

DRAFT
TOWN OF PELHAM
BUDGET COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, September 14th, 2023

1 **CALL TO ORDER** – Ms. Meg Bressette opened the meeting at approximately 6:31 PM.

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4 **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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7 Ms. Bressette called attendance:

8
9 **PRESENT:** Chair Meg Bressette
10 Vice Chair Greg Smith
11 Secretary Deborah Ryan
12 Bob Sherman
13 Ellen Cormier – *not present for roll-call; arrived at approximately 6:34 PM*
14 Garrett Abare
15 Paul Grant
16 School Board Representative David Wilkerson
17 Selectmen Representative Alternate Charlene Takesian
18 Recording Secretary Heidi Zagorski

19
20 **ABSENT:** Selectmen Representative Jason Croteau
21 David Silva – *excused*
22 Eduardo Martony – *excused*

23
24
25 **BUSINESS**

26
27
28 **MINUTES REVIEW: January 12th, 2023, April 27th, 2023, and September 9th, 2023**

29
30 January 12th, 2023 Meeting Minutes

31 Ms. Bressette determined there were not enough members present who were in attendance during the January 12th,
32 2023 meeting to make a motion. Ms. Bressette said the Committee will come back to the January 12th minutes at the
33 September 21st, 2023 Budget Committee meeting.

34
35 April 27th, 2023 Meeting Minutes

36 The Budget Committee had no changes or revisions to the April 27th, 2023 minutes.

37
38 **MOTION:** (Sherman/Smith) To place the April 27th, 2023 Budget Committee Meeting minutes on file.

39 **VOTE:** (7-0-1) The motion passed.

40
41 September 9th, 2023 Site Walk Minutes

42 Ms. Bressette had one correction to the September 9th, 2023 Site Walk minutes. Ms. Bressette asked to add an “e” to
43 her last name.

44
45 **MOTION:** (Smith/Ryan) To place the September 9th, 2023 Budget Committee Site Walk minutes on file
46 as amended.

47 **VOTE:** (5-0-3) The motion passed.
48
49

50 **OLD/TABLED BUSINESS**

51 Ms. Bressette said the bylaws would be looked at to add a line about the tallies. Ms. Bressette said this discussion
52 would be on the September 21st, 2023 Agenda.
53

54
55 **REVIEW TOWN BUDGETS**

56
57 Town Administrator Mr. Joe Roark and Finance Director Tammy Penny introduced themselves. Ms. Bressette asked to
58 please provide an overview of the spreadsheet that the Budget Committee had before them.
59

60 Ms. Tammy Penny began with the Budget Master tab. Ms. Penny said the Budget Master tab is as it always looks
61 with a few bits of information like changes over the default budget. She said you will see the department request was
62 for an amount that was \$1.359 million over the prior year or a 6.3% increase, but over the course of several meetings
63 and then the final vote, the Board has reduced that amount by approximately \$648,000 bringing the changeover prior
64 year to 3.34%. Ms. Penny said the 3.34% was not that far off of the latest CPA number that were released yesterday.
65 She said that number was 3.7%.
66

67 Ms. Penny said that she added more tabs in the worksheet this year to help the Board. She expressed that there are
68 more financial impacts than the operating budget. Ms. Penny said there is a red colored tab on the worksheet that is
69 not relevant just yet because it is in process. She said she took the department's request and added any financial articles
70 that could impact the tax rate. Ms. Penny said that this does not suggest that the Board has agreed to all of these
71 things, but that she took the CIP (Capital Improvement Plan) as presented and recommended which the Board may or
72 may not have done, and every department request, and put it in above the orange shaded area. Ms. Penny said she put
73 in all of the cuts that the Board of Selectmen made last week to those numbers. Ms. Penny said they are still going to
74 meet in October and determine what the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds could be used for.
75

76 Ms. Penny said that at the bottom it went from a 15.7% increase last week and changed to 14.97% because they
77 received the estimated evaluations for 2023 the day after last week's meeting. Ms. Penny said she updated the
78 schedule accordingly. She added they have non-final evaluations in this worksheet now that the Board did not see.
79 Ms. Penny said the Board made significant reductions and that they will probably make more over the coming weeks
80 to get to a reasonable tax rate.
81

82 Ms. Penny said she wanted to bring attention to the other funding sources tab which is labeled in green. Ms. Penny
83 said this is to show the Board other opportunities for spending. She said it includes highway block grant revenue that
84 can only be used on road construction or on equipment to maintain the roads. Ms. Penny said they do intentionally not
85 budget for some road construction intending to use this money. Ms. Penny said the Board did determine at a meeting
86 last week to use a portion of it for a highway dump truck which has not been backed out of the current schedule yet.
87 Ms. Penny said she does anticipate additional block grant monies later this year although those numbers have not been
88 finalized.
89

90 Ms. Penny discussed the ARPA monies listed. She stated that over \$700,000 of the \$1.488 million has been allotted.
91 She said the populated numbers in purple do not mean anything because the Board has not voted on those. She
92 explained it is great to use APRA for one-time expense items to reduce spikes in the tax rate. Ms. Penny said the
93 ARPA money has to be spent in 2024 or obligating with a contract and spent in 2026.
94

95 Ms. Bressette said the evaluation looks like it is about \$2.7 billion. Ms. Penny said the non-final evaluation, yes.

96
97 Mr. Garrett Abare asked Ms. Penny what she expected the tax increase would be. Ms. Penny said it was a little too
98 soon to determine. Ms. Penny said she will be before the Board in October to set the tax rate.

99
100 **ELECTIONS**

101 Ms. Bressette said the budget for elections is \$65,868, a 263% increase. Ms. Bressette said she knows they have a lot
102 more elections coming up this year.

103
104 Ms. Linda Newcomb introduced herself as the Town Clerk/Tax Collector and Ms. Kelly Salois introduced herself as
105 the Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector.

106
107 Ms. Newcomb stated on the salary portion they have four elections next year: the Presential Primary, the Town
108 Election, the State Primary, and the General Election in November. She expressed this is the increase because
109 everything is multiplied by four elections on the salaries for the Ballot Clerks and the employees.

110
111 Ms. Newcomb said on supplies, the increase is postage because postage has gone up. She said she had to guesstimate
112 on the absentee ballots on how many for each election they would have.

113
114 Ms. Newcomb said the office supplies have remained the same.

115
116 Ms. Newcomb said the ballots and coding increased because she had to add in the general coding for the General
117 Election, the Presidential Primary coding, and the State Primary coding because they have to pay for the coding, and
118 they pay for the ballots. Ms. Bressette asked Ms. Newcomb to explain the coding. Ms. Newcomb said the coding is
119 the coding for the ballots themselves. She said it has who is running for the races and their names and they program it
120 to go into their machine.

121
122 Ms. Newcomb said the voting booth stayed the same. She said they have a new line for the new voting machine. Ms.
123 Newcomb said the Ballot Commission is looking at three different voting machines and they haven't decided yet. She
124 said they will continue to use the existing ballot machine until the end of December 2024. She added by then, they plan
125 to have selected a voting machine for them to purchase. Ms. Newcomb said the whole state will be going with the new
126 voting machine. She confirmed with Ms. Bressette that the State makes the decision, and everyone will have the same
127 voting machine. Ms. Newcomb said the placemark of \$10,000 is the highest depending on what voting machine they
128 went with.

129
130 Ms. Newcomb said the election meals went up because they have four elections.

131
132 Ms. Newcomb said the poll pads cellular data is for the cradle that they use at the elections for the poll pad which is
133 the wi-fi. She said the \$50 is per month but they can shut it on and off and use it just for the elections. She said the
134 poll pad maintenance is to maintain the poll pads. She said they come and upgrade them and program them. Ms.
135 Bressette asked if last year was the first year to use the poll pads. Ms. Newcomb said yes. Ms. Newcomb explained
136 that instead of the ballot clerk checking a paper list, they would use the iPad for check-in.

137
138 Mr. Paul Grant said he observed the voting recently. Mr. Grant asked if anything was needed to help verify log-ins.
139 She explained if the person has a PO Box, they have to prove their residency i.e., an electric bill to verify they are
140 residents of Pelham. She said if they cannot prove residency, they have to fill out a domicile affidavit and then that
141 gets followed up with the state to make sure they are a resident of New Hampshire or Pelham. Mr. Bob Sherman asked
142 if their ballot was put aside or if it was counted. Ms. Newcomb said it does get counted and she has never seen an

143 issue where they didn't prove their residency. Mr. Abare asked if they had ever heard from the State that someone did
144 not verify. Ms. Newcomb said no, not in their town. Mr. Sherman asked how long they must keep the ballots before
145 shredding. Ms. Newcomb said that town elections are 60 days and state elections are 22 months.

146
147
148 **TOWN CLERK/TAX COLLECTOR**

149 Ms. Bressette said the budget for the Town Clerk is \$328,289, a 2.7% increase.

150
151 Ms. Penny said the support staff CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreement) is up this year. She said you will not see
152 increases for any members of the support staff throughout this operating budget because they will be captured and part
153 of a separate budget article. Ms. Bressette confirmed that they would be hearing about this at the end of October. Ms.
154 Penny said there are various departments included in this and you can tell on the spreadsheet because there will be no
155 increase for next year. She added it would be under union. Ms. Bressette asked roughly how many employees this
156 would include. Ms. Penny and Mr. Roark said roughly 40-50 and it is a 5-year contract.

157
158 Ms. Newcomb stated that Ms. Penny explained the salaries.

159 Ms. Newcomb said the only increase in postage is due to the fact the postage increased.

160
161 Ms. Newcomb said the dog tags went down a little because they issued fewer dog tags. She said everything else under
162 that section has stayed the same.

163
164 Ms. Newcomb said the telephone line item has been removed because it has been moved into the town building
165 budget.

166
167 Ms. Newcomb said the postage meter rental is staying the same.

168
169 Ms. Newcomb said the only difference under expenses is the mileage reimbursement. She said that went up because of
170 the federal amount that goes into that.

171
172 Ms. Newcomb said mortgage deed searches went up because it was \$20 last year and went up to \$25 per search. She
173 added that is the only increase in that section.

174
175 Ms. Bressette asked on line 170, the notary public renewal if everyone is a notary in the office. Ms. Newcomb replied
176 yes and said that one person next year will need to be renewed.

177
178 Mr. Sherman asked if they anticipated any increase in revenues. She said yes, the motor vehicle registrations are
179 increasing steadily each month.

180
181 Mr. Smith asked what a Barrington notice is. She said every January they have to send out delinquent tax notices to
182 those who have not paid.

183
184
185 **ASSESSOR**

186 Ms. Susan Snide introduced herself as the Assessment Assistant.

187
188 Ms. Bressette said the Assessor budget is \$240,825 which is an increase of 5.1%.

189
190 Ms. Snide said she is part of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, so her salary is not increased until that is settled.

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191 She said you will see ‘Clerical Coverage for Vacation’ to allow someone to manage the office in her absence. She said
192 it is approximately \$54/hour and she budgeted for one week at this point.

193
194 Ms. Snide said they do have an increase in parcel population; they are up to 5800 now, up from 5400 last year. She
195 said she is increasing her postcards. She added that postage has increased to .63 cents per letter.

196
197 Ms. Snide said the annual dues for the NH association are slated to go up to \$50 per year from \$20/year last year.
198

199 Ms. Snide said the Vision maintenance, the web hosting, and the cloud backup are all increasing this year. She said
200 Vision is the assessing database which maintains a redundant cloud backup and they also host the website and maintain
201 it.

202
203 Ms. Snide said Kirkland Consulting fees have increased this year for the general contracting by \$2,200 and that is per
204 every five-year contract. Mr. Sherman asked when this contract would end. Ms. Snide replied in 2026.

205
206 Ms. Deborah Ryan asked about the Camera Replacement Contract. Ms. Snide said in 2018 they had to upgrade the
207 system to come up to the new standards per Microsoft and Vision had to update as well. Ms. Snide said they went
208 from Vision 6 to Vision 8 and now it is just the yearly maintenance. Ms. Takesian said this is a line placeholder.
209

210 Ms. Bressette asked if there was any discussion about the clerical coverage to be 20 hours instead of 40 hours. Mr.
211 Roark replied that they did not discuss this.

212
213
214 **BUDGET COMMITTEE**

215 Ms. Bressette said there is a placeholder for \$2 which the Selectmen approved.
216
217

218 **CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

219 Ms. Bressette said the budget was \$11,000, a 2.8% increase.
220

221 Mr. Roark said Mr. Al Steward has taken over this Committee, so Mr. Roark assumes the increase under Clerical
222 Assistance would be to digitalize and straighten things out.

223
224 (Please see line 266 for an update from Mr. Al Stewart.)
225
226

227 **PARKS AND RECREATION**

228 Mr. Brian Johnson introduced himself as the Parks and Recreation Director.
229

230 Ms. Bressette said the budget for Parks and Recreation this year is \$301,123, an increase of 2.3%.
231

232 Mr. Johnson started with salaries stating that the top part is the contractual. He is asking for \$1/hour for the waterfront
233 director which comes out to \$480/year and an \$1/hour for lifeguard #1. Mr. Johnson said the goal is to create an
234 assistant director. He said they have a high turnover and wanted to create a #2 lifeguard to take over the duties instead
235 of starting from scratch. Mr. Johnson said the lifeguard increase would come out \$400/year.
236

237 Mr. Johnson said supplies are leveled and funded at \$4093.
238

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239 Mr. Johnson said the telephone is leveled and funded at \$4841.

240
241 Mr. Johnson said there is a small decrease in gas and oil because gas prices come down.

242
243 Mr. Johnson said you will see a \$500 increase in Repairs and Maintenance for a lift gate truck that they inherited from
244 the transfer station.

245
246 Mr. Johnson said rentals are leveled and funded at \$7760.

247
248 Mr. Johnson said expenses have a small increase of \$49 in mileage.

249
250 Mr. Johnson said there is a \$1400 increase in the Rec Track Software. He said this is based on usage and is expected to
251 stay the same or possibly increase for next year. Ms. Bressette asked if that is the program people use to sign up and
252 pay for programs. Mr. Johnson replied yes.

253
254 Mr. Johnson said there is an ask for \$1000 for playground maintenance. He said this year they received wood chips for
255 Muldoon Playground which cost \$3000 and did not cover the entire playground. He said they are asking for this to
256 help maintain the playgrounds in town.

257
258 Ms. Bressette said during the site walk they did look at Muldoon Playground and explained Mr. Johnson is hoping to
259 receive a 50% matching grant for repairs needed which would be on a warrant article. Mr. Johnson said the Muldoon
260 Playground was built in 1987 and it is starting to show some wear. He explained the insurance company conducts an
261 audit each year and although nothing failed, there were a couple of items that they asked to keep an eye on. Mr.
262 Johnson said with the grant coming up this year, it would be a good time to get those items fixed. He said the grant is a
263 50/50 grant. Ms. Bressette asked when they would find out if they would receive the funds from the grant. Mr.
264 Johnson said the grant is due December 15th and they wouldn't find out if they received the funds until July 2024.

265
266 Ms. Penny said she received an email from Mr. Al Steward, the Conservation Commission Chair. Ms. Penny read the
267 following from Al Steward. She said he is adding \$300 in dues making it \$1000 because they spent \$800 in 2023 and
268 they are anticipating another increase. She said they are removing \$300 from the Conservation plan that offsets the
269 dues change.

270
271
272 **PUBLIC LIBRARY**

273 Ms. Jennifer Greene introduced herself as the Library Director and Ms. Lynne Garcia introduced herself as the
274 President of the Library Trustees.

275
276 Ms. Bressette said the budget is \$559,72, a 4.2% increase.

277 Ms. Greene said the salaries are contractual increases and the total increase for salaries is \$19,641.

278
279 Ms. Greene said under supplies it shows an increase of \$294 for an upgraded newsletter software. She said the number
280 of subscribers has surpassed the free version that they had been using. She said they also have an additional \$450 for
281 3D printing supplies. Ms. Greene said it is due to the popularity of the service within their first year of owning their 3D
282 printer.

283
284 Ms. Greene stated under misc. office supplies, they are looking for an increase of \$160 mainly for the purchase of a set
285 of rechargeable batteries for their library of things collection which they received from a grant last year.

287 Ms. Greene said the equipment and tech plan is a \$136 increase for an increase in the cost of the library catalog
288 system.

289
290 Ms. Greene said there is a \$1000 increase for replaced computer expenses however that is going to be money that she
291 moved from a different line below. Ms. Greene said under expenses and databases, they reduced this line by \$1000
292 and moved the money to replace computers. She said some of the databases they were using, found great alternatives
293 that they were able to negotiate better prices for.

294
295 Ms. Greene said in specials and databases you see the \$1000 decrease that went to computers, and there is a \$700
296 reduction in videos that was moved and split between young adult and children's books.

297
298 Ms. Greene said the cost of digital resources has an increase of \$1050 to cover the cost of the website hosting as well
299 as the increase for digital and audiobooks. She said the audio and downloadable books are through the state library so
300 this price set, which is an increase from last year.

301
302 Ms. Greene said the total increase from last year, not including salaries is \$2775.

303
304 Ms. Bressette asked how many times the digital resources are used. Ms. Greene said in 2022, they had 12,871 books
305 downloaded and as of the end of July 2023, they have had 10,225 downloaded.

306
307 Ms. Greene and Mr. Abare discussed the distinctions between Adult Services, Children, and Teen Services. Mr. Abare
308 asked if it would be fair to consider some programs a quasi-extension of the school system. Ms. Greene said you could
309 say that. She said for children it is more parent and child interaction. She said you have a lot more parental
310 participation. Ms. Bressette asked Ms. Greene if she had the number of participants. Ms. Greene said last year in 2022
311 the library ran a total of 448 programs and a total program attendance of 5,963 people. Ms. Greene said so far this
312 year, they have had a total of 334 programs and a total program attendance of 7,455 people. Ms. Greene said they have
313 also had an increase in circulation. She said their physical circulation last year was 38,825 physical items and this year
314 they are already at 30,275. Ms. Greene is expecting to surpass last year's numbers. Mr. Abare asked if there was a
315 bulk number made up of a certain group. Ms. Greene said children and teens programs make up the bulk of it. Mr.
316 Abare asked if they have to be Pelham residents. Ms. Green replied, no.

317
318 Ms. Bressette said she saw the Library Assistant position was open. Ms. Greene said this position was filled on August
319 9th, 2023.

320
321 Mr. Smith referenced lines 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, and 32 to show a slight decrease, and all the other salaries are showing
322 an increase. Ms. Green explained that they remade the entire library schedule. She said the schedule did not suit their
323 needs any longer. She said with the finished renovations they needed to staff the teen desk. She said they moved
324 hours around due to turnover with people retiring and/or looking for full-time work. She said when they had those
325 openings, they were able to maneuver hours leaving some of these positions with more hours and some with less.

326
327 Ms. Bressette asked if the Library was open every day. Ms. Greene replied yes.

328
329
330 **HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT**

331 Mr. Jim Hoffman introduced himself as the Highway Director.

332
333 Ms. Bressette read the budget of \$2,150,070, a budget decrease of 4.6% after Selectmen made cuts.

334

335 Mr. Hoffman said salaries are lower because they have a lot of new people, but they are going for a new contract this
336 year.

337
338 Mr. Hoffman said supplies had an increase and the biggest part was the salt at \$10,500. He said after the Selectmen
339 meeting the cost went down. Ms. Bressette asked if they used most of it last year. He said yes, but because the pricing
340 went down, he level-funded it.

341
342 Mr. Hoffman said the telephone went up by \$45/month because they added a router.

343
344 Mr. Hoffman said the gas and oil they evaluated from last year and averaged it out which was less money, but will still
345 have to be figured out for the total cost.

346
347 Mr. Hoffman said the repairs and projects went down because last year they had the Bush Hill culvert put in for a
348 repair and they won't be asking for that this year so that has gone down.

349
350 Mr. Hoffman said rentals have gone up because they took a look at all the trucks they were using, and some trucks
351 were not accounted for in the way they were previously accounted for. He said all of those have been accounted for
352 and averaged everything out from last year.

353
354 Mr. Hoffman said the expenses went down \$3,000. They took out the highway floor garage maintenance because they
355 could handle it themselves.

356
357 Mr. Hoffman said he added \$10,000 under the specials for paving; the cost of paving goes up every year. Ms. Bressette
358 said she doesn't think it had been increased in years.

359
360 Mr. Hoffman said the truck that they took out was bought by block grant money.

361
362 Ms. Ryan asked Mr. Hoffman to explain the increase in the contracted snowplows and sanders. Mr. Hoffman said each
363 contractor that comes in, depending on the vehicle that they have, all have different rates. Mr. Hoffman said with every
364 storm, the trucks change. Mr. Hoffman said the trucks get switched around and this was the average. Ms. Bressette
365 confirmed with Mr. Hoffman that this number is more actual than what has been used in the past. Mr. Hoffman said
366 they are strictly paid by the hour. Mr. Hoffman said although they didn't have a lot of snow, they had a lot of storms
367 which are more expensive because they have to continually treat the roads. Ms. Bressette asked how they track the
368 hours. Mr. Hoffman said he makes a list, the foreman has the list, they call the contractors in, they are broken into
369 groups by company, and they write down their time in, time out, and how much salt is used.

370
371
372 **NEW BUSINESS**

373 Ms. Bressette announced that the next meeting is September 21, 2023, at 6:30 PM.

374 Ms. Bressette said the Senior Center has been moved to the September 28th, 2023 Budget Committee meeting.

375
376
377 **ADJOURNMENT**

378
379 **MOTION:** (Smith/Sherman) To adjourn the meeting.

380 **VOTE:** (8-0-0) The motion passed.

381
382 The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:48 PM.

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383

384 Respectively Submitted,

385 Heidi Zagorski

386 Recording Secretary