

**TOWN OF HOLDERNESS
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET COMMITTEE
WORK SESSION MINUTES
December 6, 2023**

Select Board Members Present: Vice Chair, Woodie Laverack and Kelly Schwaner.

Budget Committee Members Present: Chair, Dayna Titus, Kristen Fuller, Kim Beardwood Smith and Morgan Stepp

Others Present: Town Administrator, Michael Capone, Police Chief, Erik DiFilippe, Fire Chief, Jeremy Bonan, Fire Warden, Earl Hansen, Highway Supervisor, Kevin Coburn, Transfer Station Supervisor, Scott Davis, Recreation Director, Wendy Werner, Recreation Board Member, George Sutcliffe, Recreation Board Member Mary Anna Swanson, Recreation Board Chair, Tom Stepp, Recreation Board Member Heidi Emmons, Library Director, Adam Di Filippe, Library Trustee Chair, Alexis Desloge and Library Trustee, Lisa Lovett.

Call to Order: Ms. Titus called the meeting to order at 8:15AM.

The Town Administrator thanked those present for their participation in the process and provided a brief overview of the budget schedule noting that six department heads would be presenting their budgets this morning.

Police Department: Chief Erik DiFilippe went through the Police Department budget with those present. He reviewed the wage recommendations for the current staff and provided some detailed background on the proposed increases. He also discussed some of the other plans for the increased use of equipment and technology to help the Police Department do more with the same staffing. In addition, he reviewed some of the areas of the budget that were increasing along with explanations for those increases and took questions from those present.

Chief DiFilippe also discussed a patrol and equipment grant he would be putting on the warrant for town meeting and provided some background on a planned SUV cruiser purchase. He further explained his overall plan for cruiser replacements going forward.

The Board and Committee thanked Chief DiFilippe for his presentation.

Fire Department: Chief Jeremy Bonan reviewed his budget with those present making note of increases to department expense over previous years. He mentioned the pay for Fire Department details would be a separate budget line to more accurately track that activity. The three largest expenses were all related to getting the department caught up with clothing, equipment and vehicle maintenance. Chief Bonan and department members have been working on schedules for these purchases in an effort to level funding on these lines. Chief Bonan took questions from the Board and Committee.

Chief Bonan also provided some background on the large increase proposed by the Town of Plymouth for their ambulance contract. He noted that, while the increase was unexpectedly large, there were no other cost-effective options currently available to the Town. He had been approached by Chief Heath in Ashland about a shared service, but in the short term, there were too many unknowns and too little time

for it to be a viable option. He did not rule out future consideration of this option. The inhouse option would be prohibitively expensive and agreements with private providers, if one could be found, would not be cost effective.

The Board and Committee thanked Chief Bonan for his presentation.

Highway Department: Highway Supervisor, Kevin Coburn noted that the Department was now fully staffed and working well together. He thanked the Board and the Budget Committee for working over the last couple of years to bring the wage ranges to a competitive level for all positions. Kevin reviewed his budget with those present commenting on any increases to this year's numbers. He also reviewed his paving and road reconstruction plans through 2027-2028 to provide a more complete picture of the planned improvements and took questions from those present.

Kevin also reviewed his capital equipment needs providing some background on the F550 or equivalent truck he hopes to replace in this budget cycle. Kevin also mentioned that we need to be thinking about replacing the 1994 Grader as it is getting difficult to maintain due to lack of available parts. The grader was originally scheduled to be replaced in 2019, but the purchase was deferred due to other competing equipment needs. He has looked at options for replacement including the purchase of a used grader with low hours on it. We will need to find a way to work the purchase into the capital equipment schedule.

The Board and Committee thanked Kevin for his presentation

Sanitation/Transfer Station: Scott Davis, Transfer Station Supervisor, reviewed his budget with those present. He wanted to increase the overtime line to help cover any extra hours needed by employees when the Station gets busy.

Scott reviewed some of the recycling activities including how he deals with tires and televisions. Scott and the Town Administrator also provided some background regarding the current Solid Waste contract which expires in June of 2025. They reviewed some of the challenges faced in dealing with solid waste disposal and ideas they have to help control costs and took questions.

The Board and Committee thanked Scott for his presentation.

Recreation and Beach: Wendy Werner, Recreation Director, was present along with Recreation Board Chair, Tom Stepp and Recreation Board members Mary Anna Swanson, Heidi Emmons and George Sutcliffe. Wendy reviewed her recreation budget first and mentioned that the bulk of the overall increase was associated with wages for employees. There is a planned increase in the transportation line associated with an increase in the number of field trips planned for the summer program.

Wendy also provided some background on the Recreation revolving fund and reviewed the anticipated revenue for both that fund and the recreation department in general.

Wendy then briefly reviewed the Beach budget and noted there was a minimal increase overall including additional wages for employees an addition to the professional services line to cover tree removal and an increased expense for portable toilets.

The Board and Committee thanked Wendy for her presentation.

Library: Adam DiFilippe, Library Director, was present along with Library Trustee Chair, Alexis Desloge and Library Trustee, Lisa Lovett. Adam reviewed his budget noting the bulk of the increases were related to employee compensation for both full and part time employees. He also commented that the increase in the professional services line was attributed to an increase in expense for cleaning the library on a weekly basis. The Town administrator noted that cleaning expenses were up across the board and schedules had been adjusted to help keep the expense down.

In response to questions regarding the continued increase in employee wages, Library Trustee Chair, Alexis Desloge, distributed copies of a review, done by the Trustees, comparing wages and benefits offered by other area libraires in comparison to the Holderness Free Library and included a suggested range of compensation for the four library positions. The Town Administrator asked Ms. Desloge if she could send a soft copy of the materials to him so he can distribute it to other Budget Committee and Board members. Those present were of the opinion they would need more time to review the material they had just received. The Town Administrator noted that there may be other questions for Adam and the Trustees after the material had been reviewed and considered in more detail.

The Board and Committee thanked Adam and the trustees for attending.

The Town Administrator mentioned that the next meeting would be on Monday, December 11th beginning at 5:30 here in the Town Office meeting room. He will review the balance of the Town Budget, discuss capital purchases and look at revenues.

The Town Administrator also thanked the Board and Committee members for making time in their schedules to accommodate the budget presentations during Department working hours. The Department Heads appreciated their support.

There being no further business to come before the Committee and the Board, the meeting, it was adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael R. Capone
Town Administrator