

**Town of Hooksett  
Town Council Budget Review Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, September 15, 2021**

1  
2 The Hooksett Town Council met on Wednesday, September 15, 2021, at 6:06 in the Hooksett  
3 Municipal Building.

4  
5 **CALL TO ORDER**

6  
7 **PROOF OF POSTING**

8  
9 **ROLL CALL**

10 Councilor James Sullivan, Councilor Roger Duhaime, Councilor David Boutin (left at 6:44pm), Councilor  
11 Timothy Tsantoulis, Councilor Clark Karolian, and Councilor Alex Walczyk

12  
13 **MISSING-** Councilor Clifford Jones, Councilor John Durand, Councilor Randall Lapierre

14  
15 **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

16  
17 **PUBLIC INPUT- None**

18  
19 **BUDGET REVIEWS FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023**

20  
21 **Library (Tab 16)** Heather Rainer, Mary Farwell along with the other members of the Trustees were  
22 present.

23  
24 M. Farwell- We thank you for appointing Sandra Mack to the Board of Trustees. We had our first  
25 Trustees meeting with her last night and we can already tell what a great board member she is going to  
26 be. She brings a different perspective and insights that are very valuable. Heather made the  
27 observation that although we lost a “mac” from the board when Mac Broderick moved out of town, we  
28 have also gained a “Mack” as well. I’d like to share the highlights of our 2022-2023 budget request with  
29 you and then answer any questions you might have. For the last 3 years, we have not asked for a  
30 budget increase, in fact, some years we had a budget decrease. However, that is not the case this  
31 year. The increase in this requested budget is overwhelmingly tied to wages and resulting benefits. This  
32 year is all about equity for our employees. We have shared with you our past struggles to hire and  
33 retain employees. In the past 4 years we have had 11 employees leave. This is very costly not only in  
34 recruiting replacements but also to our remaining staff because of the high level of training needed for  
35 even our “entry level” positions. We would like to commend you for undertaking a pay equity study for  
36 the town as you know we came to you in May and discussed that we would conduct our own pay equity  
37 study with MRI. The results of this study were illuminating and alarming. Illuminating because we could  
38 now see why we were training and then losing employees to other libraries who were able to pay more.  
39 Alarming because of how far out of whack our pay scales were. Of our 17 employees, 4 full time and 9  
40 part time were under the minimum recommended by MRI. In some cases, just about \$3.00 per hour  
41 under the recommended minimum. When we received the study, we had five open positions and no  
42 suitable applications to fill them. Something had to be done and done now. As a result, the trustees  
43 decided to bring those positions up to the recommended minimum as of July 1, 2021, and to include  
44 this in our 2022-2023 budget. We also had 4 employees who while at or above the minimum, were not  
45 being adequately compensated for their years of service compared to their peers in other libraries. We  
46 have made no provisions for them in this budget, but this issue really needs to be addressed as well. We  
47 are working with the town to determine their course of action in this regard. Our other large increase is  
48 in the health insurance line. The 2 full time employees who are no longer with us had taken the health  
49 insurance stipend for \$5,000 each. We have filled one position with an employee who had taken a 2-  
50 person plan with an annual cost of \$19,638. The other position is still unfilled, so we have had to  
51 budget for a family plan with an annual cost of \$26,668. So that line shows an increase of \$36,306 to  
52 cover those 2 employees. The increases in wages and benefits accounts for 86% of the increase in this  
53 budget. As you know, the library trustees and Director are a frugal bunch, and it is painful to come in

54 and ask for this kind of an increase. However, our responsibility to our staff requires that we treat them  
55 fairly and we have not been doing so. We ask for our support for this budget.

56  
57 D. Boutin- According to the info at the bottom of the sheet you are increasing your budget by \$70,331 at  
58 7.6%. This is way over the current rate which I think is 2 or 2.5%. This presents a problem. In the wage  
59 line you are showing an \$21,000 increase can you explain that.

60  
61 M. Farwell- That is due to the pay inequity, to bring them to the minimum that MRI recommended.  
62 Another way to look at the 7%, if you look at a 2% annually, we got a little more of an increase this year  
63 as we have not asked for in the past 3 years. \$36,000 is due to health insurance and we have no  
64 control over that.

65  
66 D. Boutin- I think 7% is way too much and you need to sharpen your pencil and get it down to 3%. I am  
67 not going to vote for this the way it is right now it is to much. The health insurance line represents a  
68 \$33,000 increase why is that.

69  
70 M. Farwell- As I said in my introduction, we lost a position that took the \$5,000 stipend and the new hire  
71 took a 2-person plan and then other unfilled position we must budget for a family plan and that is  
72 \$26,668.

73  
74 D. Boutin- Building maintenance went up \$3,000, info tech went up \$1,200, the automation went up  
75 \$1,000, host material went up \$6,000 that is a 7.6% increase.

76  
77 M. Farwell- The automation system line is something that we are locked into. We are in the consortium.

78  
79 H. Rainer- That is our automation that is all the things that we do with our library and other libraries.  
80 That allows us to do all the things that we do, lending books, borrowing books, library cards, event  
81 registrations, meeting room registration.

82  
83 C. Karolian- I need clarification, the money that you are requesting is under the library trustee's  
84 recommendation at \$995,918.

85  
86 M. Farwell- Yes

87  
88 **C. Karolian motioned that we increase the amount by \$4,082 to \$1 million; seconded by A.**  
89 **Walczyk.**

90  
91 C. Karolian- I've done some self-reflecting that the town council does not operate departments, the  
92 departments answer to the town administrator and when it comes to the town councils' functions, we  
93 look at the dollar figures and not exactly each line requesting that you change one line or another that is  
94 entirely up the department heads and their bosses the town administrator. So having said that if wages  
95 need to go up then that extra \$4,000 should be allocated for wages, if it needs to go somewhere else  
96 that's up to you to decide.

97  
98 C. Karolian call the question no 2<sup>nd</sup>

99  
100 A. Walczyk- I have frequented the library and all the services. The budgets have not increased, and  
101 Hooksett needs to look at wages. Based on what I have looked at the adjustments are based on the  
102 services that they are providing.

103

104 R. Duhaime- I remember when we got that library, and our budget has just grown and grown on that.  
105 There are more quality-of-life projects that are more important. We had already done wage increases in  
106 the past. I think the wage increases are way to high and you need to look elsewhere.  
107  
108 T. Tsantoulis- I think the services are great but I feel that the 7% increase is too high. It comes down to  
109 optics. The question that I get a lot is will there be a tax increase this year? Agreeing to a 7.6%  
110 increase will be hard to. Are you managing without filling that position?  
111  
112 M. Farwell- we were lucky to have 2 hires take the stipend, but we have no other way to budget, but to  
113 budget for the full plan.  
114  
115 C. Tewksbury- So for all vacant positions for insurance plans we use a 2-person plan.  
116  
117 T. Tsantoulis- It doesn't change the overall % to the budget.  
118  
119 M. Farwell- \$36,000 of the \$70,000 is health insurance. And we don't have a choice.  
120  
121 J. Sullivan- The previous employee that got the \$5,000 stipend took a 2-person plan, correct?  
122  
123 M. Farwell- Yes \$19,000.  
124  
125 J. Sullivan- The town is also doing a wage scale; we need to attract people to provide the services. You  
126 can't hire people at the rate that you hoped. Now I am looking at services that you will hopefully not  
127 need. I am looking at the year in review, we are providing services to the town. The increased services  
128 do show that we are providing services and shows that the citizens are using it I see a 289 increase In  
129 card holders,  
130  
131 H. Rainer- We have about 7,000 card holders.  
132  
133 J. Sullivan- If you come down to it, it is insurance and wage increases based on what I said that is  
134 \$55,000. What is the status on the 4 vacant positions?  
135  
136 M. Farwell- We are advertising.  
137  
138 D. Boutin- This should not be a debate of if we like the library or not. The taxpayers cannot afford it.  
139 The increase in \$21,000 wages, I have not yet gotten clarification on that.  
140  
141 M. Farwell- The \$21,00 is to address the pay inequality addressed by MRI, we had 10 positions that  
142 were below the minimum recommended starting salaries for their positions. So, we decided that we  
143 needed to do something, we looked at those 10 positions and brought them up to the minimum. We  
144 also have pay inequity with employees that have been employed with us and now we are hiring people  
145 in various departments at a higher wage level that those that have been here a very long time. We did  
146 not address those employees this year, just those not making the minimum.  
147  
148 D. Boutin- I have not seen this study.  
149  
150 M. Farwell- Andre has it and can provide that study to you.  
151  
152 D. Boutin- As T. Tsantoulis applied which I agree with, if you were able to hold off on filling that 1  
153 position this year it would help on that health insurance.

154 M. Farwell- Depending on the plan that they pick the cost is \$26, 668 for a family plan.  
155  
156 D. Boutin- What is the wage level for the person who is not on board yet?  
157  
158 M. Farwell- \$47,000 \$49,00 somewhere in that range.  
159  
160 D. Boutin- What would your budget be if you did not fill this position.  
161  
162 M. Farwell- The 47 plus the 26.  
163  
164 D. Boutin – That would pretty much cover your total increase. When we talk to residents, they care  
165 about the bottom line and that's it. You are asking for a 7.6% increase that is 3x the rate of inflation. If  
166 we give it to you then we need to give it to all department.  
167  
168 H. Rainer- I just want to repeat what Mary had said and we have not had an increase in 3 years.  
169  
170 D. Boutin- Chairman I have the floor. You cannot cut me off and go to Mr. Garron.  
171  
172 J. Sullivan- He is responding to the question that you asked.  
173  
174 D. Boutin – What is the point of being here? I am going home.  
175  
176 J. Sullivan- Ok meeting is adjourned a quorum is lost.  
177  
178 D. Boutin- I am not going to be treated this way and be cut off in the middle of my opportunity to speak,  
179 you cut me off so that Mr. Garron can speak.  
180  
181 J. Sullivan – I have not treated you with any disrespect at all. You asked me a question and I want the  
182 individuals to answer them as we go along.  
183  
184 J. Sullivan- I may need to schedule an early meeting next week to cover the rest.  
185  
186  
187  
188

189 **ADJOURNMENT**

190 ***C. Karolian motioned to adjourn the public session of 07/25/2021 at 6:46pm due to loss of a***  
191 ***quorum. Seconded by R. Duhaime.***

192 **Voted unanimously in favor (5-0)**  
193  
194

195  
196 Respectfully submitted,  
197 *Alicia Jipson*  
198 Alicia Jipson  
199 Recording Clerk  
200

201 Please see subsequent meeting minutes for any amendments to these minutes  
202