

TOWN OF TAMWORTH

SELECT BOARD OFFICE

Select Board Meeting: 5:00 PM
2023 Budget Public Hearing

Thursday, February 9th, 2023

In Attendance:

Select Board members: Lianne Prentice, Kelly Goodson, Richard Doucette, Karl Behr. Emery Roberts, absent. Also in attendance: Town Administrator, Keats Myer; Administrative Assistant, Emily Verny. Ed Comeau of Government Oversight. Richard Roberts, Dana Littlefield, Richard Colcord, Glen Johnson, Jim Bowles, Sharon Nothnagle, Shannon Heath, Bob Seston, John Wheeler, Willie Farnum, Kelly Rines, Melanie Streeter, Becky Mason, Randall Dearborn, Nelson O'Bryan, Jack Waldron, David Little, Evan Henderson, Bruno Siniscalchi, Kim Trammel arrives at 6:30. Via Zoom: Linda Eldridge, Linda Cook, Maureen & Jim Diamond.

Draft Meeting Minutes

Goodson calls meeting to order at 5:00 pm and opens the 2023 Budget Public Hearing by thanking all who attended and participated in this process. Goodson explained she would read the total expense for each department and then open up questions to the public for any line item.

John Wheeler asks if the board has a general statement due to salaries or utilities going up. Goodson reviewed the 2023 tax rate, the two major impacts to the 2023 budget compared to 2022 being the Scott Bridge project (\$359,000) and the Breathing Apparatus (\$359,000), and the fact that in 2022 we were understaffed. 2023 budget will increase 3.48%, approximately \$181,000 mostly due to increase in personnel and inflation across the board.

Doucette asks who are the entities involved with Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program and if any have dropped off that we could reach out to. Becky Mason confirms Remick Farms, Barnstormers, Solar Power all have different formulas and different rates that they pay.

Goodson reviews the budget expenses:

Becky Mason asks why Medicare went up by 5% in some places but not others. Goodson explains because payroll went up with the hire of new employees. Becky Mason asks if NH retirement went up by 5%, is that across the board? Bob Seston confirms the math in the budget is correct. Streeter asks who in the office is getting the small amount of health insurance. Keats confirmed it was her, the Town Administrator. Wheeler advises the postage rate has gone up, and that should be considered.

Becky Mason asks why FICA went up for TA but stayed the same for Town Clerk. Keats confirms they're both calculated by 6.2%.

Becky Mason questions why Town Election meals and services is low. Sharon Nothnagle confirms there is only 1 election this year.

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Melanie Streeter questions why they budgeted \$1200 for Treasury mileage and then went up to \$1400 but then back down. Should that line go up more? Annie Burke explains a mileage sheet is submitted quarterly, and last year one of those quarters went late which made 2022 bigger than previous years.

Randall Dearborn questions why Software Support went from \$14,500 to \$20,000. Keats confirmed Avitar support, CAI and GIS web based support are all combined on that line now. The Tax Collector will be changing from BMSI to Avitar which will be more compatible with the assessing software the office uses.

Randall Dearborn wants to know where all the cost of all the new town emails is located. Keats confirms Internet Services line item, around \$1200 per year.

Becky Mason asks when the revaluation contract is up. Keats confirms it is a 5 year contract and it will be up in 2024.

Randall Dearborn questions why the Legal line went from \$12,000 in 2021 to \$27,000 in 2022 and now is \$40,000. Keats confirms 50% of that is related to tax deeding which will be reimbursed when the properties sell. 10% is related to 91A work by the attorney. Another 10% Sandwich boundary line litigation.

Becky Mason wants to confirm that \$19,000 in the Planning Board line is the Build Out Analysis. Goodson confirms. David Little asks if that's still moving forward without georeferencing the tax maps. Doucette states that the group could not justify spending \$50,000 this year, towns have been conducting build out analysis without georeferenced tax maps for many years and it is not a prerequisite.

Becky Mason questions if Health Insurance went up by 11% for Government Buildings line. Keats confirmed she would check the numbers tomorrow and see if that was the increase throughout the budget.

David Little questions why there are so many maintenance line items. Keats stated that these were the line items used in last year's budget and is a more detailed way to break down building maintenance.

Melanie Streeter shared that the wifi for the Town House can be reduced. This was the bundled rate, and Spectrum can now lower it if we drop the phone. The board confirms the budget will stay as is until the rate is lowered.

David Little advises that grants listed in Emergency Response should not be listed as an expense, a grant should be in the revenue. Keats will fix the mislabeled line.

Becky Mason says there is no health insurance included in the Police Department line. Dana Littlefield confirmed it was in his budget line, it must not have carried over. The proposed total is correct.

Linda Cook asks what events are planned for The Economic Development Council for \$1900. Goodson stated that they are trying to line up street fairs.

John Wheeler asks why the vehicle maintenance and repairs under the Police Department were \$55,963.88 compared to this year \$2,500. Prentice stated that because we were so under budget last year those funds went to a new cruiser. Goodson explains that the purchase of the cruiser was approved

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the previous year but we had no police officer to drive the cruiser. Once we became fully staffed, the cruiser was needed. Wheeler asks are we fully staffed now? Yes. There is still an ad on the website posted for a full time officer. Littlefield confirms we're still accepting application as long as the current officer is still going through the academy. Streeter asks if you hire another new person, would you need to increase the budget for insurance for the new hire. Littlefield confirms they would need to work within the budget they have.

Melanie Streeter asks when the Ambulance contract is up? Keats stated 2025.

Wheeler asks why part time salary went from \$53,000 to \$93,000. Jim Bowles explains that the firefighters became part time employees and are now hourly rather than on a volunteer points basis.

Becky Mason questions why the workers compensation line was at \$10,000 in the year prior, but down to \$6,000 now. Chief Colcord explains all of the firefighters are included on the plan and that year there was a claim.

Richard Roberts cuts his budget: Overtime from \$48,150 to \$45,000. Equipment Repair and Maintenance from \$76,595 to \$75,000. Equipment Rental from \$85,000 to \$80,000. Keats states this brings the total Highway budget to \$1,052,434.

Willie Farnum asks why the street lighting went up by \$6,000. Keats explains that number was set before the last bill came in, so that number can probably come down to \$8,524.

Melanie Streeter asks who the new Welfare Agent is. Keats stated it is Cathy Graham. Becky Mason asks to confirm that heat, electric, food and grocery assistance all fall under the one Rental/Housing Assistance line. Keats confirms, yes.

Becky Mason asks if the \$8,2628.48 in Recreation Program Supplies was the expense of the soccer nets purchased in the fall. Lianne confirms Dan bought equipment for soccer, nets, balls and t shirts. Melanie Streeter asks if there will be a summer program this year. Behr stated that because so many children attend the Bearcamp Summer program there is no need for a full-time rec program hosted by the town. Streeter asks if we can then delete the line items for summer programs. Prentice says we are speaking out of turn because the new Recreation Director has programming and trips in the works.

Melanie Streeter asks why we're budgeting \$1,000 for the tennis courts because they were recently redone with new nets. Shannon Heath confirms there is a pole that needs repair and lines that need to be repainted. Rick Moreau confirms there is a knee wall & backboard that has rotten and needs to be repaired.

Becky Mason asks if we know what was recently added to the library budget. Prentice confirms they received fewer grants and had to hire a new bookkeeper, salaries were increased as well as electric and heat rates.

Randall Dearborn asks if Shannon Heath is running the swim program, why is that a separate salary? Heath explains this salary line is for other swim instructors and lifeguards, possibly more depending on the program.

John Wheeler asks if the \$200 line item for flowers listed in the Patriotic Purposes budget is for the Veterans Memorial. Prentice confirms, yes because the planting in the past was done by volunteers and

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we were told it was not part of the cemetery budget to improve those flower beds. Wheeler says whoever volunteers to do the plantings can contact the Cemetery Trustees and they will cover the cost. Remove the \$200 from the Patriotic Purposes budget.

Discussion ensued about capital reserve fund.

Becky Mason asked Keats to confirm the anticipated amount raised by taxes. Keats confirms it is **\$4,767,356** based on the assumptions of the revenue.

The new total for Expenses is: \$5,497,085.

Goodson states the prior year encumbrance is \$255,168.50 and that concludes this year's budget.

Melanie Streeter brings up the fact that a lot of this year's encumbrances don't have contracts, just proposals or quotes. Keats confirms the quote for the highway states it's a contractual agreement between the town and the Tamworth and – Melanie Streeter interjects and asks if Richard Roberts was given permission to sign for this, because normally this would be signed by the Select Board. Keats explains that this truck was ordered long before January 2022 and had been delivered, we were legally obligated to sign the contract. Goodson confirms they can look back at minutes to determine if a vote was made to sign the contract. Streeter questions the proposal and quote for the Police Department signed by Keats, was she given permission by the board to sign for that? Keats confirms these contracts were reviewed by the attorney and are sufficient legal contracts to encumber and voted on by the town. Streeter advises in the past contracts were always signed by the Select Board. Lianne Prentice suggests that might be true as a historic pattern, but the majority of the board and office is new, and we are checking with town council that we are doing things legally – perhaps not the way it's been done before. Discussion ensued.

Willie suggests that considering it's a year where things went up by 7%, keeping our town budget at a 5% increase shows pretty good work.

Goodson calls for a 5-minute recess at 6:21 pm.

Meeting resumes at 6:25 pm.

Goodson states the board will not vote on the Warrant Articles tonight, but they will review them and answer any questions the public may have.

David Little questions Article 36 for the Town House. If this a petition warrant article, why is it not in the town budget? Myer shreds that it was to go into the budget, but the petition article came in that same day. Chief Colcord took a look at the safety conditions and suggested repairs, and it was presented at last week's meeting. Discussion ensued. Doucette confirms they're looking at a \$10,00 grant from the NH Moose Plate program and the remainder would come from the ARPA funds, but this was submitted by Petition at the same time. Becky Mason confirms in years past the Moose Grant would be in the budget as an expense so that if you got the money, you could spend it. Discussion ensued.

Willie Farnum is curious about Article 21, 22 and 23 Expendable Trust Funds. Is this the same thing as the Capital Reserve? No, Behr confirms in the past we had \$200,000 contingency fund and our attorney advised that was not appropriate, it is supposed to be 1% of the previous years spent money less capital

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and debt service, which for us would be \$36,524. Once these are funded do they stay and never disappear? If you never spend it, it rolls over.

Linda Cook asks when Chief Colcord looked at the Town House. Prentice asked him to look at it this week.

Becky Mason asked if we have any idea what the impact would be if we adopt the All-Veterans credit. Prentice confirms we don't know, due to privacy and the lack of a local veteran's association, which is why we would accept it and reevaluate after a year.

Randall Dearborn wants to understand Article 5 for the Woodheat Exemption. Emily Verny explains we've been giving out this exemption, but the town had never officially adopted it, which is why we're adopting it now, it is only \$500 off the assessed value.

John Wheeler asks about the All-Veterans tax credit; would this take away the limitation that they had to serve during certain active war times? Emily Verny confirms that Sununu passed House Bill 1667 which expands eligibility for people currently serving. Discussion ensued.

Kim Trammell wants to clarify that if Article 3 the All-Veterans credit gets denied, would Article 4 the Optional Veterans Credit still take effect. Verny confirms yes, but that would mean veterans previously denied the credit for not serving during active war time would still not qualify, and people currently serving would qualify. The amount of the credit is adjustable.

Ed Comeau reminds the board that joining the Communication District would require a petition warrant article. As the Select Board you would be responsible for submitting the warrant article and would get voted on at Town Meeting.

Becky Mason comments that Article 25 would need to be listed as Undesignated Enterprise Fund. Discussion ensued.

Kelly Rhines asks about Article 33 for the \$3,500 for the Bearcamp Center, is that a State certified kitchen? Lianne Prentice steps down from the Select Board chair and joins the audience as a member of the public. Prentice confirms the state has been to the Bearcamp Center twice, and they confirmed that because the center falls under the category of "community and senior meals" the facility does not have to be licensed. The State was there in the spring of 2022.

Goodson makes a motion to close the Public Hearing at 7:00 pm. Prentice seconds. Roll Call Vote: Doucette yes, Behr yes, Goodson yes, Prentice yes. 4 yes, 0 no.

Goodson makes a motion to approve the Select Board meeting minutes for February 2nd, 2023. Behr seconds. Roll Call Vote: Doucette yes, Behr yes, Goodson yes, Prentice yes. 4 yes, 0 no.

Goodson makes a motion to approve the Intent to Excavate Map 202 Lot 9. Behr seconds. Roll Call Vote: Doucette yes, Behr yes, Goodson yes, Prentice yes. 4 yes, 0 no.

Goodson makes a motion to approve the Accounts Payable in the amount of \$441,602.24. Behr seconds. Roll Call Vote: Doucette yes, Behr yes, Goodson yes, Prentice yes. 4 yes, 0 no.

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Prentice makes a motion to accept the 2023 budget as amended in the amount of \$5,497,085. Behr seconds. Roll Call Vote: Doucette yes, Behr yes, Goodson yes, Prentice yes. 4 yes, 0 no.

Public Input:

Melanie Streeter says they normally gave the year to date for what had been spent in the signature file for the accounts payable. Goodson confirms the year to date is \$1,511,654.17.

Dana Littlefield thanks Keats Myer and the board.

David Little asks if the Warrant will be voted on tonight. Keats confirms the Warrant Article will be edited and voted on Monday February 13th at 4:00 pm.

Goodson makes a motion to adjourn at 7:05 pm.

These Minutes submitted by: Emily Verny

Select Board approval:

Emery Roberts

Kelly Goodsin

Lianne Prentice

Karl Behr

Richard Doucette