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2024 OPERATING BUDGET REVIEW

Elections

Linda Newcomb, Town Clerk and Tax Collector, and Kelly Salois, Deputy Town Clerk and Tax Collector came before the Board to discuss the 2024 budget for elections. Ms. Newcomb explained that next year is a busy year as there will be four elections in Town. Ms. Newcomb explained that the salary budget has gone up about four times the amount of last year's, and they have also added a new part-time employee. They also sometimes use the Park and Recreation Department's part-time employees when needed as well to help carry things to and from the elections. The supply budget increased due to postage costs increasing. Office supplies remained the same. The budget for ballots and coding increased due to them adding general election coding, presidential primary coding, and the state primary coding for next year. Chairman Cote asked if this was for the new program the Town is using. Ms. Newcomb explained that they need to program the ballot machines to read the new ballots. She added that the state pays for the ballots, but the Town has to pay for the coding. The expenses budget is listed as \$1.00 to be a placeholder.

Ms. Newcomb also had to add in a new voting machine since the State is looking at implementing new machines. The State said that this machine should not cost more than \$10,000.00, but they are hoping it will be closer to \$6,000.00. Ms. Newcomb and Ms. Salois will be going to look at the new machine on August 2, 2023. Chairman Cote asked if every town or city in the State will be required to purchase the new machine. Ms. Newcomb confirmed that this is true. Ms. Newcomb added that she also let the school know about this since they will also have to purchase a new machine. The election worker meals budget increased as well. They added a new line item for ballot shredding. Last year the transfer station was able to send everything out to be burned but this is no longer an option. The ballots are required to be shredded or burned, so they now must pay for them to get shredded now.

Ms. Penny, the Town's Finance Director, added that for every department that has support staff, the budget for their salary is based on this year's negotiations. Rate increases or benefit changes will be presented in warrant articles.

Chairman Cote asked if Elections had any wish-list items. They said they do not.

Town Clerk and Tax Collector

Ms. Newcomb stated that Ms. Penny just alluded to the fact of the union still going through contract negotiations, so the salary budget has a minor difference. The non-union part-time clerk will follow the salary of the union person, but they are unsure of what this amount will be. The supply budget increased due to the higher costs of postage. The dog tags budget decreased by \$60.00. The budget for tax bills remained the same. The telephone budget was removed from her budget since it is now added to the Town buildings budget. The budget for renting the postage

93 meter will remain the same. The expenses budget had an increase due to mileage reimbursement
94 costs rising.

95

96

97 **Assessor**

98

99 Susan Snide, from the Assessor's Office, came before the Board to discuss the 2024 Assessor
100 budget. Ms. Snide explained that she is part of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, and since
101 they have not reached a final agreement yet, her salary will remain the same as last year. She
102 increased the supplies budget due to costs going up. The expenses budget was also raised due to
103 postage costs increasing. The cost of dues has also increased for the New Hampshire Assessing
104 Officials. It went up to \$50.00 from \$20.00. She eliminated the Real Data weekly newspaper she
105 used to get, and they no longer have to pay for mapping due to the NRPC agreement. The Vision
106 cloud system contract increased. The contract for consulting fees also increased.

107

108 Ms. Corbett asked if the dues increase annually or if this is the first time they have increased.

109 Ms. Snide explained that this is the first time they have increased, and it was increased due to
110 new legislation.

111

112 Mr. Croteau asked how often the Town uses the consultants since their fees are so high. Ms.
113 Snide explained that the Town does not have a floater to cover her vacations anymore, so they
114 need to pay the consultants to cover the data entry, meet with customers, and answer questions.
115 The consultants charge \$54.00 per hour.

116

117 Chairman Cote stated that the 2023 operating budget for the Assessor was \$229,193.00. The
118 2024 default budget is \$229,793.00. The 2024 requested budget is \$240,825.00. This is an
119 increase of \$11,632.00.

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121

122 **Parks and Recreation**

123

124 Brian Johnson, Parks, and Recreation Director came before the board to discuss the 2024 Parks
125 and Recreation budget. Mr. Johnson explained that the salary budget is contractual, and they are
126 still waiting for the final numbers. Mr. Johnson is asking to increase the waterfront director's
127 salary by \$1.00 to bring them to \$18.00 per hour. Mr. Johnson also stated that he wants to hire a
128 waterfront trainee for \$16.00 per hour. He explained that one of the problems they have in the
129 Parks and Recreation Department is that they usually only have staff members for a few years
130 before they move on, and they need to have people ready to take over these positions. There is no
131 increase to the budget for supplies. The gas and oil budget decreased slightly due to gas costs
132 lowering. The repairs budget for vehicles increased by \$500.00 since they added another vehicle.
133 The budget for rentals remained the same. The expenses budget increased due to mileage
134 reimbursement costs rising, and software price increases. They also asked to raise the budget for
135 playground maintenance by \$1,000.00.

136

137 Town Administrator Roark asked Mr. Johnson to explain the playground project further. Mr.

138 Johnson explained that they did file an intent to apply for a grant to fund the playground project,

139 but they have not heard back on whether they are invited to apply for the grant yet. He stated that
140 he does anticipate they will receive an invitation to apply for the grant. If they do end up getting
141 the grant, the swings and other pieces at the playground will be a part of the renovation. When
142 the insurance company audited the playgrounds, they mentioned the swings need to be replaced
143 due to the grooves in the metal from the chains, so they do not snap. Town Administrator Roark
144 added that if they do not get the grant, they need to consider adding the playground renovation
145 costs into a warrant article since the playground needs renovations for safety reasons.
146

147 Ms. Takesian asked why the playground, skatepark, and disc golf maintenance budget is not
148 coming out of the eighties fund. Mr. Johnson explained that the eighties fund is geared towards
149 the Town's programs only and cannot be used for a CIP project or anything that is not program
150 related.
151

152 Chairman Cote stated that the 2023 operating budget for Parks and Recreation was \$294,414.00.
153 The 2024 default budget is \$294,513.00. The 2024 requested budget is \$301,123.00. This is an
154 increase of \$6,709.00.
155

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157

157 **Senior Center**

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159 Sara Landry, Director of the Hobbs Community Center came before the Board to discuss the
160 2024 budget for the Senior Center. Ms. Landry stated that the salary budget increased due to two
161 staff members joining the union, and the costs associated with that are included in that. The other
162 salaries have a 2.5% increase. The supplies budget increased slightly since in the past couple of
163 years the budget has been tight. The phone and cable budget remained the same. The general
164 repairs and project budget also remained the same. The dumpster and copier costs have increased
165 slightly. The expense budget has some new additions. Ms. Landry is requesting a laptop since
166 she has been using her own personal iPad and it is now damaged, she explained that Brian
167 Demers recommended a laptop to her over another iPad. The other increase in the expense
168 budget is the cost of their spring event. She explained that they are also looking at starting
169 carpooling for local trips for seniors who do not drive, and they need background checks for
170 drivers, so there is also an expense for this.
171

172

172 Chairman Cote asked how many total workers are entering the union. Ms. Landry explained that
173 two employees are entering the union, the office manager, and their bus driver. Chairman Cote
174 asked if the laptop will be a Town-owned laptop. Ms. Landry confirmed this and stated it will be
175 used for Town business only.
176

177

177 Mr. Croteau asked about the bus repair maintenance budget of \$2,500.00 and wondered if this
178 number was sufficient given the age of the bus. Ms. Landry stated that they have been able to
179 keep within this budget, but she is concerned with the rust on the bus. Town Administrator stated
180 that Ms. Landry has provided the Town with estimates to fix this issue, but since her budget for
181 this year is tight, he is trying to wait until the fall to see if there are leftover funds in the budgets.
182 They also have discussed starting a capital reserve fund for a new bus eventually.
183

183

184 Ms. Takesian asked if the current bus is a good size or if they would want a bigger one
185 eventually. Ms. Landry stated that she thinks the size of the current bus is enough. However, she
186 would like to eventually get a smaller vehicle, possibly donated, to be used for services for fewer
187 people.

188
189 Chairman Cote stated that the 2023 operating budget for the Senior Center was \$193,338.00. The
190 2024 default budget is \$207,580.00. The 2024 requested budget is \$211,030.00. This is an
191 increase of \$17,000.00. Chairman Cote noted that the majority of this increase is due to salaries.

192

193

194 **Budget Committee**

195

196 Tammy Penny, Town Finance Director proposed the Budget Committee budget. Ms. Penny
197 stated that, as always, there is a \$2.00 placeholder in case anything comes up. The Budget
198 Committee generally does not spend anything except for registering for the New Hampshire
199 Municipal Association Annual Budget and Finance Workshop, which is usually \$70.00-\$90.00
200 depending on whether it is held virtually or in person. She added that the Board of Selectmen's
201 budget usually absorbs this cost.

202

203

204 **Human Services**

205

206 Ms. Penny stated that they kept this budget the same except for an increase in the New
207 Hampshire Welfare Association membership fee. Town Administrator Roark stated that they
208 recently voted for and passed a new welfare assistance policy in Town.

209

210 Chairman Cote stated that the 2023 operating budget for Human Services is \$75,640.00. The
211 2024 default budget is \$75,650.00.

212

213

214 **Town Insurance**

215

216 Ms. Penny explained that they will not have next year's insurance rates until October. To get the
217 anticipated costs for 2024 Ms. Penny used this year's numbers, contracts, bargaining numbers,
218 and history of past increases. She is assuming there will be a 1.5% increase for dental, no change
219 for life insurance, around a 7% increase for property and liability, an 8% increase for worker's
220 compensation, a 5% increase for unemployment, and a 5.5% increase for health insurance. She
221 explained that there can be a lot of changes in the cost of health insurance throughout the year if
222 any employee makes any changes in their plan due to age, adding a family member, taking off a
223 family member, or if any new employees are hired or leave.

224

225 Chairman Cote stated that the 2023 operating budget for Town Insurance is \$3,170,326.00. The
226 2024 requested budget is \$3,384,922.00.

227

228

229 **Retirement**

230
231 Ms. Penny stated that the Town is a part of New Hampshire retirement and must follow their
232 rates. The current rates are in effect until June 30, 2025. Ms. Penny took the Town employee's
233 current salaries, applied whichever rate fits in, applied taxes, and used them for the budget.

234
235 Chairman Cote stated that the 2023 operating budget for Retirement is \$2,449,933.00. The 2024
236 default budget is \$2,535,194.00. This is a \$110,000.00 increase. The 2024 requested budget is
237 \$2,560,892.00. This is a slight increase from the default budget. Ms. Penny added that this could
238 slightly change due to salary or employment changes.

239
240 **Legal**

241
242 Town Administrator Roark stated that Attorney Ratigan's office retainer is \$96,000.00. Attorney
243 Ratigan has not gotten back to the Town about the costs, but Town Administrator Roark believes
244 this cost will remain the same. Historically, the Town goes beyond the retainer due to land use
245 suits. Ms. Penny used data from previous years to see on average how much the Town spends
246 over the retainer. The total cost is on average \$127,500.00.

247
248 Chairman Cote stated that the 2023 operating budget for Legal is \$96,000.00. The 2024
249 requested budget is \$127,500.00. This is historically how much legal spends per year.

250
251
252 **DISCUSSION**

253
254 Ms. Takesian stated that she received an email from a Pelham resident stating that she was
255 unable to email all the selectmen from the Pelham website, and she was also concerned that the
256 Forestry meeting was not posted on social media. Ms. Takesian explained to the resident that she
257 is not supposed to answer emails from individual residents, but that Brian Demers was on
258 vacation which is why the meeting was not uploaded to social media. She suggested the resident
259 reach out to the Town Administrator or Chairman of the Board. Town Administrator added that
260 the meeting was posted to two different public spots which is a requirement. Mr. Croteau stated
261 that there is only a twenty-four hour notice required for a public meeting. Ms. Takesian noted
262 that the resident was not questioning the notice, but only wondering why it was not posted on
263 social media. Town Administrator noted that it was posted outside Town Hall and at the Library,
264 but they historically post it on the Town website, so they intend to try to always post it there as
265 well.

266
267 Town Administrator Roark stated that the Transfer Station will be closed on August 6, 7 and 8,
268 2023 due to the compacter being replaced.

269
270 Chairman Cote asked if the hazmat dates are posted anywhere. Town Administrator Roark stated
271 they are posted on the Transfer Station's website, and they usually are in early fall. Chairman
272 Cote stated there is one coming to Pelham on August 26, 2023. Information is posted on the
273 Town website under the Transfer Station's page.

274
275

276 **SELECTMEN AND TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS**

277

278 **Mr. Croteau** stated that they will start grinding Route 38 on Thursday, so plan accordingly for
279 traffic.

280

281 **Ms. Takesian** stated that there is a National Night Out on August 1, 2023. There will be food
282 trucks, non-profit organizations, and this will help the community get introduced to the Police
283 Department. This will be hosted on the Village Green.

284

285 **Chairman Cote** had nothing to report.

286

287 **Mr. Bergeron** had nothing to report.

288

289 **Ms. Corbett** stated that she will be face-painting at National Night Out.

290

291 **Town Administrator Roark** had nothing to report.

292

293

294 **ADJOURNMENT**

295

296 There is no need for a non-public session.

297

298

299 MOTION: (Corbett/Croteau) To adjourn the meeting at approximately 7:45 pm.

300

301 VOTE: (5-0-0) The motion carried.

302

303

304 Respectfully submitted,

305

306 Makayla Clougherty

307 Recording Secretary