

APPROVED

**TOWN OF PELHAM
BUDGET COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, September 16, 2021**

CALL TO ORDER – Amber Capone opened the meeting at approximately 7:05 pm

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRESENT:

Amber Capone (Chair)
Meg Bressette (Vice Chair)
Philip Haberlen
Bob Sherman
Darlene Greenwood
Jason Croteau
Brian McCarthy
Eduarto Martony
Jennifer Castles

ABSENT:

Kannan Sasi
Jas Moorjani
Paul Grant
Megan Larson
Deb Padykula
Robert Haverty

MINUTES REVIEW:

MOTION: (Mr. Sherman/Mr. Martony) To approve and place on file the meeting minutes as written for September 9, 2021.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Bob Sherman – yes
Philip Haberlen – yes
Darlene Greenwood – yes
Jason Croteau – yes
Meg Bressette - yes
Amber Capone - yes
Eduarto Martony - yes

(7-0-0) The motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS:

Ms. Capone stated she is still in the process of reviewing the by-laws and will be sending them over to Ms. Bressette for her input and review.

NEW BUSINESS:

Library Review (Jennifer, Library Director)

Library Trustees approved the amount of \$564,051.00, an increase of \$17,051.00 or 3.1 %.

Jennifer had an amount of \$13,051 in her files. She was informed that the difference is regarding the wish list items. The \$4,000.00 was added in for discussion at this meeting.

The library's 2021 Budget was \$5,047.00 and the request is \$560,051.00. The wish list pertains to funds given last year due to COVID and allowed to increase programing.

Salaries: all contractual increases per 5-year plan, currently in year 3. Due to turnover in part-time staff, this resulted in a slight decrease.

Supplies, Line 225: book processing supplies increased. Safety supplies were an added line item to last year to combat COVID, this year it's been zeroed out. Last year's miscellaneous office supplies increased by \$500.00 to combat COVID as well but have been removed this year.

Postage, Line 140: was decreased.

Repairs and Projects, Line 390: decreased but CIP approved a 15% increase due to the rising building costs. Equipment and Tech plans, Line 560: had an update to their catalog, which necessitated an increase of \$764.00. They've partnered with eleven other libraries, so now the catalog is shared, and this was to mitigate this cost.

Expenses, Line 525: a decrease of \$250.00 in catalog record services. The adult programs decreased by \$4,500.00. \$500.00 went to young adult programs, which has exploded. The \$4,000.00 was a one-time increase during COVID. They would like to request it for another year, as they are unsure of what this year will bring. It is used for Zoom subscriptions, story times, book groups, teen discussions, sports equipment, craft kits and safety supplies. Regarding professional association; these were not previously reflected correctly, and the membership costs have risen.

Specials, Line 690: newspapers were included in the magazine line and it is not accurate as subscriptions have increased, so it shows correct at \$500.00. Ms. Capone opened the floor for questions or comments. Ms. Bressette asked how much of the \$4,000.00 was spent last year due to COVID. Jennifer said they are under \$3000.00, meaning that's what they have remaining. Jennifer said they have also won some grants this year. Ms. Capone asked regarding the CIP approval for 15%, is this off of \$52,274.00, if so, it would be \$7,851.00. Ms. Capone asked why it's \$100.00 off. Jennifer said it was a number after the budgets went in, so it will have to be updated. Ms. Capone asked if \$52,346.00 listed in budget, is the 15% going to be based on the \$52,274.00 that was originally approved. Jennifer said she believes it is, but will have to double check. Mr. Sherman asked whether the renovations will be done this year. Jennifer said not this year and she is writing the RFPs for the closing in of the reading room. Mr. Sherman asked if she thinks they will need more money due to the rising costs of building material. Jennifer said it was a three-year breakdown, so she thinks they won't need any further funds. Mr. Sherman asked if a contractor has been hired yet. Jennifer said not currently, but the plan is to hire a contractor and do some exploratory work to check out a critical beam in order to do the work. Mr. McCarthy said he's been working hard on that building and they are on the upswing. He asked for whatever money they don't spend, they need to encumber it and keep it on the list. Jennifer agreed to this, so they don't lose it. Mr. McCarthy said he does these the first and second weeks in December. Ms. Capone asked about the \$4,000.00 to explain how this is being allocated. Jennifer said that this money is a backup and because the Friends of the Library group may not be able to continue helping them. They have lost members so they can't depend on money donated from this group. This money is also for the Zoom accounts and office and safety supplies. Ms. Capone asked how much they've historically gotten from the Friends of the Library group. Jennifer said it's typically around \$4,000.00 a year, so this is the reason why they asked for that amount. Ms. Capone asked if we got money from them last year. Jennifer said they received some, but not the typical amount. She stated that many people are not renewing their memberships. Ms. Capone asked for the amount they

received last year, and Jennifer did not have that number with her. Mr. Sherman asked about the programs that are offered with reduced admissions. Jennifer said some of them are The Museum of Science, Boston Aquarium, some NH Parks and The Butterfly place. Flip memberships are \$10.00 per year and if you are a member, these tickets are free. Ms. Capone asked if patrons need to go into the library to join the FLIP program. Jennifer said yes, but they are looking into options, such as PayPal or online services because currently it is cash or check only.

Cemetery (Ed Gleason, Chairman of Cemetery Trustees and Lisa Wood, Secretary for Trustees and Facility)

Board of Selectman approved amount for 2022 is \$172,983.00, an increase of \$11,017.00 or 6.8%.

Mr. Gleason is familiar with the increase of \$11,017.00.

Salaries: one full-time employee, Sean Cunningham. This increase is related to his contract, and he is eligible for longevity and vacation buy back time. The numbers they're looking at are \$150.00 and \$2,006.00. They are requesting an increase of five hours per week for the secretary because of the increase in administrative burden. They are trying upgrade the online system as they go forward and fix erroneous data. Mr. Gleason said there's been an increase in burials and graves which has added to the workload. This has caused an administrative burden and therefore needs the increase of \$4,290.00. Other increases are \$2,000.00 in the expense budget for tree maintenance. They've been in a reactive mode regarding trees and they would like to be more proactive and preventative regarding the trees. The \$4,800.00 was spent last year doing retroactive tree work and he doesn't want to do that every year. He's contacted Nashoba, who have come in and are going to put a program together. There are lots of trees at Gibson, Gumpas, North Pelham and at Lyons and therefore, there is a lot of work to be done at all cemeteries. They also train their trustees every year and the State runs a program, which is \$70.00 per person, and they intend to continue the training process. He would like everyone's consideration and is trying to be reasonable with their requests. Mr. Sherman wants to let everyone know that there are six cemeteries in Pelham in total. Ms. Capone wants to remind the committee that this \$2,000.00 would be an ongoing expense annually from now on.

Cable (Mr. McCarthy presented for Jim Greenwood, as he was not there)

\$153,731.00, an increase of 3,128 or 2.0%.

Salaries, Line 130: Contractual obligations.

Supplies, Line 225: Level funded.

Telephone, Line 252: Up \$87.00

Repairs: Level funded.

Equipment tech plan: Level funded.

Expenses, Line 625: Level funded.

Budget reflects a \$3,128.00 increase from last year.

Mr. Sherman asked if the number of people subscribing to cable increased or decreased. Mr. McCarthy said it continues to decrease due to the number of people streaming online. They are negotiating their franchise fee agreement to work something out and their attorneys are hard at work on a new contract. Ms. Capone asked if the new contract will be based on the number of subscribers. Mr. McCarthy said no and that Jim has done research and is comfortable with his numbers. They will have a better look at the following year's budget.

Health Services (Mr. McCarthy presented for Sara Landry, Director)

Board of Selectmen approved amount for 2022 is \$73,700.00 and this is level funded.

Mr. McCarthy said they've moved some money around under expenses. After talking with Sara, it was determined that Home Health and Hospice were not providing us with the fair services that we were paying for. Sara suggested not donating the \$25,000.00 and add more money to Center for Life Management, Greater Care Givers of Salem, St. Joseph's Community Services and to the Pelham Food Pantry. Basically,

split up the \$25,000.00 and dispersed it to organizations that they felt were more attentive to our needs here in town. Ms. Bressette asked if they all submitted letters asking for funds. Mr. McCarthy said yes, they did send in their letters. Ms. Capone asked to see them as part of their back up. Mr. McCarthy will look into it and get back to her. Mr. Sherman asked about the Upper Room in Derry and what service do they provide. Mr. McCarthy said they are counseling for adolescent support. Ms. Bressette asked about how we came up with the decision to stop using Home Health and Hospice care. This was the recommendation by Sara Landry, our Senior Hobbs Center Director. She had discussions with them, and they weren't providing our community with the services we needed. Ms. Bressette was happy about the Food Pantry increase.

Heath Officer (Mr. McCarthy presented)

Board of Selectmen 2022 approved amount is \$87,956.00, an increase of \$42,040.00 or 92%.

Expenses, Line 625: Typically, this was a stipend position, but with COVID, our Heath Officer, Karen McGlynn was putting so much time with the cases and tracking that the Board decided to make this an hourly wage position to ensure fair compensation. Karen works a lot of hours and takes a lot of calls with the schools and guiding them through the pandemic. The Board voted to increase her hours to 30 hours, 29 a week.

Expenses, Line 690: Level funded.

Mr. Sherman asked if there is any offsetting revenue from the state to help cover some of these costs. Mr. McCarthy said during COVID the town was granted under \$330,000.00 from the CARES Act, this is federal money from the government given to communities to help offset costs during COVID. We used all of about \$69,000.00 last year, so they encumbered that money into 2021 and was used to pay Karen. Once that money is exhausted then it will come out of the budget. Mr. McCarthy thinks we can get through this year with the remaining money from the CARES Act, so it shouldn't negatively impact the budget. Mr. Sherman said we may get more money if this continues next year from the government. Mr. McCarthy said we just received some funding from the American Rescue Plan Act and we're getting 1.4 million dollars to replace the air systems and duct work to better circulate air in our buildings. He commented we are still using 1973 technology for our air systems, so we need this update to be more efficient and up to code. There will be no costs to the town for this. We've already received half, which is \$755,000.00 and they are starting the process of getting bids to begin construction. They are hiring EEI (Energy Efficiency Incorporated) who did our boiler project and have done lots of projects for the town. They will interview bidders and contractors; do site walks, and they make recommendations to the board. Also noted there are no change orders, so they have to get it right the first time. Ms. Capone asked if in the future the health officer's position can be moved back to a stipend position. Mr. McCarthy said that it can be changed at any time. Mr. Sherman asked if this position has any benefits. McCarthy said it does not.

Human Services (Mr. McCarthy presented)

The Board of Selectmen approved amount is \$73,820.00 and this is level funded.

Salaries, Line 130: Level funded.

Expenses, Line 625: Level funded

Mr. Sherman asked what these services cover. Mr. McCarthy said these are general services that are budgeted for if someone in the community loses their jobs or has difficulty paying their utility bills or for relocating families. This is an emergency fund for people that are having hard times or people who have suffered from a medical event. This is to help them with services they need until they can get back on their feet. Ms. Capone said last year these funds were reduced by \$20,000.00 and how is this going for this year. Mr. McCarthy said this year's budget is on track and not in danger of overspending it. Mr. McCarthy stated that Dawn Holdsworth is fantastic at her job and is very thorough with these requests. She makes sure these people requesting are truly in need and not taking advantage of this system. Ms. Capone asked if he could follow up to see the amount that we've spent so far. Mr. McCarthy said yes, he will follow up.

Ms. Capone closed out the town budget review for the evening.

New Business

Ms. Capone said the recent schedule she sent out had an omission, which was town celebrations. She will send out a revised schedule by the end of the weekend and we will cover these next Thursday.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: (Sherman/Croteau) To adjourn the meeting.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Bob Sherman – yes
Philip Haberlen – yes
Darlene Greenwood – yes
Jason Croteau – yes
Meg Bressette - yes
Amber Capone - yes
Eduarto Martony - yes

(7-0-0) The motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Castles
Recording Secretary