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**Town of Hooksett
Town Council Budget Review Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 07, 2022**

10 The Hooksett Town Council met on Wednesday, September 07, 2022 at 6:08 in the Hooksett
11 Municipal Building.

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CALL TO ORDER

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PROOF OF POSTING- Provided by Town Administrator Andre Garron.

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IN ATTENDANCE- Councilor James Sullivan, Councilor Randall Lapierre, Councilor David Boutin, Councilor Timothy Tsantoulis, Councilor Alex Walczyk, and Councilor Roger Duhaime.

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ABSENT- Councilor David Ross, Councilor Keith Judge, Councilor John Durand.

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PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PUBLIC INPUT- NONE

BUDGET OVERVIEW OF FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024

D. Boutin- thank you Mr. Garron for keeping the budget down and it being an only 1.7% increase.

A. Garron- I commend department heads for bringing forward responsible budgets. This figure also includes non-union raises that were included in phase 2. Phase 3 is to continue with the wage plan and look at longevity.

A. Garron- The Town Administrator's recommended operating budget of **\$19,296,951**, (excluding Wastewater and Library) an increase of **\$279,953** or **1.47%** from the current FY 2022-23 budget. This recommended budget supports: Union raises approved by the voters for 23 DPW and 16 Mid-management union members. A proposed Longevity payment system for non-union employees. The replacement of three police cruiser as recommended by the Capital Improvement plan. Funds to replace the carpet at the Courthouse. Funds to pave the cemetery road behind the Head Cemetery Chapel. Additional stipends for Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk. With the difficulty we had in hiring this will help with hiring. The Administrator's recommendation includes level funding the employee health and dental insurances. The budget includes 119 Full-time and 24 Part-time employees, which is the same as the current year.

As part of the long-term strategy for non-union employee, it was recommended to establish a longevity bonus system similar to union employees. Non-union full-time employees who complete 3 years of service will receive a one-time bonus of \$1,000 on their 3rd anniversary. A \$2,000 bonus will be received for the completion of 6, 9,12,15,18, 21,24,27,30... years with the Town. Non-union part-time employees will follow the same cycle, but will receive a \$500 bonus after 3 years and a \$1,000 bonus the additional milestone years. Bonuses are not cumulative, are subject to employment taxes and paid in the employees' paycheck the week following their

48 anniversary. Currently, there are 32 full-time and 28 part-time non-union employees including
49 library employees. The total estimated cost over three years would be \$108,000.

50

51 FY 2023-24 18 employee hit a milestone year costing an estimated \$35,000

52 FY 2024-25 24 employee hit a milestone year costing an estimated \$38,000

53 FY 2025-26 18 employee hit a milestone year costing an estimated \$35,000

54

55 The Administrators recommendations vs current years budget is as follows:

56

57 The **Administration** budget increased in total approximately \$23,000. The increases are
58 primarily from: 1) the replacement of computers and peripheral items for the entire town 2)
59 increasing Property Liability Insurance rates and 3) uniform shirts for Town Hall employees.

60 The **Assessing** budget reflects an increase of approximately \$30,000 to hire a contractor to
61 measure and list properties in town.

62 The **Community Development** budget reflects an increase of \$7,274 from last year. This
63 increase supports current staffing levels.

64 The **Family Services** budget reflects an increase of approximately \$13,000 from the current
65 year. \$10,000 of this increase was for Town Welfare. Also, there are some funds to support an
66 electronic document filing project.

67 The **Finance** budget reflects an increase of approximately \$7,000. This is related to the cost of
68 the GASB 45/75 actuary study that will be needed in the current budget.

69

70 D. Boutin- what is the GASB 45/75?

71

72 A. Garron- Governmental Accounting Standards Board, and we do it every other year.

73

74 C. Tewksbury- we do it every other year and it is a required element of our financial report.

75

76 D. Boutin- what are they reporting?

77

78 C. Tewksbury- It is to report post retirement benefits.

79

80 A. Garron- The **Fire-Rescue** budget has decreased by approximately \$26,000. Changes to the
81 budget include a reduction in wages of \$34,000, which supports current staffing levels. An
82 additional \$40,000 in overtime is needed to support minimum staffing levels. NH Retirement
83 has reduced the Town's rates for a savings of \$52,000. \$10,000 was added to both the vehicle
84 maintenance and fuel lines.

85 The **Police** budget has increased by approximately \$47,000. Changes to this budget include a
86 decrease of \$63,000 in the town's share of NH Retirement. Vehicle maintenance and fuel lines
87 have been lowered based on the three replacement cars proposed in the budget.

88 The vehicle & related purchases line has an increase of \$99,000 to support the replacement of
89 three police cruisers, which detail in the Capital Improvement Plan.

90 The **Public Works** budget increased approximately \$178,000 over the current year's budget.
91 This budget supports approximately \$30,000 in approved union raises that span all three
92 divisions.

93 The **Highway Division** has increased about \$40,000. Overtime increased based on the
94 average cost of winter storms and fuel lines increased based on the projected rate of diesel and

95 gasoline. The NPDES Stormwater line (aka Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems aka
96 MS4) has been reduced by \$5,000. Also there are funds added to the courthouse building
97 maintenance line to replace 20-year old carpets throughout the building.

98 The **Parks, Recreation and Cemeteries Division** has increased approximately \$38,000. This
99 budget supports a new ride-on paint machine, which will increase staff efficiency when lining
100 fields and funds to pave the road behind the Head Cemetery Chapel as requested by the
101 Cemetery Commission.

102 The **Recycling and Transfer Division** has increased approximately \$100,000. Tipping fee
103 rates and tonnage accounts for about half of the increase. Equipment maintenance and fuel
104 have increased about \$25,000.

105 The **Tax Collector** budget reflects a decrease of \$2,800 in professional services and office
106 supplies.

107 The **Town Clerk and Elections** overall budget reflects an estimated increase of \$22,000 for the
108 upcoming year. The largest increase is in the stipend paid to the Town Clerk and Deputy. The
109 proposed budget supports a \$20,000 annual stipend for the Elected Town Clerk and additional
110 \$5,000 stipend for the Federal Election year. The \$5,000 stipend for the Federal Election will
111 only be paid when there is a Federal Election scheduled, which happens every other year. The
112 Deputy Town Clerk's stipend has also increased from \$2,000 to \$5,000 annually.

113

114 A. Garron- DEFAULT: The recommended operating budget is \$223,385 or 1.17% higher than
115 the default. The main changes in the default are increases for the union contracts (DPW and
116 Mid-Management), the repayment of the TIF Sewer & Other Infrastructure bonds approved by
117 the voters. The default budget does not support the non-union longevity proposal, rate
118 increases for property liability insurance, fuel and maintenance costs, as well as the increased
119 welfare and tipping fees costs. Also not in the default budget is the additional stipend for the
120 Elected Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk and two of the replacement police cruisers.

121 **In 2018 Chapter 241 (HB 1307)** changed the definition of "Contracts" for default Budget
122 Calculation. The new law limits "contracts" to only those contracts "previously approved, and in
123 the amount so approved, by the legislative body in either the operating budget authorized for the
124 previous year or . . . a separate warrant article for a previous year."

125

126 J. Sullivan- I can see where you indicated certain things are not included? Are the tipping fees
127 not included under that?

128

129 C. Tewksbury- HB 1307 did just that and anything that is not on the ballot cannot increase.

130

131 A. Garron- Estimated revenues, which will impact the tax rate, show a decrease of
132 approximately \$400,000 in the FY 2023-24 budget.

133 **Decreases:** The proposed budget reflects a decrease of \$400,000 in motor vehicle registration.
134 The budget is estimated at \$4.1 million, which is the same amount as collected in FY 2021-22.
135 The number of vehicles registered was lower in FY 2021-22.

136 The remaining revenue lines have been adjusted, but overall are level fund from last year
137 estimates. The hope is that the economy will improve, and additional revenues can be
138 considered when setting the tax rate in November 2023.

139

140 D. Boutin- why the decrease in motor vehicle?

141

142 C. Tewksbury- when I talked to the tax collector it represents that in 2022 registered 800 less
143 vehicles. One particular fleet registered early in 2021. It is also a combo of people not
144 registering 2nd vehicles.

145
146 D. Boutin- how do we handle this?

147
148 C. Tewksbury- I am comfortable using the 4.1 million number. We should continue to budget for
149 what we have collected.

150
151 T. Tsantoulis- it is very hard to buy a car right now.

152
153 A. Garron- lastly there are possible warrant articles that the council will take up later. Some
154 items are under the CIP. We still don't know what the Union numbers will be so we will fill that in
155 later. Capital reserve numbers are typical that we see year after year for various projects. Phase
156 2 of the MRI study is also included. Items we are not clear on are the police and fire union. The
157 feasibility study for the solar farm and are gathering information to consider.

158
159 D. Boutin- the unaccounted numbers how do you think it will affect the percentage increase?

160
161 A. Garron- remains to be unseen I couldn't project. We are trying to keep the numbers low.

162
163 R. Duhaime- the Conservation Budget is down again.

164
165 C. Tewksbury- \$30,000 was what was funded last year because we didn't see the justification.

166
167 **Town Clerk**

168
169 A. Garron- the majority of the increase in this budget is the increase in the stipend for both the
170 Town Clerk and the deputy Town Clerk, and I believe there is another adjustment in the taxes.

171
172 D. Boutin- budget for TC is going from \$22,550 to \$35,050 why the current stipend is not
173 sufficient to get the job done.

174
175 A. Garron- we have discussed the difficulties in finding a town clerk, and we were luckily to find
176 one. We had discussed looking at this and decided to look at it more like a part time position
177 and looking at the election years and the increase of duties. We increased the stipend from
178 \$5,000 to \$20,000 to the Town clerk and we added a \$5,000 stipend for federal elections.

179
180 D. Boutin- what is a stipend. What is it currently? How are you justifying the increase.

181
182 A. Garron- it is a stipend position; it is currently budgeted at \$5,000 a year. We have re looked
183 at the position and looked at it more so as a part time position and therefor felt it should be more
184 so a part time position and the wages should be increased. When we look at the hours that they
185 actually put in it is closer to the \$20,000 vs the \$5,000 when you look at the hours that they put
186 in.

187
188 D. Boutin- I don't think you have given any justification to warrant the increase.

189
190 T. Tsantoulis- we had an employee who was doing it before who was grossly underpaid and
191 decided that they no longer had the time to do it. now we are faced with being competitive and
192 establishing an amount of pay that reflects the amount of time that they put in. if we were to look
193 at this as a paid position, we would be looking at more than \$20,000 plus benefits.

194
195 D. Boutin- this is a big increase for one year and we have to justify this to the tax payers, that
196 we are going to increase one-person salary by \$15,000 in one year and I am not convinced.

197
198 R. Lapierre- Hooksett is one of the quickest growing towns, at some point for Hooksett to
199 maintain the level of service it needs to it will be at a full-time clerk with benefits. If this bridges
200 the gap until then, but to think that we can continue on with a \$7,000 budget for a town clerk and
201 continue on with services I think we have been spoiled by our former clerk.

202
203 J. Sullivan - that prior clerk also had a Monday thru Friday day job and could accommodate the
204 residents. We are concerned in the future. Based on the passed expectations this may be the
205 next best estimate on how to address the issues.

206
207 ***D. Boutin motioned to have a presentation at our next budget meeting from the TA on***
208 ***how we would fund this position as a full-time employee seconded by R. Duhaime.***

209
210 D. Boutin- I am looking for greater detail and approach this from a more practical sense.

211
212 R. Duhaime- I think as it was stated that we will be growing and how we will be thinking about
213 the future. How are other towns doing it?

214
215 J. Sullivan- whatever we do now will be in affected in 2023. We need to plan for the future now
216 and address it now for next time.

217
218 T. Tsantoulis- what would it cost the town assuming that individual had a family, what is a
219 ballpark for health insurance?

220
221 C. Tewksbury- it is roughly \$26,000 for the health insurance not factoring in other stuff.

222
223 D. Boutin- the \$26,000 that has been brought up as a benefits cost is that under the town?

224
225 C. Tewksbury- that's what the town premium is.

226
227 R. Lapierre- do we have to accept the proposed budget in order for the BC to move forward?

228
229 J. Sullivan- no we do not, we have time according to the calendar.

230
231 **Roll Call Vote #2**
232 ***R. Duhaime Aye***
233 ***J. Durand NP***
234 ***D. Ross NP***
235 ***R. Lapierre Aye***

236 **A. Walczyk Aye**
237 **D. Boutin Aye**
238 **K. Judge NP**
239 **T. Tsantoulis Nay**
240 **J. Sullivan Aye**

241
242 **Vote in favor 5-1**

243
244 **Library Trustees**

245
246 M. Farwell- you have our budget which is almost level. I'd like to address 2 lines. We have hired
247 a custodial service to come in 5 nights a week to do regular cleaning and in addition they will do
248 carpet cleaning as well that we once hired out before. We added a line for legal review for those
249 that challenge our books. Like material challenges, patron behavior and meeting room use. We
250 will use the town attorney for review and assistance. We want to update and do our homework
251 on our rules and procedures.

252
253 A. Walczyk- thank you for a good-looking budget. The services at the library continue to be
254 fantastic. I do have a question on book challenges.

255
256 M. Farwell- when someone comes in and say, I don't think you should have x book on the shelf.

257
258 H. Rainer- if someone came in and challenged us with a book choice that we have on the
259 shelves. We have some books that have recently gotten book challenges and we have a
260 procedure that we follow, and we look at the materials and does it align with our collection
261 development policy.

262
263 R. Lapierre- what happens to the material during the process of the challenge?

264
265 H. Rainer- it is left on the shelf until the process is done.

266
267 D. Boutin- out of curiosity do you have books on the shelf about critical race theory?

268
269 H. Rainer- yes, we do.

270
271 D. Boutin- how was the library affected by covid?

272
273 H. Rainer- it was affected we saw a shift in people from print to digital and seeing it go back. It
274 was harder. We had more programs outside; we learned a lot and have kept some of those
275 adaptations.

276
277 ***D. Boutin motioned to approve the Library budget for fiscal year 2023-2024 in the amount***
278 ***of \$1,093,440 and be subject to an amendment of the longevity pay once it has been***
279 ***decided seconded by A. Walczyk.***

280
281 **Roll Call Vote #3**
282 **D. Boutin Aye**

283 **D. Ross NP**
284 **A. Walczyk Aye**
285 **J. Durand NP**
286 **R. Duhaime Aye**
287 **T. Tsantoulis Aye**
288 **R. Lapierre Aye**
289 **K. Judge NP**
290 **J. Sullivan Aye**

291
292 **Vote in Favor 6-0**

293
294 **Family Services**

295
296 P. Flynn- Lat fiscal year budget we returned \$32,000 that was unspent. we have just completed
297 a major giveaway to folks going back to school. It was the backpack charity funded by the
298 salvation army. Through their generosity they gave out 149 backpacks and are getting more
299 prepared. We work closely with the food pantry and provide scholarships to the YMCA and the
300 salvation army also funds children to attend that. We have a successful ride share program and
301 is well worth the \$14,000 that we budget.

302
303 D. Boutin- under the column for dept request and the TA request it says \$154,591 are you
304 actually proposing to cut it by 10k?

305
306 A. Garron- yes, I am proposing to cut it by 10k. it is a direct reflection of the budget being
307 underspent. There was a lot of federal monies out there and it made us less reliant on spending
308 this line, and as we look at the historical view, we have not spent that line in the past.

309
310 D. Boutin- does family services agree to the changes you made?

311
312 P. Flynn- Yes, I agree and it is more so a compromise. CAP funds most of our rental increases
313 and electricity increase and I am confident that CAP will make up those differences.

314
315 D. Boutin- if we made a motion tonight you would feel comfortable with that?

316
317 P. Flynn-Yes, I would.

318
319 R. Duhaime- if this budget were to go over where would we find the money to fund this?

320
321 A. Garron- we could look at other departments and where they are underspend and could look
322 at transferring if need be.

323
324 ***D. Boutin motioned to approve the Family Services budget for fiscal year 2023-2024 in***
325 ***the amount of \$154,591 seconded by A. Walczyk.***

326
327 **Roll Call Vote #4**

328 **A. Walczyk Aye**
329 **R. Lapierre Aye**

330 **D. Ross NP**
331 **R. Duhaimé Aye**
332 **J. Durand NP**
333 **K. Judge NP**
334 **T. Tsantoulis Aye**
335 **D. Boutin Aye**
336 **J. Sullivan Aye**

337
338 **Vote in Favor 6-0**

339
340 A. Walczyk- what is the fuel revenue?
341

342 P. Flynn- It is nothing that affects this budget. It is a reporting on their end. I'd also like to add
343 that I am on the board for that committee.

344
345 **Fire Rescue**

346
347 S. Colburn- we worked hard with the TA to present a budget that continued to allow us to
348 provide the necessary services and save where we could.

349
350 D. Boutin- I see that the dept was 4.934 million, and the TA suggestion was 4.805 million are
351 you comfortable with the TA budget?

352
353 S. Colburn- I think what we have is a workable budget and we can get through.

354
355 **D. Boutin motioned to approve the Fire Rescue budget for fiscal year 2023-2024 in the**
356 **amount of \$4,805,040 seconded by R. Lapierre.**

357
358 R. Lapierre- this does not reflect the increases in the CBA correct?

359
360 S. Colburn- correct.

361
362 A. Walczyk- in the OT line it looks like a difference of about \$50,000 how that could be possible
363 if it was more than proposed and the TA's?

364
365 S. Colburn- that activity was due to Workers Comp and vacancies, and we hope to bring back
366 the staffing levels.

367
368 A. Garron- it is actually a reduction of about \$70,000. We have programs put into the
369 negotiations that allowed a lower FF to act up and address the OT. We started at a figure that
370 was a \$300,000 proposal that was increased to \$337,000 that was done without giving that
371 program an opportunity to succeed. Part of last years budget was covid induced. Although that
372 numbers high I don't think it represents the norm.

373
374 A. Walczyk- in new equipment- that is decreased what wont we buy?

375
376 S. Colburn- we had budgeted 8 new hire equipment's and now we are only planning on hiring 6.

377
378 R. Duhaime-- looking at last year what kind of calls and accidents you had and the trends and
379 what are you seeing.

380
381 S. Colburn- onset of covid we had a downturn, but it is and has been increasing. We are at
382 about 11 to 12% ahead of last year.

383
384 R. Duhaime- do you separate out what happens out on the highway?

385
386 S. Colburn- No, but we could if we had to.

387
388 **Roll Call Vote #5**

389 ***T. Tsantoulis Aye***

390 ***D. Ross NP***

391 ***R. Duhaime Aye***

392 ***A. Walczyk Aye***

393 ***R. Lapierre Aye***

394 ***K. Judge NP***

395 ***J. Durand NP***

396 ***D. Boutin Aye***

397 ***J. Sullivan Aye***

398
399 ***Vote in Favor 6-0***

400
401 **Capital Improvement Plan**

402
403 J. Sullivan- CIP items will be presented on the Warrant Articles as presented earlier.

404
405 **Other Business**

406
407 J. Sullivan- There is a state primary is on Tuesday. We still need people to sign up.

408
409 R. Lapierre- we only have 2 Town Councilors signed up for the end of the night and we need 3.

410
411 L. Mclaughlin- there was some questions on the initial sheet that the TC was unsure of so there
412 is some question marks there.

413
414 **ADJOURNMENT**

415
416 D. Boutin motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:29 pm; seconded by T. Tsantoulis.

417
418 **Vote in favor 6-0**

419
420 **Respectfully submitted,**

421 ***Alicia Jipson***

422 **Alicia Jipson**

423 Recording Clerk
424