

**TOWN OF HOLDERNESS
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET COMMITTEE
WORK SESSION MINUTES
December 17, 2021**

Select Board Members Present: Chair, Jill White, Sam Brickley 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, Transfer Station Supervisor, Scott Davis, Recreation Director, Wendy Werner, and Library Director, Adam Di Filippe.

Call to Order: Mr. Evans called the meeting to order at 10:01AM. Mr. Evans explained the format for this morning's meeting.

Police Department: Chief Erik DiFilippe went through the Police Department budget with those present. He reviewed the wage recommendations for the current staff and reviewed his request to add an additional officer to the Department. The Chief cited a number of statistics in support of his request. Among them were the overall increase in call volume particularly during the 2AM to 7AM "on call" shift. The addition of another officer would allow for 24/7 coverage for three days during the week and provide better continuity of coverage overall. Chief DiFilippe noted that Holderness had the third largest call volume among area departments, but had one less officer on staff than the smallest department in the area. This is putting a strain on the other officers and could impact overall service to the community. He noted that the increase in visitors to the area and the influx of more permanent residents has extended the "busy" season to almost the entire year. The other fact that creates a challenge is the change in the types of calls requiring follow up beyond the initial action of the officer. He provided the example of a simple vehicle unlock versus a domestic violence event and the time necessary to resolve each issue.

Chief DiFilippe went through the other increases to the budget the largest of which was to his computer services and support line. This increase was related to the lease/purchase of body cameras to be worn by the officers.

Mr. Barrett inquired as to the impact of the portable tablets the officers were now using in their vehicles. Chief DiFilippe replied that they have had a positive impact on the efficiency and safety of the officers and were well worth the investment.

The Chief also mentioned that there have been delays in taking delivery of vehicles. The Truck that was approved for purchase at the March 2021 Town Meeting has still not been delivered. He is still not certain when it will arrive. The delay may also impact delivery of the SUV that is in the schedule for the March 2022 Town Meeting. This creates additional challenges for the budget in that maintenance costs are exceeded because we have to keep older vehicles on the road longer.

The Board and Committee thanked Chief DiFilippe for his presentation.

Fire Department: Chief Eleanor Mardin was present for her final budget presentation. She mentioned the Chief Jeremy Bonan will be sworn in on Monday, December 20th. He has been on board since December 6th and has been working with Chief Mardin to get up to speed on the Department. Chief Bonan was a Captain on the Holderness Department and most recently was Deputy Chief on the Plymouth Fire Department.

Chief Mardin mentioned that the new Chief will be reviewing capital expenses within the Department. While there are no capital purchases planned for this year, engine 4 is scheduled for replacement in the 23-24 budget cycle. She mentioned that Chief Bonan will be reviewing the design of the vehicle with other Department members. While the original target number for capital planning purposes was \$500,000, the Chief noted that an area department recently purchased a new engine at a cost of around \$700,000. The final cost for the vehicle for Holderness will be determined by its final design. Chief Mardin also mentioned that Chief Bonan will be looking at options to possibly consolidate equipment on other vehicles to eliminate the need to replace the Rescue vehicle in the 26/27 budget cycle.

Chief Mardin mentioned that there appear to be shortages of parts and other materials from suppliers that might impact vehicle operations and maintenance. This will be monitored over the coming months.

The Board and Committee thanked the Chief for her presentation and for her years of service to Holderness.

Highway Department: Road Agent, Kevin Coburn reviewed his operating budget noting that the largest increase would be his wage line which included a 3% increase for all employees. There was a discussion among those present regarding wages and the competitive pressures from the private sector. It was noted that, total compensation needs to be considered when making a comparison. While the private sector might be able to offer a higher wage, they are usually lacking in other benefits which keeps highway departments competitive. Ms. White asked Kevin if he felt the hourly rates paid to employees were sufficient and if not suggested that this would be the time to discuss possible increase. Kevin felt the wages were adequate.

Kevin also mentioned that he was going to discontinue the uniform service due to ever increasing costs. The department was going to do a one-time purchase of their uniforms from our current provider and then have an allowance in the budget to purchase new items as necessary.

Kevin also reviewed his planned road reconstruction and paving projects for next summer. Included are projects on Shepard Hill, Hardhack, Beede and Seven Pines Roads. There was discussion among those present regarding an increase to the amount of money set aside in capital reserves each year from \$150,000 to \$200,000. This will be discussed further as part of the capital outlay discussion at the meeting on December 27th.

There was some discussion among those present regarding the impact of adding any new Town roads. Kevin mentioned that the addition of any new roads would require additional people and equipment as the Department is maxxed out in terms of what they can handle safely and effectively. Mr. Brickley commented that winter plowing would be of particular concern. There was additional discussion regarding other potential options to be considered. Mr. Elgin asked about the availability of subcontractors who might be able to support the Highway Department on an as needed basis. Kevin mentioned that subcontractors could be an option, but is would need to be further explored.

Kevin reviewed his capital equipment needs noting that he will be purchasing an F350 pick up as part of the planned purchase. He has also discussed the purchase of a loader with the Select Board. Ms. White mentioned that this matter was taken up with the Board and will be given further consideration.

The Board and Committee thanked Kevin for his presentation.

Sanitation: Scott Davis, Transfer Station Supervisor, reviewed the Sanitation (Transfer Station) budget with the Board and Committee. The increase in the wage line included a 3% increase for employees and a wage adjustment for one employee. The only other increase was an adjustment to the Solid Waste line to cover the increase built in to the existing agreement.

Mr. Barrett asked about the length of the agreement. The Town Administrator mentioned that they were in the second year of an agreement that will end in June of 2025. Some of the statistics regarding the yearly volumes of Solid Waste, Construction and Demolition material and recycling for the past five years were reviewed with the Board and Committee. There was some discussion regarding possible options for handling glass separately with the pros and cons being detailed by Scott and the Town Administrator.

Scott also discussed some possible future changes to the roofline over the structure that covers the roll offs. A possible extension of the roofline to provide more coverage during inclement weather is being considered.

The Board and Committee thanked Scott for his presentation.

Recreation and Town Beach: Wendy Werner, Recreation Director, reviewed the Recreation and Town Beach Budgets. The increase to her hourly rate was submitted by the Recreation Board in a letter to the Budget Committee and Select Board. Wendy mentioned that the increases in employee wages were to stay competitive with the labor market and allow for some possible extra hours for both training and coverage.

The only other increase of note was funding for the possible renewal of the Summer Concert series. There was some discussion regarding programming expenses and logistics. Wendy mentioned that there would be outreach for private sponsorship as well.

Wendy also reviewed the revenue associated with the many programs offered through the recreation department. Mr. Barrett asked if the SummerEscape program was self-supporting. Wendy mentioned that it was almost fully supported by the fee charged. Wendy also reviewed the Recreation Revolving fund and explained how these revenues are utilized within the recreation budget.

The Committee and the Board thanked Wendy for her presentation.

Library: Adam DiFilippe, Library Director, reviewed his budget and explained that the increase in the regular positions line reflects the proposed change of the Children's Librarian from part time to full time. The change would impact, not only the wage line, but also health and dental benefits as well as retirement contributions. Mr. Evans asked about the increase to the health insurance line. The Town Administrator explained that the line reflected a single person plan and an "opt out" for a two-person plan. This option, recently approved by the Select Board, would provide an annual payout of \$5,000 to

an employee who opts out of insurance coverage. The employee would have to provide proof of insurance coverage through another source. The use of this option has the potential to lower the Town's overall Health Insurance expenses.

Adam reviewed some of the data in support of the change to the position. Those present asked that he submit this information to all of the Board and Committee members so that it could be further reviewed and considered.

Adam also reviewed the increase to the technology line noting that it would be related to the cost of upgrading the Spectrum service beyond what is presently provided for free. This would allow for faster and better internet connections for those accessing and/or using library computers.

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 was one more meeting planned for December 27 at which time the Town Administrator will review the balance of the operating budget and discuss revenues and capital expenses.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was adjourned at 12:50 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael R. Capone
Town Administrator