

1 **Town of Hooksett**
2 **Town Council Budget Review Meeting Minutes**
3 **Wednesday, September 20, 2023**
4

5 **CALL TO ORDER-** Chairman T. Tsantoulis called the meeting of September 20, 2023, to order at
6 6:30 pm.

7 **PROOF OF POSTING-** Provided by Town Administrator Andre Garron.

8 **IN ATTENDANCE-** Councilor James Sullivan, Councilor Timothy Tsantoulis, Councilor Alex
9 Walczyk, Councilor John Durand, Councilor Roger Duhaime and Councilor Randal Lapierre.

10 **ABSENT-** Councilor Jodi Pinard and Councilor David Boutin.

11 **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

12 **PUBLIC INPUT**

13 Todd. Lazod 21 Post Road- I'm here as the Town Moderator. We are coming up on the 2024
14 presidential election. One thing that is coming up is new voting equipment. We are in
15 agreement that the new machines won't be ready to be purchased until after March and there
16 won't be training and testing available right off. I do recommend that we add money to the
17 budget to purchase these new machines. They run about \$7,000 a unit. We will need them at
18 some point. The Accu voting machines will be maintained until 2025. I suggest that you put
19 \$14,000 into the budget so we may purchase these when they are available.

20 J. Durand- are they still going to be paper ballots?

21 T. Lazod- yes, it is still a paper ballot.

22 **BUDGET OVERVIEW OF FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025**

23 **6.1 Assessing**

24 A. Garron- no changes other than payroll and benefits. There was a request for a part-time
25 employee, but we reduced that.

26 J. Duhamel- Since I started, we just have the full-time field assessor, and that has been it, we are
27 asking for a part-time field helper.

28 R. Duhaime- the health insurance line looks really high.

29 **6.2 Town Clerk**

30 A. Garron- there was an increase in this budget, we had asked Karina to plan for that part-time
31 position and add that extra help into the office.

32 K. Towne- we do have someone in the process of the new hire process. It will expand the hours
33 of the Town Clerks office; she is a resident and a registered voter. She will be able to take
34 absentee ballots and take care of things in regard to voting.

35 J. Durand- I am confused isn't the position stipend.

36 K. Towne- yes, it is just \$5,000 which is \$1,250 quarterly and doesn't leave much room to cover
37 any extra.

38 J. Sullivan- this makes sense, and I am glad that we went with this. What are your thoughts on
39 what the moderator brought up?

40 K. Towne- it is a process to transition into new machines. We just found out about this
41 yesterday, so I don't have enough knowledge at this time to say yes or no to put this in the
42 budget now or not.

43 J. Sullivan- can we possibly buy 1 now in this budget and 1 more at a later time?

44 A. Garron- yeah, I think we just don't have the correct information to make a decision right now
45 but can change it at a later time.

46 ***A. Walczyk motioned to place \$14,000 in the Town Clerk's budget to purchase 2 new voting
47 machines; seconded by T. Tsantoulis.***

48 R. Duhaime- technology changes so quickly I'd be for just putting some money away for a later
49 time purchase.

50 **Roll Call Vote #2**

51 ***R. Duhaime Nay***

52 ***J Durand Nay***

53 ***J. Pinard NP***

54 ***R. Lapierre Nay***

55 ***A. Walczyk Aye***

56 ***D. Boutin NP***

57 ***J. Sullivan Aye***

58 ***T. Tsantoulis Aye***

59 ***Vote fails 3-3***

60 A. Garron- do we want to continue the recording of the deliberative session?

61 T. Tsantoulis- if we are going to have a deliberative session is it a requirement to have it
62 recorded?

63 K. Town- I think it was done due to covid, it is not a requirement that we live stream it.

64 A. Garron- really the only significant increase was to the part-time line and a reduction to the AV
65 crew being brought in.

66 **6.3 Library**

67 ***J. Sullivan motioned to accept line 001-684.4550-830.002 Library's recommended budget of
68 \$1,132,495 as presented; seconded by A. Walczyk.***

69

70 **Roll Call Vote #3**

71 ***D. Boutin NP***

72 ***J. Pinard NP***

73 ***A. Walczyk Aye***

74 ***J. Durand Nay***

75 ***R. Duhaime Nay***

76 ***J. Sullivan Aye***

77 ***R. Lapierre Aye***

78 ***T. Tsantoulis Aye***

79 ***Vote in favor 4-2***

80 H. Rainer- the line that we want to highlight is the wage line increase, we are looking to hire a
81 part-time employee. This past year we started providing part-time employees leave for sick and
82 vacation and we have seen an improvement in leave.

83 R. Duhaime- the portion of your budget is mainly in wages, and it is a significant amount.

84 H. Rainer- all departments are struggling with wages and retention. Most budgets their top % is
85 in wages and benefits.

86 **6.4 Public Works**

87 A. Garron- there are only certain areas that we have taken a look at. There was an increase in
88 the solid waste line due to a contract commitment for tipping fees. But most of the adjustment
89 were minor in nature and based on historical data on those lines. Other than that, I don't have
90 much more to present to you.

91 R. Duhaime- are you purchasing a truck now?

92 B. Berthiaume- yes, we just put the purchase order in.

93 R. Duhaime- are you on track with your budget? Are you going to be over or under?

94 B. Berthiaume- we are looking good for our budget.

95 R. Duhaime- the cemeteries and parks are in your budget do you have any future plans for
96 improving these?

97 B. Berthiaume- Yes, I do have some ideas on improving some of the parks. Long term planning is
98 adding additional fields at some point.

99 **6.5 Administration (Heritage Commission)**

100 A. Garron- no new employees are being requested. Health Insurance increases will change once
101 the new rates are figured out. Dues for conferences and dues have increased, the most
102 significant increase that you will see is in the IT section. We have some new programs that we
103 have added to the list. also, the equipment purchases have increased. We tried to hone that as

104 much as we could to meet the various needs of the departments. As far as reductions we do
105 have \$95,00 in the BSNA, there will be one year that we won't have an increase. We have an
106 increase in the Interware software and in the GAP software, but will be reducing the Family
107 Services budget by removing the Silo program.

108 ***J. Sullivan motioned to reduce line 001-100.4150-342.000 Comp Software & Programs by***
109 ***\$8,555 bringing the line down to a total of \$131,690; seconded by A. Walczyk.***

110 **Roll Call Vote #4**

111 ***A. Walczyk Aye***

112 ***R. Lapierre Aye***

113 ***J. Pinard NP***

114 ***R. Duhaime Aye***

115 ***J. Durand Aye***

116 ***J. Sullivan Aye***

117 ***D. Boutin NP***

118 ***T. Tsantoulis Aye***

119 ***Vote in favor 6-0***

120 A. Garron- the majority of my budget takes into consideration the whole town. We are keeping
121 an eye on the legal line, which is used for the whole town, and I think we have been utilizing it
122 appropriately and utilizing NHMA free legal services first when needing assistance. The other
123 increase really gets down to the section where we fund miscellaneous items.

124 T. Tsantoulis- the light up the village was anticipated to grow in the future, but maybe we take a
125 wait and see approach. I'd like to see how it pans out in the future.

126 ***J. Sullivan motioned to reduce line 001-100.4589-800.016 by \$15,000; seconded by R. Lapierre.***

127 J. Sullivan- I agree with T. Tsantoulis that we need to see where it goes. I think it came under
128 the Heritage Commission and they are unsure if it should be under their control. This still leaves
129 enough money in their budget to cover other expenses.

130 **Roll Call Vote #5**

131 ***J. Sullivan Aye***

132 ***J. Pinard NP***

133 ***R. Duhaime Nay***

134 ***A. Walczyk Aye***

135 ***R. Lapierre Aye***

136 ***J. Durand Nay***

137 ***D. Boutin NP***

138 ***T. Tsantoulis Aye***

139

140 **Vote in favor 4-2**

141 A. Garron- this was supported by the town in one way or another and the question out there is
142 how it will be funded in the future.

143 **6.6 Finance**

144 C. Tewksbury- the finance budget is 1.16% less than last year. The major decrease was in
145 banking services and professional services. Depending on interest rates we leave the money in
146 the bank to offset the fees. The staffing levels, there is a motion to remove the part-time AP
147 clerk. It went vacant this year and we worked with staff to absorb those hours elsewhere, so I
148 don't feel we need to fund it.

149 ***R. Lapierre motioned to reduce line 001-300.4150-113 Finance Part-time Employees by***
150 ***\$21,020 bringing this line down to \$9,347 and line 001-300.4150-220.000 Finance FICA Taxes***
151 ***by \$1,608 bringing this line down to \$13,247; seconded by A. Walczyk.***

152 **Roll Call Vote #6**

153 ***J. Durand Aye***

154 ***R. Lapierre Aye***

155 ***D. Boutin NP***

156 ***J. Pinard NP***

157 ***J. Sullivan Aye***

158 ***A. Walczyk Aye***

159 ***R. Duhaime Aye***

160 ***T. Tsantoulis Aye***

161 **Vote in favor 6-0**

162 **6.7 Debt & Leases**

163 C. Tewksbury-

164 ***J. Sullivan motioned to reduce line 001-250.4441-342.000 Family Services Software &***
165 ***Programs by \$1,025, bringing this line down to \$0; seconded by T. Tsantoulis.***

166 **Roll Call Vote #7**

167 ***J. Pinard NP***

168 ***R. Lapierre Aye***

169 ***R. Duhaime Aye***

170 ***A. Walczyk Aye***

171 ***J. Durand Aye***

172 ***J. Sullivan Aye***

173 ***D. Boutin NP***

174 ***T. Tsantoulis Aye***

175 **Vote in favor 6-0**

176 R. Lapierre- what is the difference between line items that we leave a dollar vs a 0?
177 C. Tewksbury- it is an old practice and there is no right or wrong way, it only matters on the DRA
178 forms.

179 ***J. Sullivan motioned to increase the following lines to cover the cost of Juneteenth holiday:***
180 ***001-350.4220-111 Fire Full time employees by \$8,754***
181 ***001-350.4220-220.000 Fire FICA Taxes by \$127***
182 ***001-350.4220-230.000 Fire NH Retirement by \$2,657***
183 ***001-400.4210-111.000 Police Full time employees by \$7,853***
184 ***001-400.4210-220.000 PD FICA Taxes by \$193***
185 ***001-400.4210-230.000 PD NH Retirement by \$2,232***
186 ***Seconded by A. Walczyk.***

187 ***Roll Call Vote #8***
188 ***R. Lapierre Aye***
189 ***R. Duhaime Nay***
190 ***J. Sullivan Aye***
191 ***A. Walczyk Aye***
192 ***J. Durand Aye***
193 ***J. Pinard NP***
194 ***D. Boutin NP***
195 ***T. Tsantoulis Aye***

196
197 ***Vote in favor 5-1***
198

199 **7. List of Potential Warrant Articles**

200 C. Tewksbury- we are only handing out the list for reading material and a heads up of what the
201 articles will look like. We will discuss it at a later date. With all your changes the amount you are
202 bringing to the budget committee is \$21,590,180 which is a 2.7% increase over last year's
203 budget and 2.4% over the default budget.

204 **ADJOURNMENT**

205 ***R. Lapierre motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 pm; seconded by R. Duhaime.***

206 ***Vote in favor 6-0***
207

208 Respectfully submitted,

209 ***Alicia Jipson***

210 Alicia Jipson

211 Recording Clerk