

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING – October 19, 2023

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Hooksett Town Hall

35 Main Street

Thursday, October 19, 2023

6:30 pm

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Soucy called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

ATTENDANCE

Chair Brian Soucy, Germano Martins, Evelyn Baker, Ernie Bencivenga, Darren Greenberg, Abigail Shaine, Mike Kowack, and William Lynch

Absent: Richard Ross, Chhatra Gurung and Jodi Pinard

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

October 12, 2023

M. Kowack motioned to approve the minutes as corrected. Seconded by E. Baker

Vote unanimously in favor. M. Kowack and W. Lynch abstained

PUBLIC INPUT

OLD BUSINESS

Tony Lacasse- Heritage Commission

The Heritage Commission is in charge of preserving the cultural and natural heritage by documenting historical homes in town, preserving historical character in town like the Lincoln Park neighborhood with a historical marker. There are currently 14 historical markers in town with funds set aside to maintain and add.

K. Northrup founded the Heritage Commission in 1997 and passed in 2021. She was a one women show. I stepped up as the Chair in 2021. Kathy created this budget and her line items were kept the same. There is a line item for \$1000 for Heritage Markers, general commission work for miscellaneous office supplies, postage, fundraising, workshops, thank you gifts and new this year “Light up the Village” supporters’ thank you notes. We plan to do that event again this year. Also membership in the preservation alliance.

The only addition was the events and programming originally for \$15,000. We then felt we didn’t need all that money so we were able to go a different route. We went to Council and got \$9500 from ARPA for the lights on the lilac bridge. We now have \$9500 and we are requesting an amount for labor to put up the lights. That cost is \$3000/yr for the labor every year. The

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING – October 19, 2023

Heritage Commission was hoping to get funding for that so we wouldn't have to constantly fund raise. We are asking to add \$3000 to our budget for that.

E. Baker asked if there were independent funds.

T. LaCasse: We have our own funds. We plan to use those funds for more historical markers and put in markers in Village because we already have a walking tour without markers.

That ties into the vitality of the river and the historical and cultural value of that. The lights on the bridge is more aesthetically than historical.

We have \$7423 in the Heritage Markers account.

Heritage Commission has \$42208 in another account. Account

We envision having markers similar to those currently on the river walk trail.

The cost was about \$2000/sign with 12 sites planned.

NEW BUSINESS

Municipal Budget Review

Sewer Comm.-Ken Conety

Background of the Sewer Commission was given. Recently completed a \$7 million upgrade.

This is the final fix for the plant. We have five (5) pump stations and we are in the process of building a sixth (6th) on the west side of the river. We have 3500 manholes and 112 miles of pipe in town with a 6 man crew.

The Budget changes:

- Eliminated the part time consultant.
- Eliminated holiday and on call wages because of the upgrades. Everything is automatically recorded.
- Electricity – Last year we put in a solar panel array and borrowed from the trust fund. We are paying back that trust fund. We took 120,000 out of the electric line and put in under debt services (solar) It is expected to take 11 years and we have reduced it already to 8 years.

By selling solar to Eversource, I must be on Eversource's commercial rate which varies every month and therefore difficult to track. It went from \$5000 bill to \$30,000 bill.

Large increases were Lab fees which come out of Germany; eliminated the defoamer which saves \$7700/year; mains and manholes had an increase. As roads are paved, we change the covers because there is no labor costs. Operations, we had \$48,000 decrease from last year but we moved \$120,000 to debt services. The overall is a \$70,000 increase. Computers are 9-11 years old so we are looking to buy new. The legal line stayed the same.

The budget increase is \$93,700 or 3.55%.

M. Kowack: The legal line was \$65,000 and only \$29,000 was spent. This year's adopted budget is \$65,000 and only \$1000. has been spent.

K. Conety: There are 12 easements left that have not been cleared.

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING – October 19, 2023

Assessing – John Duhamel

This year, we are up \$21,000 for professional services. We have a part time appraiser. We need to use our current contractors to do data verification.

Other than that, everything is the same except for increase in costs.

A. Garron: We reduced professional \$8500 because there was money to defend the values. That comes from town legal line under Administration

B. Soucy: Printing went up but you have been consistently under budget on that line.

John Duhamel – Assessor

Elayne Pierson – Full Time Clerk

Family Services – Trish Caruso

There is a change in the training line based on the different workshops offered for Welfare Administrators. Traditionally, I have attended the NHMA conference and I find that helpful.

The software program line with an annual cost of \$1800 has been remove because we are looking to not move forward with that program.

A. Garron: The former director thought that was a good program, but with the new director, the Gap program is adequate to meet the needs of the department.

Budget Comm.

The committee reviewed the Budget Committee budget.

Fire Department- The response to the fuel questions from the previous wee were sent via email by Chief Colburn.

Diesel cost: This year 3.50 and \$4.00. Diesel went up to 5 with the average of 4.76. Since June the average was 3.53 diesel.

B. Soucy asked C. Tewksbury about the police revolving fund.

C. Tewksbury: The question was 20%. Since July it has been \$4800 and estimated at \$20,000. Regarding the voting machines, the question was is the voting equipment going in the default. Budget. I don't think it is mandated so I wouldn't add it to the default, but it is the Council's final decision with my recommendation not to include it.

I am keeping track of all the changes requested and I have it on a spreadsheet.

Wastewater budget is not part of the town's budget so it must be a separate motion to accept by the Budget Committee.

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING – October 19, 2023

***B. Soucy motioned to accept the Wastewater budget as presented. Seconded by M. Kowack
Vote unanimously in favor.***

C. Tewksbury – Debts and Leases

No leases

The bond for the TIF district which is offset by the TIF revenue .
Safety Center and the Fire Engine \$126,803 for FY 2024-2025

Revenue – offset of \$20,000. We can revise our revenue just before we set the tax rate. These are estimates. It looks like they went down \$2.6 million but that's because we didn't have the wastewater numbers. The revenues actually stayed level. There is an increase in interest income and sale of town property. There is \$4.3 million for motor vehicles and we collected 3.4 million last year and anticipate a higher revenue this year.

Building permit fees have decreased over the past 4 years.

The town renewed the Court House lease.

The new Workman's Comp numbers have come in under estimated.

Health Insurance came in at an increase of 11.3% with a \$115,000 increase in the budget with a total 3.4% overall increase.

School District Budget

E. Baker – The School Board Budget Workshop is Tuesday, October 24th at 5:30 pm a the Cawley School Media Center. All Budget Committee are invited and encouraged to attend.

School Fund Balance from June workshop still unavailable.

OTHER BUSINESS

No meeting next week. DPW will present on Nov. 9th.

PUBLIC INPUT

ADJOURNMENT

D. Greenberg motion to adjourn. Seconded by W. Lynch.

Vote unanimously in favor

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Ann Moynihan