

DRAFT
TOWN OF PELHAM
BUDGET COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, October 5th, 2023

1 **CALL TO ORDER** – Ms. Meg Bressette opened the meeting at approximately 6:32 PM.

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4 **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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7 Ms. Bressette called attendance:

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9 **PRESENT:** Chair Meg Bressette
10 Secretary Deborah Ryan
11 Bob Sherman
12 Phil Haberlen
13 Ellen Cormier
14 Garrett Abare – *not present at the time of roll-call; arrived at approximately 6:45 PM*
15 Paul Grant – *not present at the time of roll-call; arrived at 6:38 PM*
16 David Silva
17 School Board Representative David Wilkerson
18 Selectmen Representative Jason Croteau – *not present at the time of roll-call; arrived at 6:35 PM*
19 Recording Secretary Heidi Zagorski

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21 **ABSENT:** Vice Chair Greg Smith - *excused*

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24 **BUSINESS**

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27 **MINUTES REVIEW: September 28th, 2023**

28 Ms. Bressette asked on line 168 to change the word “Federal” to “State” in reference to the block grant money. Ms.
29 Bressette asked on line 227 to change the words “well 9” to “line”. Ms. Bressette asked on line 359 to remove the “s” at
30 the end of Mr. Silva’s name.

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32
33 **MOTION:** (Sherman/Ryan) To place the September 28th, 2023 Budget Committee Meeting minutes on file as
34 amended.

35 **VOTE:** (6-0-2) The motion passed.

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38 **CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED:**

39 Ms. Tammy Penny stated that she had put a note on listserv in response to member Silva’s inquiry about the Healthtrust
40 rate increase. Ms. Penny explained that Londonderry had started a thread on the same topic as other communities must be
41 seeing increases as well. Ms. Penny said a handful responded and all said they use Healthtrust. She said she did reach out
42 to Nashua and Manchester. She said the Nashua CFO said they are expecting a 9% increase next year adding that they are
43 self-insured. Ms. Penny said she sent slides from the Healthtrust rate-setting hearing so the members could look at them.
44 She said they go over the rate-setting process. Ms. Penny said Healthtrust is a nonprofit public risk pool, so they have to
45 keep reinvesting and sometimes they return surplus monies. She said over the past year they had to dip deep into their
46 unassigned fund balance to pay claims and they are trying to determine how much they are going to build it up and how

47 quickly. Ms. Penny said claims have been up across all categories. Ms. Penny said her Healthtrust contact told her that
48 the town of Pelham would have paid closer to 9% of an increase for the 2023 budget as opposed to the 5.4% because they
49 benefitted from being in the risk pool. She said she will have more information later in the month, but they will be
50 adjusting those numbers probably at Reconsideration. She said she would have the final Primex numbers at the same time
51 explaining that some may go up and some may go down.

52
53 Ms. Bressette announced that members Mr. Croteau and Mr. Grant were present.

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55
56 **REVIEW TOWN BUDGETS**

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59 **TOWN BUILDINGS**

60 Ms. Bressette said the 2023 operating budget was \$890,764, the department request was \$1,170,394 and the Selectmen
61 approved \$924,491 which is an increase of 3.8%.

62
63 Mr. Joe Roark introduced himself as the Town Administrator.

64
65 Mr. Roark said the part-time handyman has stayed the same, handling as many repairs as he can and being paid on an as-
66 needed basis at \$30/hour.

67
68 Mr. Roark said there is a \$2,000 increase in supplies which is an inflationary number. Mr. Roark said they are contracted
69 for cleaning, but the cleaning supplies have gone up.

70
71 Mr. Roark said electricity has gone down. Mr. Roark said he and Ms. Penny together looked between actual usage and
72 projected rates and predicted a comfortable number although it has been fluctuating.

73
74 Mr. Roark said the telephone and cable number is down.

75
76 Mr. Roark said the water remains the same.

77
78 Mr. Roark said the heating remained the same. Mr. Roark said they contract year-to-year for the oil, and they are not in a
79 contract for propane, adding that they only have one provider for natural gas.

80
81 Mr. Roark said they kept repairs and projects as status quo. He said as the buildings get older, the repairs get more
82 expensive.

83
84 Mr. Roark said under 2024 projects they tried to get a handle on what needed to be done in the town buildings and broke
85 them out into critical projects, important projects, and needed projects. Mr. Roark said the Board of Selectmen chose to
86 try and complete the critical projects through ARPA funding or other means that they could find. He said those were
87 removed from the budget. Mr. Roark said they did budget the second section under "important" which includes the carpet
88 replacement and impound lighting. Mr. Roark said one of the reasons they have critical listed under ARPA is because the
89 sooner they are completed, the better. He said the important projects are \$109,699. He said those are the types of projects
90 that don't fit into their regular repair projects. Mr. Roark said the carpeting in the Police Department needs replacement as
91 it is buckling and shrinking due to all the steam-cleaning and is a trip hazard. He said the impound lighting needs to be
92 improved as there has been some vandalism and take-back attempts. He said they want to set up a perimeter fence
93 because as Lyons Park has increased foot traffic, the Police Chief wants to keep people out of the cruiser area where cars
94 are coming and going. Mr. Roark said the training room in the Police Department, the air handler needs to be replaced

95 because it is low to no function. He said the electronic access control at the Police and Fire building is at the end of its life.
96 Mr. Roark said the Senior Center needs interior door replacements. He explained they are not energy efficient, hard to
97 close, and potentially hazardous. Mr. Roark said the Senior building needs to be power washed. He said the Highway
98 Department needs electric gates at the front and rear, adding that right now there are manual gates. Mr. Roark said if the
99 gates are left open and the trucks are out plowing, some people still go in and take the salt and sand and sometimes they
100 get in the way of loading the trucks adding they have a lot of trucks back there. Mr. Roark said the highway agent would
101 like to install electric gates for security.

102
103 Mr. Roark said the next section “needed” has been postponed for future consideration because they were deemed not
104 critical or important.

105
106 Mr. Roark said under expense and maintenance, the septic service has had an increase. Mr. Roark said the Fire
107 Department has to keep their trucks washed down in the winter and the sand is getting into the drains and needs to be
108 pumped out.

109
110 Mr. Roark said the elevator inspection is \$5,000 and has not been budgeted in the past.

111
112 Mr. Roark said generator testing is monthly and serviced in the fall.

113
114 Mr. Roark said backflow testing is one that was being done without being budgeted.

115
116 Mr. Roark said the Historical Society roof repair had been completed and was under budget.

117
118 Mr. Roark said Lyons Park was for a well and pump setup and that has been completed and are working on getting bids
119 for the irrigation portion.

120
121 Mr. Roark said the pest control went up at the Police Department.

122
123 Ms. Ryan asked if there was a reason why historically the individual building repairs are included under the Town
124 Buildings' budget rather than the individual buildings' budget. Mr. Roark said many of the repairs that may be within their
125 budgets are micro repair types that they handle on their own. Mr. Roark said the Town Buildings budget is more towards
126 the bigger projects and the maintenance side.

127
128 Ms. Bressette said the landscaping budget had not gone up. Mr. Roark said they signed a three-year contract with
129 Boyden’s Landscaping for the same amount each year.

130
131
132 **DEBT SERVICE INTEREST/PRINCIPAL**

133 Ms. Bressette said the 2023 operating principal budget was \$487,416 and the department request and Selectmen approved
134 was \$363,170 which is a decrease of 25.5%.

135
136 Ms. Penny said the decrease is because a couple of those debt service payments have fallen off explaining that on the
137 detailed schedule, the Conservation bond is fully paid and so is the Fire Rescue Pumper and the Ford Focus.

138
139 Ms. Penny said the golf course loan dropped off and you will see it go away in the 2027 budget. Ms. Penny said the
140 Police cars are a lease agreement. Ms. Penny said she meant to change the default budget on that line, and that she will
141 update that to no default on that line.

143 Ms. Penny said the boiler replacement and Conservation land purchases are the actual debt payments that the town owes.

144
145 Ms. Bressette said the 2023 interest operating budget was \$68,881 and the 2024 budget request and the Selectmen
146 approved is \$52,857.

147
148
149 **LEGAL**

150 Ms. Bressette said the 2023 operating budget was \$96,000, and the 2024 operating request and Selectmen approved
151 budget is \$127,500 which is an increase of 32.8%.

152
153 Mr. Roark said the \$96,000 is the legal retainer cost for the town council. He said that gives them access to DTC
154 attorneys and allows them to be contacted as much as needed with questions. He said they review contracts, MOUs, and
155 answer personnel questions, help with contract negotiations, and grievances.

156
157 Mr. Roark said the increase of \$31,500 is for items outside of the retainer. He said when the town gets sued or legal
158 matters that require testimony, preparation, and court appearances happen, they start to come out of the town's pocket.
159 Mr. Roark said in past years when they went over budget it would have to come from another budget. He said as they
160 start to tighten all the budgets there is no room for extra money, so they have to increase this. Mr. Roark said as the town
161 continues to get built out, the land use gets more challenging.

162
163 Mr. Silva asked if they do not use the extra \$31,000 would that carry over? Mr. Roark said no that it would go to the
164 general fund.

165
166
167 **TREASURER**

168 Mr. Bill Hayes introduced himself as the town treasurer.

169
170 Ms. Bressette said the 2023 operating budget was \$15,224 and the 2024 request and Selectmen approved is \$7,000 which
171 is a decrease of 54%.

172
173 Mr. Hayes said historically they carried over bank fees in the budget and they do not incur any bank fees with any of the
174 institutions they use so it has been removed from the budget.

175
176 Mr. Hayes said the annual stipend is \$4700, supplies and technology are \$1000, and dues/memberships/conferences are
177 \$1300.

178
179
180 **TRUST FUNDS**

181 Ms. Bressette said the 2023 operating budget was \$335 and the 2024 request and Selectmen approved is \$350

182
183 Mr. Ed Gleason introduced himself.

184
185 Mr. Gleason said the increase was for checks that were running low.

186
187
188 **SELECTMEN**

189 Ms. Bressette said the 2023 operating budget was \$670,604 the 2023 department request is \$700,740 and the approved
190 budget is \$700,741 which is an increase of 4.5%.

191

192 Ms. Penny said she tried to look at last year and ask for what they actually needed. Ms. Penny said they did take on some
193 office supply items that used to be in the treasurer's budget.

194

195 Ms. Penny said all of the salaries are contractual. Ms. Penny said most employees in the Selectmen's office are under
196 individual employee contracts. She said there is one individual who is part of the collective bargaining agreement which
197 is under negotiation so that position has had no raises after April 1st.

198

199 Ms. Penny said there is a large increase in overtime for the IT Administrator. Ms. Penny said they decreased the recording
200 secretary hours because those were inflated. Ms. Penny said they had to add longevity because it was not in the budget but
201 that is part of an individual employment contract.

202

203 Ms. Penny said under supplies she worked with the Admin Assistant to adjust lines accordingly including moving postage
204 from rentals to supplies, dropping the copier paper, and some items that were in the treasurer's budget were moved into
205 supplies.

206

207 Ms. Penny said under cell phones they dropped off municipal landlines because it is budgeted under Town Buildings. Ms.
208 Penny said the cellular phones have gone down because Mr. Brian Demers is in the process of negotiating a better deal for
209 the whole town.

210

211 Ms. Penny said she left the copier service flat. She said this could be however many copies are used and sometimes they
212 may have a repair cost.

213

214 Ms. Penny said she reduced the postage meter line to what they actually pay for it.

215

216 Ms. Penny said they left a \$1 on the new equipment line as a placeholder in case something comes up.

217

218 Ms. Penny said under expenses, the municipal association went up and they raised this by 3%, the municipal management
219 dues cost is anticipated to be \$110, and the finance and budget workshop includes training monies.

220

221 Ms. Penny said the town report mailing cost is a significant item, and the mileage cost has not seen much activity.

222

223 Ms. Penny said advertising is \$1000.

224

225 Ms. Penny said under publications is the LexisNexis publication.

226

227 Ms. Penny said the town financial audit is in a three-year contract and they are in year three.

228

229 Ms. Penny said actuary services are required by law and they have to engage in this service every two years. She said this
230 is the cost for one year.

231

232 Ms. Bressette asked who uses the LexisNexis publications. Mr. Roark said LexisNexis sends them the updates to the
233 RSAs, and he believed the Police Department may have access to it as well. He said he would look into it.

234

235 Mr. Abare said the Selectmen's stipends were cut from \$6300 to \$1. Ms. Penny said the Board of Selectmen voted to cut
236 that. Mr. Abare asked why it was there and why did they cut it. Ms. Penny said stipends are there because there is a lot of
237 time involved in going to meetings and administrative work. Ms. Penny said there was a motion made when this budget
238 was discussed, and it passed to cut the stipend down to a dollar. Ms. Bressette said it was not a unanimous decision. Ms.

239 Bressette said it was a thank you from the town for putting in so much time with the town. Ms. Bressette expressed her
240 thoughts that removing the stipend could keep some people from being able to serve the town. Mr. Silva asked if the
241 stipend was used in the past. Ms. Penny said yes. She said each year it is paid at the same time in one lump sum during
242 the first week in December. Mr. Croteau clarified that the Chair gets \$1200, and the other Selectmen get \$900. Mr.
243 Croteau said the \$1 was left there as a placeholder to allow for future conversation.
244
245

246 **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

247 Lieutenant John Ignatowicz introduced himself from the Pelham Fire Department.
248

249 Ms. Bressette said the 2023 operating budget was \$2,918,972 the 2024 request was \$3,178,554 and the Selectmen
250 approved \$3,137,264 which is an increase of 7.5%.
251

252 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said most of the salaries are contractual salaries. He said one increase they proposed was a Deputy
253 Fire Chief. He said it was \$93,600 last year, and they increased this to \$112,320 to attract qualified candidates. He said
254 this was cut back down by the Board of Selectmen to \$93,600.
255

256 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said the administrative overtime is for extra coverage that they need to bring back if they send
257 paramedics to the hospital to switch out medications and pick up supplies, they bring them in on administrative overtime.
258

259 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said disability coverage is for people who are out injured and is based on the wage scale.
260

261 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said hazmat refresher training is mandated by OSHA.
262

263 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said fire education backfill provides coverage so they can go to classes and get better trained.
264

265 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said paramedic refresher is \$1 because they rotate the EMT refresher and the paramedic refresher
266 from year to year so you will see an increase in the EMT refresher and a decrease in the paramedic refresher.
267

268 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said the paramedic school overtime rate is to pay them once a week to go to class and then they
269 backfill their shift which is the overtime. He explained they pay the student to go to class and then they pay to backfill
270 their shift. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said once they receive their certification, it is two and a half years that they have to
271 remain with the Town of Pelham. Ms. Bressette asked for budget's sake if they could stagger the trainees and send one
272 this year and one next year to also prevent losing them both at the same time. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said he sees a benefit
273 to having two trainees together and he would have to see contractually if they could deny sending them if they are
274 interested. Mr. Roark added that they need paramedics. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said at their peak they had nine
275 paramedics, and they are currently at four.
276

277 Mr. Abare asked if Lieutenant Ignatowicz had any information on the Deputy Chief position compared to other towns.
278 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said he could send the information to the Board. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said the Deputy Chief is
279 the number two in the Fire Department and in the absence of the Chief, he is number one. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said they
280 are seeking the best talent they can.
281

282 Mr. Sherman asked if there were any vacancies. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said the Deputy Chief position is vacant and the
283 Chief is out on injury, so he is wearing dual hats as Lieutenant and acting Chief. He said they also have one firefighter
284 who left, and they are currently filling this position. Mr. Abare asked if he could share some responsibilities that go
285 uncovered in that timeframe. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said since he has taken over as acting Chief, it has become a balance
286 of prioritization. Mr. Abare asked if because they do not have a Deputy Chief, could it cost more in overtime to refill that

287 time. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said there is a hefty overtime cost. Mr. Silva asked if they were in the process of looking for a
288 Deputy Chief. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said the last time the town had posted for the vacancy, they got back 11-12
289 applicants who were all non-hirable because of what the posting required for certifications and education. Mr. Silva asked
290 if Lieutenant Ignatowicz thought this position was worth more than \$93,000. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said yes 100%.

291
292 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said within the union contract, the firefighters are entitled to different stipends. Lieutenant
293 Ignatowicz said the same is true for education incentives. He said the position incentives are due to key administrative
294 areas that are handled by firefighters who are paid \$2500/year to manage those departments. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said if
295 a lieutenant takes a day off and an approved lieutenant acts up, he will get a 5% stipend. He said the Coopers test is a
296 physical fitness test that the members are allowed to take every year and if they pass, they get a stipend.

297
298 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said earned time buyback is an estimate of what they are allowed to buy back if they choose to.

299
300 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said the brush permit was moved in the budget. He explained because the Fire Chief is the town
301 Fire Warden assigned by the State, for every burn permit, the state reimburses 75% to the Warden as a salary for being the
302 town Warden. He said they have to fund that and then they get reimbursed.

303
304 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said the call department has increased. He said with the recruitment and retention and the injury
305 rate, they are just not getting people back on call back. He said they are looking to increase their call-back staff.

306
307 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said ambulance supplies have no change.

308
309 Lieutenant Ignatowicz the fire supplies have some increases due to the increase in costs.

310
311 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said the Selectmen did vote to reduce one of the printer cartridge line items under office supplies.

312
313 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said hazard material supplies have increased due to the cost of material and an additional hazardous
314 shipping fee.

315
316 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said the Verizon EMAG is the software that is a gateway to allow communication from dispatch to
317 the members of the department which is a monthly fee.

318
319 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said Verizon Wi-Fi tablet routers are the tablets for the fire trucks and ambulances.

320
321 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said they have not received the rates for gas and oil yet.

322
323 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said vehicle maintenance and repairs increased because of a cost increase for tires. He explained
324 they budget for one set of tires for every vehicle.

325
326 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said the only increase under portable equipment was for stretchers and stair chair maintenance. He
327 said that the rate did go up.

328
329 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said there is a big credit under radio maintenance because they purchased those batteries last year.

330
331 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said the SCBAs (self-contained breathing apparatus) are the air packs that they wear on their backs,
332 and this has an increased maintenance cost because they are nearly seven years old. He said the compressor to fill the
333 SCBAs has annual testing and service.

335 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said the radio contract is split 50/50 with the Police Department. It places its radio system under
336 warranty.

337
338 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said the cardiac monitors and IV Pumps are certified every year.

339
340 He said under rentals are the oxygen filling and the hydrant fees which are estimated with a 5% increase. There is also a
341 slight increase in dumpster fees.

342
343 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said the SCB air bottles are a big increase as they had to get rid of four expired ones within the last
344 year and needed to replace them.

345
346 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said uniforms were level-funded with the exception of call firefighters and that was with the
347 anticipation of new firefighters coming on.

348
349 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said under general it is the various dues that are paid to various associations that lobby for them.

350
351 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said professional development includes training to remain cutting-edge.

352
353 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said physicals cover TB Shots and Hep B shots to protect their staff.

354
355 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said recertification fees were increased due to an anticipated increase in call firefighters.

356
357 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said in all to send two people to paramedic school it is just under \$140,000. Ms. Bressette asked if
358 the increase would be for one year or two years. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said it will be a little bit into the second year
359 because the program runs typically for one – one and a half years. He explained it depends on the scheduling of clinical
360 time required.

361
362 Mr. Sherman asked about the engineering cost of \$20,000 for the four-bay garage. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said that was cut
363 in the Selectmen's review. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said of the six companies he reached out to, four companies responded,
364 and the range was \$17,000 - \$55,000 so the cheapest for the engineering it is \$10,000, and for the site work, they are
365 looking at \$17,000. Mr. Croteau said the general discussion with the Board of Selectmen was that they were going to
366 table the discussion for now. Ms. Bressette asked if this was due to the new forestry vehicle coming. Lieutenant
367 Ignatowicz said that would add to the situation. He said the station was at capacity about 5-6 years ago and has no room
368 for growth.

369
370 Ms. Bressette said that there was \$300,000 returned from the budget last year and asked Lieutenant Ignatowicz if he knew
371 from which line items or areas the money was not spent. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said he could get this information.

372 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said with public safety they plan for the worst and hope for the best. Lieutenant Ignatowicz said
373 they air on the side of caution to ensure they do not run out of money.

374
375
376 **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

377 Ms. Bressette said the 2023 operating budget was \$10,673 and the requested and Selectmen-approved budget is \$10,781.

378
379 Lieutenant Ignatowicz said the only increase in this budget was the hourly rate for salaries because of the increase in the
380 contracts which is the \$108 increase.

383 **NEW BUSINESS**

384 Ms. Bressette said next week they will have a review of all the budgets. The Committee will be voting on these on
385 November 16th, 2023. Ms. Bressette said on October 14th there will be a school site walk at 9 a.m. to visit all of the
386 schools.

387
388
389 **OLD/TABLED BUSINESS: Bylaw Review – Language related to numeric tallies RSA 32:5, V-a**

390 Ms. Bressette said she would like to table the numeric tallies. Ms. Bressette said if anyone would like to volunteer, she
391 can send the language for them to look over and discuss. Mr. Grant volunteered.

392
393
394 **ADJOURNMENT**

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396 **MOTION:** (Sherman/Ryan) To adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:11 PM.

397 **VOTE:** (10-0-0) The motion carried.

398
399
400 Respectively Submitted,

401 Heidi Zagorski

402 Recording Secretary