

1 **APPROVED**
2 TOWN OF PELHAM
3 BUDGET COMMITTEE - MEETING MINUTES
4 Thursday, September 3, 2020

5
6
7 **CALL TO ORDER** – at approximately 7:00pm

8
9 Chairman David Cronin opened the meeting and read aloud “A Checklist To Ensure Meetings
10 Are Compliant With The Right-to-Know Law During The State Of Emergency” (*regarding*
11 *access to the meeting*)

12 Mr. Cronin asked Committee members, when their name is called, to please confirm their presence
13 and to please identify as the right to know law requires, who, if anyone, was in the room.

14
15 Mr. Cronin called roll.

16
17 **ROLL CALL VOTE:**

PRESENT: David Cronin – Present in person
Amber Capone – Present in person
Bob Sherman – Present in person
Meg Bressette – Present in person
Kannan Sasi – Present via Zoom
Eduardo Martony – Present in person
Philip Haberlen – Present in person
Jason Croteau – Present in person
School Board Representative Deb Ryan – Present in person
Board of Selectmen Representative Bob Haverty – Present in person

ABSENT: Jas Moorjani – excused absence

18
19 **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

20
21
22 **MINUTES REVIEW:**

23
24 **May 21, 2020:**

MOTION: (Sherman/Capone) To approve the May 21, 2020 meeting minutes as written.

ROLL CALL VOTE: David Cronin – Yes
Amber Capone – Yes
Bob Sherman – Yes
Meg Bressette – Yes
Kannan Sasi – Yes
Eduardo Martony – Yes
Philip Haberlen – Yes
Jason Croteau – Yes
School Board Representative Deb Ryan – Yes
Board of Selectmen Representative Bob Haverty – Yes

27 **OLD BUSINESS**

28

29 **ByLaw proposed revision**

30

31 Ms. Capone mentioned she will provide the Committee with information during the next week.

32

33 **2021 BUDGET REVIEW**

34

35 Elections - Town Clerk/Tax Collector Dorothy Marsden and Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector
36 Linda Newcomb presenting.

37 2021 Selectmen approved budget - \$16,383

38

39 Mr. Sherman inquired if they had an idea of the percentage of people requesting absentee ballots.
40 Ms. Marsden replied for the State Primary they mailed approximately 600 and had approximately
41 450 returned; four years ago, they had 36 absentee ballots. For the general election they've
42 received approximately 700 requests for absentee ballots with two months to go. Mr. Sherman
43 asked what the deadline was for submitting an absentee ballot for the general election. Ms.
44 Marsden replied the deadline was November 2nd (day before the election).

45

46 Town Clerk / Tax Collector - Town Clerk/Tax Collector Dorothy Marsden and Deputy Town
47 Clerk/Tax Collector Linda Newcomb presenting.

48 2021 Selectmen approved - \$274,441

49

50 Mr. Croteau questioned the increase in supplies (\$2,214). Ms. Newcomb replied the increase was
51 mostly in postage because of the increased number of renewals and tax bills being sent out.

52

53 Ms. Ryan asked that departments provide a brief summary of their proposed budgets noting the
54 increases and decreases for the committee and public to understand the budgets.

55

56 Ms. Newcomb provided a brief summary of the proposed budget.

57

58 Assessing Department – Assessing Assistant Susan Snide presenting.

59 2021 Selectmen approved - \$231,315

60

61 Ms. Snide provided an overview summary of the budget. The main increase to postage was due
62 to being in a certification year, which required additional mailings. She mentioned her priority
63 list (wish list) item of having a cloud-based document management system for older records to be
64 available on .pdf. There is a one-time set up fee and a subsequent annual maintenance.

65

66 Ms. Bressette questioned if the abatement review contract was up during the year. Ms. Snide
67 replied the contract would end December 2021. Ms. Bressette questioned if the increase was a
68 normal percentage increase. Ms. Snide answered yes. She noted during the first ten years of the
69 Town working with Corcoran they didn't increase their fees so now they were 'catching up'. Ms.
70 Bressette asked if they also were the company who did the cyclical revaluation. Ms. Snide
71 answered yes; that contract was also up next year.

72

73 Ms. Ryan wanted to know if the equipment tech plan and the priority line item were the same.
74 Ms. Snide replied they were the same thing. It was noted the Selectmen approved the priority
75 item (\$10,000 with subsequent \$3,000 maintenance) and included it in the budget submitted to
76 the committee. After a brief discussion and review of the budget lines, it was realized the budget

77 number needed to be corrected and decreased from \$10,000 to \$7,000. Mr. Demers did an
78 automatic update for the committee to view the corrected figures.

79
80 Mr. Martony asked if they received multiple quotes for the (document management) software.
81 Ms. Snide replied she spoke with other vendors; however, the company they chose would do all
82 the necessary work including copying.

83
84 Mr. Croteau asked if the item (document management) was still considered a ‘wish list’ item
85 since it was already in the budget. Mr. Haverty replied the ‘wish list’ was the explanation of the
86 budget line; it captured an item that the department wanted to be considered and the Board of
87 Selectmen approved it for inclusion within the budget. Mr. McCarthy informed the Board of
88 Selectmen approved number would remain as submitted. Ms. Capone noted the committee would
89 make their own adjustments as the budget review/approval process went forward. They would
90 make a note to amend the figure.

91
92 Ms. Bressette inquired if the Town would be entering a contract with the document management
93 company. Mr. McCarthy replied they could review the language of the contract and at the end of
94 the term they could review other vendors. Ms. Snide noted they would have an annual contract.

95
96 Mr. Cronin wanted to know the assessed values of residential properties. Ms. Snide replied the
97 residential total assessed values totaled \$1,827,945,007. Industrial/Commercial totaled
98 \$119,951,261. The equalization rate (2019) was at 97.5; however, the 2020 rate would be lower,
99 the data entry and analysis hasn’t been done yet.

100
101 Budget Committee – Town Administrator Brian McCarthy presented.
102 2021 Selectmen approved - \$1 (placeholder)

103
104 Mr. McCarthy explained they kept the placeholder in case the committee wanted to add to it in
105 the future.

106
107 Conservation Commission – Town Administrator Brian McCarthy presented.
108 2021 Selectmen approved - \$5,989

109
110 Mr. McCarthy noted the budget was level funded from last year.

111
112 Ms. Bressette questioned if the prime wetland study would be done this year. Mr. McCarthy
113 replied it would be done this year; they want to rehire Mark West (original wetland scientist). He
114 said the wetland conservation ordinance needed updating.

115
116 Parks and Recreation – Parks and Recreation Director Brian Johnson presenting.
117 2021 Selectmen approved - \$265,816

118
119 Mr. Johnson provided the Committee with a summary overview of the proposed budget
120 highlighting the increases/decreases.

121
122 Mr. Sherman wanted to know the age and mileage of the truck being used. Mr. Johnson replied
123 the truck had approximately 85,000miles. The truck was believed to be a 2006; Mr. McCarthy
124 explained how the Town acquired the vehicle.

125
126 Mr. Johnson noted they had added an expense to test the water at the Scout Lodge and Muldoon
127 because both locations had restrooms. Mr. McCarthy explained the Raymond Park Lodge was

128 used by the Girl and Boy Scouts. He didn't realize the water wasn't being tested and thought it
129 would be a good idea to have it checked.

130

131 Ms. Capone spoke about the hour wage increase request and wanted to know if the base salary
132 would increase from \$12 to \$13 per hour or if the request was a raise for an employee. Mr.
133 Johnson explained it was basically a base salary; there were three employees who were paid from
134 that line. He had a regular employee who works 10-15 hours per week and a couple more who
135 came in during the summer months. He described the work the employees performed.

136

137 Mr. Sherman mentioned there was nothing listed on the latest Capital Improvement Plan for
138 Parks and Recreation. He would like to see some type of bathroom facilities at the soccer fields
139 near Raymond Park. Mr. Johnson noted they had just put out an RFP for a new well at Raymond
140 Park because it had gone dry. Mr. Sherman suggested if Memorial School renovation is
141 approved, the Town could work out a deal with the school to have the existing modular.

142

143 Highway Department - Highway Agent/Transfer Station Director Frank Ferreira with
144 Administrative Assistant Rhonda Martin presenting.

145 2021 Selectmen approved – \$1,814,976

146

147 Mr. Ferreira reviewed the proposed budget and noted the areas that were increased and decreased.
148 Mr. McCarthy noted the postage costs have been broken down by department this year so they
149 can keep an eye on the usage figures.

150

151 Mr. Ferreira pointed out the placeholder for plowing private roads had been eliminated from the
152 budget; therefore a decrease was shown in that area of the budget.

153

154 Mr. Haberlen asked for further explanation regarding the priority list (wish list) item for the 2021
155 dump truck that would replace the 2005 freightliner. He wanted to know if the proposal was to
156 purchase or lease the vehicle. Mr. Ferreira explained they usually have a lease/purchase
157 agreement; after the five-year period they purchase for \$1. He said that was how they bought all
158 their equipment. Mr. Haberlen questioned if that was more favorable than doing an up-front
159 purchase. Mr. McCarthy said with an up-front purchase they would have to expend \$250,000 in
160 one lump sum; they like the lease/purchase idea because it breaks the payments down and have an
161 option to buy-back the equipment or turn it in for another vehicle. He's had discussions with Mr.
162 Ferreira regarding the most efficient way to proceed. He noted there were two additional items
163 on the priority list, a glass crusher and repairs to the trailers. He pointed out the Selectmen
164 approved (and included in the budget) the crusher and trailer repairs; however, they held off
165 putting the truck in the budget because they wanted additional time to review the options of
166 leasing and purchasing. He said they will have all the correct data by the time the Committee
167 votes. He was personally leaning toward leasing. Mr. McCarthy then spoke about the new
168 highway department garage which would help extend the life of equipment and extend their
169 maintenance. It was noted that the glass crusher and trailer repair fell under the Transfer Station
170 budget.

171

172 Ms. Capone questioned if the Town paid an interest rate on the lease. Mr. McCarthy answered
173 yes; it was currently 3.10%. Mr. Sherman wanted to know if there would be a warrant article if
174 they decided to pursue a lease. Mr. McCarthy replied they had been placing those in the
175 operating budget. He said all lease agreements being signed had escape clauses. Mr. Ferreira
176 pointed out they weren't buying an extra vehicle, they were upgrading/replacing their existing
177 equipment.

178

179 Mr. Sherman asked when the new building would be completed. Mr. McCarthy replied the lot
180 had been cleared and he had met with the contractor earlier in the day. The building will arrive
181 the second week of October and should take approximately six weeks to construct and insulate
182 the structure. The interior work will be done after the first of the year.

183

184 Transfer Station - Highway Agent/Transfer Station Director Frank Ferreira with Administrative
185 Assistant Rhonda Martin presenting.

186 2021 Selectmen approved – \$922,146

187

188 Mr. Ferreira reviewed the budget and noted the increases/decreases.

189

190 Mr. Sherman inquired if the rental company would sell the Town the department's trailer. Mr.
191 Ferreira replied they may purchase a smaller trailer for equipment and an employee break room.

192

193 Mr. Ferreira spoke about the glass crusher. He said they would like to start separating because
194 there was no market in single stream. He pointed out they could use glass in road projects;
195 therefore, the cost of the crusher would pay for itself. Currently single stream is hauled out by
196 the ton. He noted they would eventually have to start separating cans and plastic because there
197 was no longer a market for it. He added there would be a market if they started separating it.

198

199 Mr. McCarthy told the Board that the Board of Selectmen had approved inserting some of the
200 priority list (wish list) items into the presented budget, although there were other items not
201 included. He said the Committee could consider those items and have the 'ultimate say'
202 regarding such.

203

204 Ms. Capone asked about the need for the internet at the Transfer Station. Mr. Ferreira explained
205 it controlled the phones, all the cameras and the gas pump system.

206

207 Mr. Croteau inquired if the \$7,000 budgeted for repairs was an estimate or if it went out to bid.
208 Mr. Ferreira replied it was an estimate; he sends one trailer out at a time. He hoped it would be a
209 simple fix. He described the repairs done this year to another one of the trailers. Mr. Croteau
210 asked if the work went to a preferred vendor that provided a municipality rate. Mr. Ferreira
211 replied they didn't receive 'a break' on labor no matter where they went.

212

213 Mr. Sherman wanted to know when the other trailers would need replacement if the Committee
214 approved the request for the \$80,000 trailer. Mr. Ferreira said he could try; the two green trailers
215 were made within a month of each other. He noted one was in good shape underneath but the
216 other one was horrible and been patched several times. He said trailers lasted longer than trucks.
217 Mr. McCarthy questioned how separating would impact the trailers in the future. Mr. Ferreira
218 replied it would cut down on the use of the green trailers. Ms. Bressette said it appeared the long-
219 term plan was to make money by separating trash to offset some of the cost. Mr. Ferreira
220 answered yes. He said in the beginning China was taking everything, but they had now stopped
221 and indicated they will not start again.

222

223 DISCUSSION

224

225 Mr. Cronin asked Mr. McCarthy to discuss the financial effects from COVID on the Town.

226 Mr. McCarthy discussed the effects COVID had in relation to Town operations and the
227 adjustments each department made to continue providing services to citizens.

228

229 Ms. Capone inquired if the Town had a disaster recovery plan. Mr. McCarthy replied Mr.
230 Demers had created a remote program; therefore, in the event of an emergency they would revert
231 to a remote-from-home program. Ms. Capone felt it was important to have everything
232 documented so future employees know what to do in the case of an emergency. She wanted to
233 ensure everyone was prepared. Mr. McCarthy commented the emergency response departments
234 as they are the most critically exposed. He said the crisis made them all think outside the box and
235 find safe/efficient ways to service the community and protect the Town employees from any
236 exposures. They have learned a lot, have plans in place and documentation for the future. Mr.
237 Haverty added the Selectmen approved items within the Technology budget that would allow for
238 operations to continue.

239

240 **NEW BUSINESS**

241

242 Mr. Cronin spoke about the opportunity for members to attend the 2020 Finance Virtual
243 Workshop on September 24th. Anyone interested should contact him prior to the next Committee
244 meeting.

245

246 Prior to the meeting members were provided with an up to date expenditure detail (as of August
247 12, 2020). Mr. Cronin saw that the only department that was overspent was Emergency
248 Management.

249

250 **ADJOURNMENT**

251

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

ROLL CALL David Cronin – Yes

VOTE: Amber Capone – Yes

Bob Sherman – Yes

Meg Bressette – Yes

Kannan Sasi – Yes

Eduardo Martony – Yes

Philip Haberlen – Yes

Jason Croteau – Yes

School Board Representative Deb Ryan – Yes

Board of Selectmen Representative Bob Haverty – Yes

(10-0-0) The motion carried.

252

253 The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:38pm.

254

255

Respectfully submitted,

256

Charity Landry

257

Recording Secretary