

**TOWN OF HOLDERNESS
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET COMMITTEE
WORK SESSION MINUTES
December 9, 2020**

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

Budget Committee Members Present: Chair, Ken Evans, Bob Maloney, Kevin Barrett, Todd Elgin and Dayna Titus

Others Present: Town Administrator, Michael Capone, Police Chief, Erik DiFilippe, Fire Chief, Eleanor Mardin, Road Agent, Kevin Coburn, Recreation Director, Wendy Werner, Recreation Board Members, Tom Stepp, Jenny Evans, George Sutcliffe and Library Director, Adam Di Filippe.

Call to Order: Mr. Evans called the meeting to order at 8:03AM. Mr. Evans took a few minutes to review the budget process and schedule with those present noting while it was being done virtually this year, the objective still remained the same. The budget package had been organized in the order it was to be presented to make it a little easier to follow.

He then asked the Town Administrator to provide a brief overview of the 2021-2022 Budget. The Town Administrator explained how the budget package was arranged and went through the summary sections taking questions from those present.

There was discussion with regard to the allowance for % wage increase for employees. The Select Board had voted to recommend a limit of 2.75% for this fiscal budget. Mr. Barrett asked if the Board had considered bonuses in lieu of % increases to minimize the budget impact. Ms. White explained the process by which the Board reviews and considers wage increases.

In discussing the information provided with regard to Fund Balance, Mr. Evans commented on the extent to which the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) Policy and the Towns adopted policy overlap and suggested that the DRA policy be followed.

Police Department: The Town Administrator introduced Chief Erik Di Filippe, noting that he was promoted to Chief of the Department on September 1, 2020 after working his way up the ranks during his more than fifteen years of service to the residents of Holderness.

Chief Di Filippe went through the changes to the Budget and explained that the recommendations with regard to wage increases were to bring the existing positions into line with the going wage for each of those positions. Other wage related categories also reflect this change. The Chief also noted that he had just been informed of an increase in the cost of the dispatch service provided by the Plymouth PD.

Mr. Barrett asked how the dispatch fees were determined. The Chief explained that it was mostly based on call volume.

Mr. Elgin asked about the elimination of the Prosecutor Line. Chief Di Filippo mentioned that given Lt. Gerior's extensive experience in handling prosecutorial work while in Plymouth he was going to have the Department handle their own prosecutions effective July 1, 2021.

Chief Di Filippo also discussed the planned replacement of the F-150 pick up in 2021. He estimated the expense to be in the vicinity of \$45,000. The funding would come from the capital reserve account and the Police Revolving Fund.

Mr. Evans asked if the Chief had any particular issues or worries. Chief DiFilippo noted that the increase in population created by the pandemic and planned development will increase demand on services. He also noted that the present fines for violating parking restrictions near the Rattlesnake trailhead did not appear to be much of a deterrent and they may have to be increased.

The Board and Committee thanked the Chief for his presentation.

Fire Department: Chief Mardin reviewed the Fire Department budget noting that the only increases were to the dispatch line and vehicle repairs to allow for the replacement of tires on Engine 5.

There was discussion among those present with regard to how to properly budget for filling the vacancy at the end of calendar year 2021 when Chief Mardin plans to retire. As this information has just been recently disclosed it is still under review and may be taken up later in the budget discussions. The Town Administrator noted that in addition to wage considerations, benefits and retirement expense, may need to be considered, depending on how the position is structured.

When asked, Chief Mardin commented that given the increase in population and development, the position could be full time assuming many of the current tasks associated with the position remain the same.

Chief Mardin also reviewed the capital needs of the Department. She noted the Fire Officers had recently discussed moving the Rescue Truck up in the replacement rotation and moving Engine 4 back a couple of years. The Chief is going to explore options for obtaining a grant to purchase a rescue truck. It would require a five percent match that could come from the Fire Department vehicle line.

The Chief also mentioned that she was going to pursue a grant to replace radios in the Department vehicles as most of them are no longer supported by the manufacturer.

Mr. Elgin inquired about call firefighter staffing levels. Chief Mardin mentioned that she has seen a decrease in participation within the department as many of the call firefighters do not have jobs in Town and are not able to make calls during the day. This is a region wide trend.

Mr. Maloney asked if the local tech schools could provide interns to fill the positions. The Chief noted that this is a possibility, but departments have not had great success with it to date. Another option Towns have explored is to have per diem firefighters at the station, but, once again, trying to locate and employ them has been a challenge.

The Board and Committee thanked the Chief for her presentation.

Highway Department: Road Agent, Kevin Coburn was present to review his budget. He noted modest increases to the professional services, general supplies and clothing lines due to increases in the costs for these services.

He also planned to take some of the department savings on mowing and increase the funding for the Sand and Gravel line as these costs have increased as well.

Mr. Barrett inquired about the dust control expense and Kevin explained the process by which dust control is managed on our roads.

Kevin also reviewed his plans for road reconstruction projects on a portion of Shepard Hill Road and Marsden Road.

Mr. Maloney asked if there were plans to work on the rest of Shepard Hill. Kevin replied that they were scheduled for another time.

The Board and Committee thanked Kevin for his presentation.

Sanitation: Given that Scott was working at the Transfer station and not able to attend in person, the Town Administrator presented the Sanitation (Transfer Station) budget. He made note of the three planned increases for the 2021-2022 budget cycle. The first being that we will have a full year of expenses under the new solid waste disposal agreement resulting in an increase of just over \$6,900. The second would be an increase to the hazardous waste line to accommodate an increase in disposal frequency due to volume. The other increase would be for water testing at the monitoring sites throughout the Station. New testing for PFAS chemicals required by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) will have to be incorporated into our next monitoring agreement resulting in an anticipated increase of \$1175.

Mr. Evans noted that there have been no expenditures from the Transfer Station Equipment Capital Reserves and wondered if some of the equipment might need replacing in the future. The Town Administrator noted there have been some discussions with regard to equipment and depending on how some of the recycling programs proceed, there will be need of some new equipment. He will also follow up with Scott to determine any other anticipated needs.

Mr. Barrett commented that he noticed that the fees we receive for disposal of construction and demolition material do not offset the expense. He asked why this matter had not been addressed. The Town Administrator mentioned that this had been reviewed and an increase in fees was put in place last year. It was to be reviewed again as time and resources permit and it was anticipated that there will be increases to those fees in the future.

Recreation and Town Beach: Wendy Werner, Recreation Director, was present along with Board members, Jenny Evans, Tom Stepp and, George Sutcliffe, to review the Recreation and Town Beach Budgets. Wendy noted that there were only some minor increases in supplies that were offset by decreases in other areas of the Recreation Budget. She also reviewed the program and Revolving Fund revenue.

The Recreation Board had supplied correspondence in support of a request that the Recreation Director position receive a three percent wage increase.

Wendy made note of the only significant increase in the Town Beach budget which would be in the wage line. She wanted to allow for an increase for staff and also to provide more hours should good weather allow for the beach to be open more days in the Summer.

There were no questions for either Wendy or the Recreation Board Members. The Budget Committee and Select Board thanked Wendy and the Recreation Board, not only for their presentation, but for their work during this trying year.

Library: Adam Di Filipppe was present to review the Library budget. Other than employee related expenses, the only anticipated increase to the budget would be an allowance for additional cleaning services.

Adam took questions from the Committee and the Board with regard to Library activity and the challenges imposed by the pandemic.

The Committee and the Board thanked Adam for his presentation.

Having reached the end of the planned presentations, Mr. Evans reviewed the balance of the meeting schedule and noted that there were two more meetings planned, one on December 14th and one on December 28th. He was going to contact Carolyn Mello, Chair of the HCS School Board to see which meeting she would attend. The additional Town budget materials could be presented at the other meeting.

Mr. Evans also mentioned that he would make the HCS budget materials he receives from Ms. Mello available to the Select Board and Budget Committee members.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was adjourned at 10:43 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael R. Capone
Town Administrator