

Approved

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
Hooksett Town Hall
35 Main Street
Thursday, October 12, 2023
6:30 pm

CALL TO ORDER

Pledge of Allegiance

ATTENDANCE

Chair Brian Soucy, Rick Ross, Germano Martins, Evelyn Baker, Ernie Bencivenga, Darren Greenberg, Abigail Shaine, and Jodi Pinard

Absent: Michael Kowack, Chantra Gurung, William Lynch

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

October 5, 2023

*R. Ross motioned to approve the minutes of October 5, 2023. Seconded by D. Greenberg
Vote unanimously in favor as corrected. J. Pinard abstained*

PUBLIC INPUT

NEW BUSINESS

Municipal Budget Review

Fire – Chief Colburn

Chief Colburn presented budget with a minimal increase. TA made a couple reductions. There is one amendment to Professional Services which is dispatching fees. The line is \$87,500 which represents half of the dispatching fees. We belong to a shared dispatch center and we share the fees. We estimated 175,000 for 2024. That budget was set after the process was done with Council. There is an increase to 176,673. We split that 50/50 which brings that to \$88,336.50. We ask that you increase that line. We are looking at a significant 5 million dollar radio upgrade that will come from grants.

B. Soucy asked since that is split with the ambulance line, will that be an increase as well.

Chief: No, we will split that cost.

Chief: The amount comes from the town assessment as well as the population. The revaluation of a town can increase the portion paid by the town.

Chief: The ambulance is \$336,000 but I'm not sure that represents the last transfer.

Staff numbers decreased due to new employees starting at a lower rate. We are fully staffed for the first time in a long time.

Chief reviewed the history of the fire inspectors from 2 full time to 1 full time. The hope was to start to nibble away at the work by hiring a part time inspector and eventually return to 2 full time inspectors. The TA eliminated that part time inspector.

A. Garron stated that Assistant Chief Colburn was the inspector as well as the assistant chief. Now we have a full time dedicated inspector.

Chief: All level funded. Fuel increased based on actuals and projected increases in costs.

A. Garron stated that there was an increase due to water rates from 288,000 to 318,000. This is Hooksett Water as well as Manchester Water.

Chief: Uniform line represents a contractual requirement for replacement as well as outfitting new hires.

R. Ross asked on vehicle maintenance there was a reduction, what are the conditions?

Chief: Reviewed the equipment and feels that \$100,000 is acceptable. The ambulance line revolving account handles their own maintenance. The fleet is in good shape with a good capital plan.

B. Soucy asked Emergency Management EOC exercises were reduce to \$500.

Chief: We have been working with the PD with the hope of doing a full scale exercise next year.

TNT network maintain our phones inside the building.

A. Shaine: Reduced the public relations budget where half went to Admin and the other half went away.

A. Garron: That went away because we already have an account in Admin so we combined it. The Admin line was increased from \$1500 to \$3000 for public relations.

B. Soucy asked about fuel from 37,000 to 45,540.

Chief: The fuel was based on last year's gallons consumed plus the recommended cost increase.

B. Soucy asked for the detail on how the fuel was calculated

J. Pinard: 75,000gls at \$5/gl and 2400 at 3.35/gl

B. Soucy asked for a comparison from last year.

B. Soucy: Budget test from 7 to 5 by TA.

B. Soucy: New Equipment- Significant jump

Chief: The gear is a large part of that. Every member of our department has 2 sets of gear issued. Every 5 years they get a new set of gear. The gear is good for 10 years. We have rotation so to keep that going we buy 7 sets of year. The other 4 sets is for new hires. The increase is price increases. The PP and gear is typical over the years. We are looking to do a remodel for a break room. We put \$3500 in for that. It was cut by \$2500 and left with \$1000 for appliances. Part time inspector was cut. New gym equipment was something the council allowed us to use ARPA funds to update the gym. The one thing that us or PD have every had is maintenance for that equipment so we put \$4000 to update equipment at station 1.

Library – Heather Rainier Sandra Mac

H. Rainier: We have provided pro-rated leave time for our part time employees. For 10 PT employees were asking for \$6500 as part of the overall wage increase. We requested an increase in our wages of approximately \$14,000 and in that is the \$6501 PT leave and a part time hire for 9 hrs a week. One of our employees is working to digitize the historical records. Also is the \$4000 for longevity which is part of the personnel plan.

B. Soucy asked if the roof was done.

H. Rainier: The roof will be replaced in 2025. Building maintenance is the line we consistently overspend. We have a great building that is aging. Most of our maintenance is HVAC repair. We have had electrical work this year. The roof is part of the CIP. The general maintenance of the library repair falls under the library budget.

H. Rainier: \$2500 for office and library services – increase in cost and we shifted the materials we were using and we realized the book covers were plastic so we switched to a sugar based plant biodegradable cover and supplies for the archive for pictures to go into acid free boxes.

R. Ross about the youth programs. How does that compare to 2022.

H. Rainier: We have an increase from 2022 and is comparable to 2019 which was per-Covid.

H. Rainier: E books have been reduced but there is an increase in audio books.
7000 library card holders.

Tax Collector – Kim Blichmann

K. Blichmann: After meeting with the TA and the Council I became aware of a postage change in July that certified mail increased. Request current budget for postage to be the current rate which is 8.53/letter and I have \$8.13. The increase is \$483 increase in certified mail. By making it match the current postage, when they increase next year, my budget may be close when I send out letters next year.

The budget is the same. I don't have longevity in this budget and a change in professional services for deeding and liens. If I execute both in 30 days I receive a discount. We are not using the drop box at this time. That process didn't work out for us. We have a lock box outside the building for payment.

D. Greenberg motioned to move the Cemetery budget up on the agenda. Seconded by B. Soucy. Vote unanimously in favorable.

Cemetery – M. Horn

Our budget is the smallest budget with the exception of conservation. There is a 2% change. We would like to have new maps. The largest part of the budget is our subscription to look up maps on line. We are looking for a warrant article for \$10,000 to repair headstones and monuments. The condition of the cemetery needs improvement. We have done some work repairing fencing and Park and Rec does a good job in mowing and tree work.

Town Clerk – A. Garron & K. Towne

A. Garron: Increase of 63.85% over last year with the adding of a part time admin assistance to help the clerk and the elections. This year we had a vacant position in another department and we wanted to address the immediate need by putting that in this department this year. We want to continue that in the department and that represents the increase.

K. Towne: We have a presidential election next year as well.

A. Garron: There is an addition. We discussed it at the Town Council level. The current ballot machines will be supported through next year but after 2024 we will need to have them replaced.

B. Soucy asked if everyone in the State uses the same machines.

K. Towne: I believe that is true now but moving forward there will be two options. From my understanding, they will be updated machines, similar to what we have with different technology. I was going to make an amendment to the new equipment line – election for \$14,000. The timeline is up to the State.

A. Garron: The \$14,000 proposed would allow us to go either way. We will need to get quotes and choose which one we will go with.

J. Pinard asked if this will go in the default budget as well since our current ballot boxes will no longer be valid.

A. Garron: I don't believe it will.

K. Towne: The current machines we have now will be valid and supported through the Presidential Election. After December 2024, they cannot guarantee that they can support that. The election of March of 2025 would not be supported. The \$14,000 is not in the proposed budget.

K. Towne stated she has a deputy clerk who started in July. I also have a part time person that started 3 weeks ago. The Admin Assistant is also appointed as a deputy town clerk. The Town Clerk hours have been extended to Monday 9-2 Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday and Wednesday 1:30 to 6:30. The Town Clerk hours are 10-2 Tuesday and Thursday and every 3rd Wednesday of the month 4:30 to 6:30.

B. Soucy: This is another \$25,000 in salary plus benefits for 5 hours a day for 4 days.

K. Towne: Right now the office is slow. There are not a lot of vital records or dog licensing. We plan to extend the hours and become more available as the office gets busier.

B. Soucy: The Part time employee dollars were stolen from finance. Next year we will make it a permanent position and is that essential for the Clerk.

A. Garron: I believe it is for the operation of the department. The fact that this person is also a town resident makes them capable of serving as deputy as well.

B. Soucy: Do you see a time in the near future when Finance will need a part time person to help in their duties.

A. Garron: I don't know. That line could go back to finance if the clerk is not needed.

K. Towne stated she works 3 weeks 8 hours and 1 week work 10 hours. I do expect to expand hours during the primary.

Heritage Commissioner

B. Soucy asked to have Tony LaCasse come to the Budget meeting to explain the role of Commission. We are working on a date.

The Police Chief responded to the fuel line request. Corrected information:

Fuel \$56,280 which is a reduction from the previous amount of \$62,310 and a reduction from 2022-23 budget which is \$68,600. With more hybrid vehicles the calculation is 16,800 gls x \$3.50.

School District Budget

E. Baker submitted a Fund Balance distribution report for the end of this year which represents a total of \$197,000 in fund balance. This included a list of 16 items of which 7 items are for increase security items.

J. Pinard asked for the special education trust fund balance for the School Budget meeting.

E. Bencivenga asked how often that fund has been used and when it was funded.

Also are those funds being placed in an interest bearing account.

Are there funds from Special Details that go back to the town?

B. Soucy stated that he believes 20% go back to the town.

E. Bencivenga stated that he believes Mr. Kowack was looking for the information regarding the 2022-23 fund balance and what was expended based on the decisions made at the June Workshop meeting. What projects were funded and what was returned to the taxpayers.

Mr. Rearick sent an email regarding the School presentation which he plans to attend on November 16th and December 7th.

B. Soucy asked E. Baker to confirm when the School Budget Books would be submitted to the Budget Committee. Also confirm that we get digital and excel printed copies of Budget.

B. Soucy asked the member to review the budgets received and prepare questions and motions for upcoming meetings.

OTHER BUSINESS

PUBLIC INPUT

ADJOURNMENT

*G. Martins motioned to adjourn at 8:38 pm. Seconded by R. Ross.
Vote unanimously in favor.*

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Ann Moynihan