doesn't approve this warrant article. The boat company still has the title, so they could take it back. **J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend an increase in the amount for Article #12 from \$28,000 to \$28,250. J. O'Reilly moved to recommend Article #12 for \$28,250. B. Arsenault seconded the motion with all in favor.**

**Article 15:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000) for the Board of Fire Engineer's to conduct a third party, full needs analysis of the Fire Department. This article is not recommended by the Selectmen. K Latchaw explained that the Board of Selectmen would like the Fire Department to wait a year before asking for an assessment. The new management of the Fire Department would have a year to make sure everything is running smoothly, then the auditors will come back and verify that everything is ok. J. Lamson asked who would be doing the assessment. E. Hoyt thought it would be Municipal Resources Inc. (MRI). J. Belanger thought that there were enough experts on the running of the department sitting at the table. Why couldn't they do the assessment instead of an outside company? J. Klanchesser explained that the Board of Fire Engineers had discussed that possibility, but the Chief thought that an outside person would be best. The assessment would be a joint study by the Selectmen and the Board of Fire Engineers. J. Kent Weiner asked if it had to be \$25,000, could it be less money? J. Kent Weiner suggested starting the assessment on your own and then coming back next year. (Carry Over). **J. Lamson called for a vote to not recommend Article #15 for a \$25,000 needs assessment. B. Arsenault moved to not recommend Article #15. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with E. Savinelli and J. O'Reilly opposed and all others in favor.**

**Article 18:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) to be placed in the Replacement of the Fire Department SCBA Equipment Capital Reserve Fund. This article is not recommended by the Selectmen. K. Latchaw explained that the Selectmen did not recommend this warrant article because the Fire Department lease purchased SCBA units last year that have a 7-year warranty. The Board of Fire Engineers agreed to pull this warrant article.

**Article 20:** To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) to be placed in the Fire Department Communications Capital Reserve Fund. This article is not recommended by the Selectmen. There is \$14,500 in the capital reserve now. B. Arsenault asked what an appropriate balance would be for the Fire Department Communications Capital Reserve Fund. E. Hoyt responded \$20,000-\$25,000 total. (Carry Over). **J. Lamson called for a vote to recommend Article #20 for \$10,000 to be added to the Fire Department Communications Capital Reserve Fund. J. Chamberlain moved to recommend Article #20. J. Belanger seconded the motion with K. Latchaw and B. Arsenault opposed and all others in favor.**

J. Lamson asked for a motion to approve the Fire Department budget of \$1,918,762. **E. Savinelli moved to tentatively approve the Fire Department budget of \$1,918,762. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.**

K. Latchaw pointed out that the Selectmen had reduced the Fire Department in two places. The Legal line was reduced from \$6,000 to \$0; the Professional Training line was reduced from \$19,000 to \$6,000; the Protective Clothing was not reduced but this approval was contingent upon receiving a protective gear excel sheet list for 2017, 2018 and 2019. P. Moynihan said he would send a list to the Selectmen. E. Hoyt agreed with the reduction in the professional training line. E. Savinelli asked about the \$86,850 increase in the health insurance expense line. Rates went up by 7% plus two firefighters, that had previously gotten the health buyout, were now getting insurance through the town. J. Kent Weiner asked why the holiday pay had increased by 36%. E. Hoyt explained that the holiday pay was calculated incorrectly in 2019, two people, the Chief and Assistant Chief, were not included in the numbers in 2019. They have been added to the 2020 budget. J. Kent Weiner inquired about the Town's strategy for health insurance. E. Savinelli asked for a list of all the employees and numbers for health insurance. M. Roy will put together a list for the committee. M. Roy explained that according to state law there are only two groups that have the authority to hire legal counsel, the Planning Board and the Selectmen. She added that using a retainer method is a risk, you may pay for services and then not need them. The Fire Department thinks that using legal counsel on retainer instead of an hourly rate is a much more fiscally responsible. K. Latchaw pointed out that no department has ever been denied legal counsel. T. Connors explained that the town is putting legal services out to bid in 2020. J. O'Reilly inquired if the town uses the NHMA legal counsel. M. Marconi said that the Town uses the NHMA all the time. E. Savinelli commended the Fire Department for finding a solution to their IT needs. B. Arsenault asked about the increase in the telephone expense line. E. Hoyt said that the department got a whole new phone system. Each office has their own phone line and iPads. \$14,000 is the normal amount for the phone going forward. There is a new expense line in the Fire Department budget, \$10,000 for ambulance billing. This was a recommendation from the auditors.

Ambulance fees used to be taken out of the revenue line, they will now be taken out of this expense line. J. Belanger asked about the dues expense line, \$4,000 had been budgeted but only \$2,500 had been spent. E. Hoyt said that dues are increasing. The SCBA maintenance line was discussed. Is \$6,000 needed for maintenance since the department just got new SCBAs. E. Hoyt explained that the masks need to be fitted to each firefighter each year. B. Arsenault asked why the lease doesn't cover the yearly testing and should the testing fees be taken out of the capital reserve account in the future, maybe the capital reserve account should be repurposed. J. Belanger asked if the radio maintenance line could be decreased by \$2,000. K. Latchaw asked why the protective clothing line was so high. E. Hoyt explained that it costs \$4,000 for each firefighter. J. Belanger asked why the alarm maintenance line increased. E. Hoyt said that they had gotten a new vendor, and this was the new number.

J. Belanger would like to reduce the Fire Department budget by \$2,000.

**J. Lamson called for a vote to reduce the Fire Department budget by \$2,000. The new amount would be \$1,916,762. B. Arsenault moved to recommend the Fire Department budget of \$1,916,762. K. Latchaw seconded the motion, contingent upon the BOS receiving a list of current bunker gear, with the expiration dates of equipment included, from the Fire Department, with all in favor.**

#### **Fire Department Audit Discussion:**

K. Latchaw pointed out that the Selectmen had concerns but are now pleased with the Chief's process. The timecards are being sent to the finance department and the new schedules are all online. J. Chamberlain questioned why this subject was even being discussed at a budget meeting, it seemed to be an administration problem. J. Lamson said that it was a budget committee issue because there was a lot spending done without any authorization. K. Latchaw would like to see the Board of Fire Engineers sign off on all purchases. J. Lamson asked what the current process was for signing POs. The BOFE monitors POs at their monthly meeting. J. Kent Weiner thought that they should follow the "best practices" and asked how other town's BOFE handled POs. P. Moynihan said that most other towns do not have a Board of Fire Engineers. A. Hebert thought that there were enough people checking the payroll and if she checked it, it would be just checking the math after many people have already checked the math. B. Arsenault thought that payroll should be checked by the BOFE, not to check the math but to question why the overtime was so high in the payroll. A. Hebert pointed out that the Fire Department had already implemented all the auditor's recommendations before the report had even come out.

**J. O'Reilly moved to adjourn at 10:02pm. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with all in favor.**

#### **Carry Over List from the 1-8-20 Budget Committee Meeting:**

1. J. Lamson would like M. Bilodeau to come to the budget meeting in September with a list of days when the K9 unit is performing out of Town and the overtime that has been spent in 2020 on the K9 program.
2. J. Lamson asked what an accurate number the Fire Department would need in the capital reserve vehicle repair account E. Hoyt thought between \$37,500-\$40,000.
3. J. Lamson suggested that \$25,000 be added in 2020 and 2021 and put a \$50,000 cap on the balance of the Fire Department Vehicle Repair capital reserve account.
4. If \$50,000 is added to the Ambulance Capital Reserve account each year for 4 years (2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023) there will be \$352,000 when a new ambulance is needed.
5. Fire Department Assessment- J. Kent Weiner suggested that the Fire Department start the assessment this year on their own and then come back next year about an outside assessment.
6. B. Arsenault asked what an appropriate balance would be for the Fire Department Communications Capital Reserve Fund. E. Hoyt responded \$20,000-\$25,000.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Eleanor Boy  
Recorder**