

**TOWN OF HOLDERNESS
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET COMMITTEE
WORK SESSION MINUTES
December 27, 2022**

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

Budget Committee Members Present: Chair, Dayna Titus, Kevin Barrett, Bennett Evans and Morgan Stepp

Others Present: Town Administrator, Michael Capone, Fire Chief, Jeremy Bonan, Library Director, Adam Di Filippo, Library Trustees Chair, Andrew Herring.

Call to Order: Ms. Titus called the meeting to order at 5:31PM.

Library: Library Trustees Chair, Andrew Herring and Library Director, Adam DiFilippe, were present to take follow up questions from the Committee and the Board regarding the Library budget. Mr. Barrett, Ms. Schwaner and other members of the Committee asked for some background on how the increases for some of the positions were determined. Mr. Herring explained that a review of the State Library wages report indicated that the Assistant Director/Children's Librarian position for similar communities was funded at a rate of \$18.70 and up. The Trustees felt that \$20.00 hour was a fair wage for the experience and talent the current employee brings to the position. Other wage increases were more in line with cost of living. Mr. Barrett questioned why a smaller wage increase was not incorporated as part of last year's budget and would some consideration be given to that in the future as library wages have increased at a higher-than-average rate over the past few years. Mr. Herring commented that he hoped wages would stabilize in the coming years.

Ms. Schwaner inquired about increase in patronage and circulation and the impact of those numbers on staffing. Mr. Herring commented that patronage has increased by over 34% and there had been an increase in both circulation in programming as well. Having more employee hours makes it possible to accommodate the increased demand.

There was a fair amount of discussion regarding professional development and the increase in that budget line. Mr. Herring noted that as part of the Libraires employee retention plan was to partially fund educational opportunities for the staff, in particular, the Library Director. Mr. Herring noted that the Friends of the Library had plans to supplement that line in an effort to attract and keep library employees. Mr. Brickley mentioned that the Select Board had discussed creating a line in the operating budget that would provide educational opportunities for all employees that would be based on yet to be developed criteria. The Town Administrator noted that he had placed \$10,000 in the benefits section of the operating budget to support educational advancement and planned to discuss it later in the meeting when he reviews the balance of the budget.

The Board and Committee thanked Mr. Herring and Mr. Difilippe for attending the meeting.

Fire Department: Chief Jeremy Bonan was present to revisit the matter of funding for per diem firefighters to staff the department on a limited basis. He mentioned that he had reviewed the matter with the Select Board and felt that budgeting an initial amount of \$20,000 would provide coverage during the busy period in Town between May and October. This would provide an opportunity to see if adequate staffing could be provided without committing to a full time position.

Mr. Barrett asked if there were other incentives that could be provided for the call firefighters that might help the department to meet staffing needs. Chief Bonan noted that increasing the wages provided had not achieved the desired result in the past year so this was a logical next step. Based on his conversations with other Fire professionals an hourly rate of \$25.00 would be a good starting point. Mr. Barrett asked if there were any additional expenses contemplated. Chief Bonan noted that there might be a need to provide additional gear if the Firefighters were not allowed to bring their own from their current departments. He estimated the additional expense to be roughly three thousand dollars. The Town Administrator mentioned that there may be some additional impact on payroll taxes. Ms. Schwaner noted that staffing was a universal issue in all call departments, not just in Holderness and this approach would be a good first step.

The Chief also mentioned that he had checked with the vendor who had supplied a quote for the fire engine and there presently were not options to make a partial payment on the truck to lock in the price. He did note that there was a pretty good chance that the price would not increase. He also mentioned that he expected a second quote to come in shortly.

The Board and Committee thanked Chief Bonan for attending the meeting.

Operating Budget, Revenues and Capital Funding: There was considerable discussion regarding how best to fund future purchases. The pros and cons of borrowing versus funding through Capital Reserves were considered. Mr. Barrett provided some background on possible options for borrowing. While the members of the Select Board present agreed that borrowing was one option to be considered, historically purchasing capital items through the use of capital reserves has been preferred by the community.

The Town Administrator reviewed the Towns revenue history as the basis for providing revenue estimates for this budget cycle. He also reviewed the balance of the operating budget and the capital purchases planned for FY 23-24 and took questions from the Board and the Committee.

Approval of the draft minutes of December 7 and December 12 Joint Meetings: Ms. Schwaner made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 7th and December 12th meetings as written. Mr. Barrett provided a second. There being no further discussion, the Board and Committee voted 7-0 in favor of the motion.

Other Business: The Town Administrator mentioned that the Board will review and approve their proposed budget at their meeting on January 3rd. Once that is completed a copy will be forwarded to all of the Budget Committee members for their review and discussion at a meeting to be schedule in January. The objective of that meeting will be to decide to make changes to the Select Board budget or adopt that budget as the one that will go to the Budget Hearing on February 8, 2023.

There being no further business to come before the meeting Mr. Brickley made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Stepp provided a second. There being no further discussion the Committee and the Board voted 7-0 in favor 7:48 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael R. Capone
Town Administrator