

Town of Newington, NH
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 14, 2022 Town Hall

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

Present: Budget Committee members: John Lamson, Chair, Emily Savinelli, Vice-Chair, Jamie Belanger, Jeff Semprini, Chris Wayss, Margaret Cooke, Selectman's Rep. Brandon Arsenault, School Board Rep. Jeremy Boston.

Guests: Selectman, Ted Connors, , Library Trustees; Jack O'Reilly and Peter Welch, Library Director Lara Berry, Fire Chief EJ Hoyt, Assistant Fire Chief Pat Moynihan, Board of Fire Engineers Chair John Klanchesser, Board of Fire Engineer Ann Hyland Hebert. Finance Director Sheryl Bagley and Martha Roy, Town Administrator

Minutes: E. Savinelli moved that the approval of minutes be tabled when the committee has more time to review them. C. Wayss second the motion. All were in favor.

Library Budget:

J. Lamson said that members of the library board had just handed him a 25-year-old opinion from the State Department of Justice that says that the governing body of the library is the Budget Committee not the Board of Selectman. The library submits its budget directly to the budget committee. This has never been an issue before, the budget number that the Budget Committee recommends to the town is the budget committees' number, regardless of who it comes from, the Selectman or the library trustees. The Budget Committee sets the budget number, and it is typically the Selectman's number. The Budget Committee can move whichever number you want. J. Lamson would suggest, in the sense of fairness, that the committee move the library's budget number and then we will let the Selectman and the library discuss why there's a variance and then we can either adjust the budget down, up or leave it the same.

J. Belanger moved to tentatively approve the Library budget of \$272,624. E. Savinelli seconded the motion.

J. Lamson reminded the committee that when they move a budget now it's contingent upon the public hearing. The committee's definitive vote is after the public hearing. The committee can't decide until we've heard from the public and then it goes to the town meeting. Any vote that the Budget Committee takes is pending until the public hearing and it can be amended after the public hearing at the town meeting. S. Bagley explained that this is the first year that the library budget shows many new budget lines. In the past the library had one line for operating expenses. This expense line

included many items. This year the Board of Selectmen asked for a breakout of the operating expenses, so you will see many new lines added to the library budget. J. O'Reilly explained that the increases in the budget are mostly because the trust fund is earning less interest. In previous years, the library used the interest money from the trust for part of its operating expenses, but now the trust fund's interest has gone down significantly so that's why they're asking money for more funds from the taxpayers. Discussion ensued about electricity rates, switching to a new company, taking over the electric and water bills in 2023, the town will still purchase the propane for the library because there are better rates for purchasing in bulk. The Library Trustees will be returning any excess money from the budget to the Town at the end of the year. L. Berry explained the maintenance expense line in the budget and listed all the items that come out of that budget. L. Berry believes that they're all necessary and spending money on maintenance will save future expenses on the equipment. The library has five furnaces and a very complicated HVAC system that needs to be maintained. J. Lamson asked if the library could have cleaning done only once a week instead of twice. L. Berry explained that it's hard to get a cleaning company to come just once a week, plus she also feels that it's necessary to get the library cleaned twice a week because it can get quite dirty during the week. L. Berry is very proud of how clean the library is. J. Semprini asked about the irrigation expense, is it an installation expense or a maintenance. L. Berry explained that part of the expense is the setting up in the spring and then the closing in the winter, plus any maintenance during the year that's needed. J. Semprini asked where else in town has irrigation for the lawns. M. Roy said only the library has irrigation, the cemetery has faucets. J. Semprini asked if they fertilize the lawn. L. Berry explained that they are changing to organic fertilizer in 2023 and it is more expensive. J. Semprini asked if it needed to be organic, he thought \$1,800 for less than an acre of lawn was very expensive. J. O'Reilly said that the change to organic came from a request from parents. The summer program uses the lawn for story time. J. Belanger questioned if the library's lawn should be more expensive to maintain than the other lawns in Newington. L. Berry said that the patrons of the library care a lot about the lawn and the parents are very sensitive about using chemicals on it. L. Berry also said that the biggest feedback she gets from residents is about how much they love the lawn. C. Wayss asked if they treat the lawns for ticks. J. Boston said that the town treats many areas for ticks. J. Belanger suggested that the Town be more consistent with the lawn vendors around town. M. Roy said the Town Hall's treatment of their lawn is between \$500 and \$600 a year. C. Wayss said that he believes in treating the lawn with an organic fertilizer and is OK with the extra expense. Discussion ensued about the maintenance line and the increase in the budget. B. Arsenault understands there are many things in the line that can't be changed but questions why it went from \$8,400 to \$16,000. L. Berry explained that in previous years the library has paid for maintenance out of the trust account, and they can't this year. In the past 50% was paid by the town and 50% was paid by the trust but the town is paying a bigger portion of it in the 2023 budget because the trust interest has decreased significantly. L. Berry said that they're expecting \$3,000 to be spent on unexpected maintenance items in 2023.

Discussion ensued about the trust fund, the interest from the trust fund, how many different bank accounts the library has, the settlement that the library received several years ago and how that is used, if they don't spend the full amount of trust interest each year then it can be used in the coming years. B. Arsenault explained that only the Library Trustees can decide how to spend the interest. E. Savinelli asked about the telephone expense line. She understands the library is getting a new vendor in 2023. L. Berry says she got a new company this week, but she can't shut off the current company at this time, so they are currently paying two telephone bills. Eventually the cost will be reduced in 2023. E. Savinelli asked if they could reduce the telephone expense line budget number to the Board of Selectman's number. L. Berry said that she's worried about not getting the vendor and if the vendor does show up and everything does start to happen, then they can reduce the expense line before the public hearing. C. Wayss asked why they had zeroed out the library maintenance expense repairs line. L. Berry said that they never used that line so it just made sense to take it out of the budget. C. Wayss asked about the New Hampshire charitable foundation line. L. Berry explained that an anonymous donor gives the library \$1000 a year. This money can only be used to buy books. It is considered an income line. C. Wayss asked about the electricity expense line. Why there is such a difference between the Board of Selectman's budget amount and the library's budget amount. J. Boston said that he recommended a 48% increase in electricity for 2023 and a 25% increase in fuel for 2023. C. Wayss asked if the town got a municipal rate on electricity. M. Roy said yes. C. Wayss asked if the town was enrolled in any programs to reduce costs. M. Roy said they're looking into that and that they've applied haven't heard anything back yet. B. Arsenault asked if they were keeping the \$2,000 in their legal line in 2023. J. O'Reilly said yes, but they hope to not to spend it. E. Savinelli pointed out that the health buyout budget line number was not right, it was off by \$42.

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

Fire Department Budget:

E. Savinelli moved to tentatively approve the Fire Department budget of \$2,146,959.

J. Belanger seconded the motion.

E Hoyt presented the budget to the committee. E. Hoyt explained that most of the operating expenses went down, however the fuel line increased. E. Hoyt said that the fire department uses their WEX cards for purchasing fuel and they have gone to the Department of Transportation's shed in Dover to buy fuel to help keep the cost down. They shop around as much as they can. E. Savinelli asked about the physical expense line because it has money left in it. E. Hoyt said there are outstanding invoices, and the company is very slow to bill. E. Hoyt said it's about \$700 to \$800 per physical. C. Wayss asked if the fuel line included all the vehicles. E. Hoyt said yes. P. Moynihan said that they don't get fuel from the Marina for the boat because it doesn't have any additives in it, plus the Marina had no fuel all summer. C. Wayss asked if the department had

gotten a reimbursement for fighting the boat fire. E. Hoyt explained that it's very hard to get. P. Moynihan said that it's similar to a car fire and they don't get reimbursed for that. E. Savinelli asked about the hazmat number. E. Hoyt said that the dues went up this year for the first time in a long time. B. Arsenault commended the fire department for being prudent with their funds. The fire department is returning money this year, about \$150,000, because of this, the Board of Selectman decided that they could buy a new command truck with part of these excess funds, about \$70,000. Because they're buying the new command truck out of 2022 funds, they have reduced their warrant article for vehicle fire vehicles from 220,000 to 150,000. C. Wayss asked about the ambulance supplies this year. The budget line was overspent by \$1,000, but the fire department budgeted the same amount for 2023. P. Moynihan explained that this line also covers medical equipment. The department tries to buy one item each year but the 2021 purchase was delayed so two purchases happened in 2022, that's why it's overspent. He doesn't anticipate it being overspent in 2023. E. Hoyt explained that they had money leftover in their budget this year because of the staffing issues -everyone knows how hard it is to get staff. Hiring is a difficult task, that's why the overtime line is overspent. C. Wayss asked about the training line. E. Hoyt said that there is a new line because of the new union contract with education incentives in it.

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

J. Lamson asked to review the fire department's warrant articles. E. Savinelli expressed concern that one of the fire departments warrant articles had been cut. E. Hoyt said that the SCBA warrant article for \$20,000 was eliminated. P. Moynihan said the SCBA warrant article was eliminated because the units don't have to be replaced until around the year 2030. B. Arsenault explained that the Fire Vehicle warrant article was reduced from \$220,000 to \$150,000 because they're going to buy the second pickup truck out of 2022 funds. The SCBA units will cost about \$330,000 if they were going to buy them today. The Fire Department currently has a lease purchase for the SCBA units. They are in the fifth year of a seven-year lease agreement. The units will last for a while after the lease is done. C. Wayss asked if there was a maintenance agreement in the lease. P. Moynihan said no. C. Wayss asked if there was a trade possibility at the end of the SCBA life. E. Hoyt said that there is a possibility. B. Arsenault pointed out that this SCBA lease is the only account left in the debt service budget. The town doesn't have any financing on anything else. E. Savinelli said that she thinks the town should be putting away money each year so that they don't have any debt service. P. Moynihan believes the town has time to put away enough money for the SCBA units when they have to be replaced. C. Wayss agreed with E. Savinelli and thinks that the town needs to put away money in lower amounts over more years. C. Wayss doesn't want to get behind for the big-ticket items. J. Lamson said that the State Department of Revenue doesn't want the town to accumulate an unnecessary amount of taxpayers' money to invest. Newington pays as we go, because we manage our money well. C. Wayss asked

if the ambulance and major medical equipment warrant article account is enough to buy what they need.

P. Moynihan said that it is all built into the amounts for the warrant article. The new defibrillator will come with the ambulance when they purchase it, they will not have to purchase it separately.

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

Adjournment: C. Wayss moved to adjourn at 7:54pm. E. Savinelli seconded the motion with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eleanor Boy, Recording Secretary