

**Town of Milton**  
**Board of Selectmen Meeting Agenda**  
**Joint Budget Committee – BOS Meeting**  
**November 16, 2023**

**ATTENDEES:**

**Board of Selectman Committee:** Humphrey Williams (Chair), Claudine Burnham, Andy Rawson

**Budget Committee:** Laura Turgeon (Chair), Kimberly Wischniewski, Bob Carrier, Peg Hurd, Renata Gamache, Stephanie Mills, Claudine Burnham, Mike Beaulieu

**Staff:** Karen Brown- Recreation, Pat Smith- Public Works, Chief Richard Krauss- Police Department, Brian Leclerc – Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Ann Nute- Milton Free Public Library, Grace Wing- Director, Milton Free Public Library, Mackenzie Campbell- Treasurer

Board of Selectman: The BOS continued in session from their 5:30 PM meeting start.

Budget Committee: Ms. Turgeon, Chair, led the roll call of members to determine if a quorum was present. Laura Turgeon (Chair), Kimberly Wischniewski, Bob Carrier, Peg Hurd, Renata Gamache, Stephanie Mills, Claudine Burnham, Mike Beaulieu. A quorum was present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

BOS Chair, Humphrey Williams thanked everyone for their hard work; this has been a major effort by all. He said there are still a few departments to be updated. The BOS has reviewed the budget and made possible changes to decrease the overall budget. The Budget Committee will do the same at their upcoming meeting. The main focus is on changes from the default.

1. **Public Works – Pat Smith:** There are a few changes.

Contracted Services: The monthly rental price for the Winding Road temporary bridge was added (\$1,500/month).

Operating Supplies: Mr. Smith's proposed budget for this line is \$71,000. Mr. Williams said the BOS proposed decreasing this to \$60,000. Mr. Smith said last year he tried to meet the 2% cap and removed items from that line using the Road Construction fund. However, that fund has been depleted and he has had to add those items back into this line. Mr. Williams asked if the amount of gravel purchased could be lowered. Mr. Smith said the winter sand purchase could be decreased by \$5,0000 although the cost of sand did increase. Ms. Turgeon asked if this year's significant road damage caused by major storms meant buying additional gravel and other supplies. According to Mr. Smith, there **were** additional materials like gravel, etc. which came out of Road Construction. This also included excavator rental and contractor services.

Mr. Williams said the BOS will vote to accept the \$9,300 grant for road construction at their next meeting. This could be used toward sand purchase. After discussion, the Operating Supplies budget was set at \$62,000.

Proposed 2024 Highway Department budget - \$830,268 (1.84% overall increase)

**2. Government Buildings – Pat Smith:**

Proposed 2024 Government Buildings budget - \$212,321 which is lower than the default (\$218,267).

**3. Solid Waste – Pat Smith:**

The Proposed 2024 Solid Waste budget of \$206,645 is lower than the default of \$225,084. Mr. Smith said this is because in 2024 the highest-paid person will retire causing a decrease of 8.19% in full-time salary (based on experience level).

Ms. Turgeon asked about the continuation of recycling, as some neighboring towns no longer do it. Mr. Smith said although other towns are currently not recycling, he said it's important to help keep recyclables out of the landfill, which according to DES will be filled by 2034. The goal is to keep this landfill open for as long as possible to keep future costs down.

**4. Recreation, Karen Brown:**

There were no suggested changes from BOS. It was noted the PT Salary is split with half coming from the beach revenues.

**5. Supervisors of the Checklist, Karen Brown:**

Proposed 2024 Budget: \$5,886. It was noted there will be four elections in 2024.

**6. Library, Ann Nute:**

Ms. Nute will attend the November 28<sup>th</sup> Budget Committee meeting to further discuss their budget. She reported there are many increases from most of their contracted services.

**7. Town Clerk / Tax Collector, Brian Leclerc:**

Postage – Proposed budget \$9,500 (default \$8,000). BOS suggested an increase to \$8,500. Postage rates will increase.

Professional Services – there will be four elections in 2024. Mr. Leclerc said the machines will not be serviceable after the upcoming election cycle. New machines will have to be purchased for the following year. Mr. Williams said this would need to be a Warrant Article for purchase. Previously the town purchased one and the school purchased the second machine.

**8. Treasurer, Mackenzie Campbell:**

Salary Elected: Proposed increase to \$7,200. Mr. Campbell said as he does not submit any of his travel expenses, he proposed taking the money from the travel/mileage line to increase the TR Salary Elected line. He said he has never previously asked for any increase in salary.

Ms. Turgeon said this would be a 6.5% increase. In the step plan, this would be a step 4 increase, instead of a normal 2 step. Ms. Turgeon said she does not mind adding travel in as he should be compensated for any travel expenses. Ms. Burnham expressed a concern about the step plan as this is a significant increase in salary. If there are travel expenses, they should be applied to the travel/mileage line and Mr. Campbell should track those expenses. Mr. Williams said if there is an increase to one elected official's salary, there are other elected positions that would not receive an increase. Mr. Campbell said he is OK with not changing the salary line and he would donate

those travel costs to the town. He does feel an increase in the salary is deserved but would agree to keep it the same.

Ms. Turgeon said she does not like to have elected officials give themselves a raise through their budget. If they want a salary increase, that should be added to a Warrant Article to let the voters decide.

**9. Fire Department, Chief Nick Marique:**

Chief Krauss had previously discussed the budget with Chief Marique.

PT Salary: Instead of the full increase that Chief Marique originally presented, it's proposed to increase it over a three-year window. The Revolving account is projected to add \$188,000 in 2023; from that account, take out \$120,000 (the \$20,000 needed to purchase supplies needed to operate the ambulance will still be covered); the balance can then go back into the Revolving account, so the account does not continue to run down to a zero balance. This also means they would not touch the \$200,000 already earmarked from the Warrant Article. This will allow, over a three-year window, to get to that PT salary line number needed to run out of the general fund balance and not from the Revolving account. Doing this for the next 2-3 years most likely will allow the new ambulance to be paid off from the Revolving account, i.e. first year, \$90,000 from the Revolving account, second year \$60,000 from the Revolving account, etc. The entire projected \$188,000 in revenues will go back into the Revolving account each year. Already this year there is \$45,000 toward the ambulance. There is already the \$200,000 from the Warrant Article in the Revolving account. November is projected to be a good month for collections, along with December's collections. Being able to decrease this number significantly also means a savings in Social Security and Medicare.

Ms. Turgeon asked about other expenses Chief Marique previously noted he was taking from the Revolving account such as diesel – items that would be in the default. Has this been rectified? Chief Krauss said that was discussed as well. They decided not to move it into the budget this year due to the overall budget increases. That could happen by looking at contracted services and moving contracts into the general fund. They did try to stay as close to the default as possible. Ms. Turgeon said she remains nervous about utilizing the Revolving fund to pay down the salaries. Chief Krauss agreed but said they are trying to ensure they are earmarking what the revenue is. We are trying to spend significantly under to stay below the \$150,000 from coming out of the Revolving account.

Mr. Williams said BOS proposed cuts to the Duty Uniforms and Class A Uniforms lines along with a change in the Amazon Business account and Adobe Acrobat licenses. According to Chief Krauss, Chief Marique is OK with the reductions.

Ms. Turgeon said she is happy to see the proposed compromise with the PT Salary. Chief Krauss said they will not request a Warrant Article as long as they continue to focus on the proposed proceeding over a three-year window.

Ms. Gamache said based on the previous discussion concerning elected salaries, why is there a

change in the Salary Elected line? Mr. Williams said addressing only two of the elected positions which have been treated more as an employee than an elected position. He explained the Public Works Director, Town Clerk, and Fire Chief positions when originally put together, they were factored in as part of the employee pay plan. It was later explained by the town attorney, that they cannot be part of the employee step plan, but the plan can be used for guidance. These positions have been treated differently than the stipend positions. The Town Clerk's salary had previously been adjusted at the start of the year. Ms. Turgeon said this increase is over the 2%. Chief Krauss said for a long time, the Fire Chief was not on the correct step (Mr. Williams said he was between steps). This will be corrected over time and not all at once.

Ms. Wischnewski asked if this is considered a full-time position? Mr. Williams said it is a 24-hour/week position. It is an hourly rate based on 24 hours/week. The lawyer has said the positions are not part of the employee pay plan, but the pay plan can be used to determine position salaries.

Ms. Turgeon asked if the Fire Chief is working 24 hours each week. Mr. Rawson said while it's fair to ask the question, the Fire Chief should be here to answer the question directly. Chief Krauss said as an elected official, he can work any number of hours per week. If there is any concern or question about the number of worked hours, they should be directed to him. You cannot put a set number of hours on an elected official. Ms. Turgeon said if he is trying to follow the step plan like a town employee and get yearly increases, but as an elected official there are no requirements. Chief Krauss said if looking at the step plan, Chief Marique has been the Fire Chief for over ten years; if basing his salary on the step plan, he would be over the \$40 hourly rate. Currently, it's based around \$34/hour. He is coming in at the beginning of the step plan and not where he really should be. Mr. Williams said all salaried employees increases, what they are currently being paid will carry over to the end of June. Increases begin July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Ms. Gamache asked why is this position based on 24 hours/week, when he can really work any number each week? Mr. Williams said this started in 2014-2015 – Chief Marique was paid a stipend and for any hour worked. The BOS at that time decided to combine everything together based on the average number of hours worked/week (determined at 24 hours/week on average). This has become the standard ever since with continued approval by the voters.

#### **10. Police Department, Chief Richard Krauss:**

Chief Krauss reported a couple of changes from this original budget proposal. The Salary line has a slight increase due to a promotional increase. The Admin Assistant Salary line will decrease due to retirement with the expectation of hiring someone with less experience; this also impacts Social Security and Medicare which will decrease. Retirement line has a slight increase.

Chief Krauss said the Police Department is down one position and is expected to lose a second officer. In addition, the Administrative Assistant is retiring and will be replaced.

Regarding step plans, which should correct wages over a three-year period, there is an issue. He is currently at year two of corrections. The step plan was originally created in 2018 to go before the voters in 2019 and go into effect in 2020-2021. It did not pass until 2022 which means the step

plan is five years behind. A majority of NH communities have corrected their wages. Because Milton is five years behind, this means they are \$5-\$7/hour behind in starting pay than almost all other state Police Departments. He continues to do what he can to draw new hires to the town; however, it's time to look at the plan. He stressed that the BOS and Budget Committee needs to meet earlier in the budgeting process. Currently we are not able to compete with other communities and we will continue to have a hard time bringing in new officers.

Chief Krauss said it's important to find the balance of what the town and taxpayers can afford and what services are wanted and needed by the residents. The town needs Police, Fire, Public Works, and town employees. However, the cost for these positions is going through the roof. Ms. Turgeon agreed this all needs to be really looked at; people are going elsewhere because of higher pay. Chief Krauss said this is not just an issue for Milton; other communities across the state and country are experiencing the same problems.

**11. Town Administrator, Chris Jacobs:**

Contract Services line includes Consolidated (new phone/internet system), Amazon Prime Business account (10 users – Library could also be included in plan), NH Business Association, American Security (for new Town Hall – fire/alarm).

Mr. Williams said there are two contracts that need additional information: Back Bay and Civics CMS Virtual Town.

All street lighting should now be converted to LED lights – it's projected this line should decrease.

**12. Welfare:**

Chief Krauss said for most of the current year, expenses were out of control. This happened mainly after the federal government stopped their funding. This meant everything moved over to the town's responsibility. Chief Krauss is working with Diana (Welfare Clerk) who is doing a phenomenal job, and they are strictly sticking to policy; whatever the policy says in the handbook, that is how they are proceeding. All cases have been re-evaluated (focusing on the policy) with an increase in application suspensions due to individuals not following through on requirements. They have also focused additional attention on landlords and their policies and what they are doing. Over the past few weeks, this line has started to come down. Chief Krauss said there will always be Welfare costs and some lines within this area should be increased. He is hopeful next year they will keep this area in check.

Mr. Williams said looking at some of the cases, there were massive payouts to individuals that could have been reduced by 90%. All communities are trying to fight the rapid increase and are in the same boat. Ms. Turgeon is concerned the budget is set too low and this will be discussed by the Budget Committee. Chief Krauss said this is not simple to do. For most communities, the Welfare Clerk is a full-time position. Ms. Burnham said communities typically do not have full-time welfare but usually combine it with some other administrative position. She believes welfare will level off in the future. Chief Krauss agreed and said that is how Milton used to staff the position. Currently, the Welfare Clerk is considered part-time and is combined with the recreation assistant position. Mr. Jacobs said when the recreation assistant is focused on recreation during the

summer months, welfare generally falls to the Town Administrator's office. Moving forward, the town will need to focus on reworking the position. The salary line will be raised to match the default, along with rent/mortgage.

Mr. Williams reported to date, they have only received a handful of requests from outside appropriations.

### **13. Insurance & Benefits:**

Retirement line reflects a 27.58% increase (2023 default \$112,535 to 2024 default \$143,578). 2023 project expenditure is \$137,000. It is tracking higher because an incorrect number was used. Lines are calculated based on full-time employees (not including Police and Fire).

Default - \$143,578

Proposed - \$138,784

Health Insurance has increased from \$618,000 to \$710,485 (an increase of 14.97%). Chief Krauss said that based on 32 full-time employees in Milton, currently, 25 employees have insurance, with five who take the buy-out (and two open PD positions). They should continue to budget for 27 employees to get insurance. Chief Krauss said he does expect more employees to come off insurance and go onto their spouse's insurance plan. Employees will see a significant increase in both health and dental insurance. He recommended making the buy-out more appealing to have employees take the buy-out of \$3,650 and jump to their spouse's plan.

It was noted the only insurance that decreased is Workman's Comp.

### **14. Assessing:**

Mr. Williams said the major increase is the Contract Assessor to do the town's re-evaluation in 2024. They are hoping to offset part of this expense before the end of year to help reduce next year's budget. Chief Krauss said he is working with Finance to have all numbers up-to-date. Current projected expenses to be \$230,000-\$235,000. He wants to talk with the BOS about offsetting some of the biggest costs this year instead of next; this includes the Contract Assessor. This contract was signed two years ago and resigned this year; this means the town could pay toward the contract this year. He is looking to see what could be taken from the remainder of the general fund to help pay this down. If this is paid down, would take \$105,000 out of the budget which is a significant number.

Mr. Jacobs said last year the BOS discussed a \$33,000 encumbrance. Chief Krauss said upon review, that when the Board voted to encumber, they did not choose where it was coming from. That needed to be determined at the time of the vote. There is also not enough money currently in assessing to cover that amount.

Mr. Williams said there are a few ways to do encumbrances depending on the time of year. Mr. Jacobs said as a bottom line budget, it's possible to overspend in certain department areas and underspend in another area. He took exception saying lines are never identified on any expenditure. Mr. Williams said when January, 2023 came around the money was never

encumbered and now we cannot go back. Chief Krauss said he always says what line will be utilized when doing encumbrances. Ms. Burnham said going forward we will have to ensure there are revenue lines to encumber from. Chief Krauss said the lines will not always match up. You can over-expend a line but pull it from a different part of the budget which is underspend. Currently, revenue just goes into the general fund. Further discussions will happen. Mr. Williams said it is a big chunk.

15. **Planning:** This matched with the default. There is an increase for Strafford Regional Planning and the contract with Bruce Woodruff increased by 2%.
16. **Milton Conservation Commission:** There was a decrease from 2023 to 2024.
17. **ZBA:** Same budget as previous year.
18. **Planning:** Same budget as previous year.

Chief Krauss said there is no line in the budget for retirement. As an example if he was to retire at end of this year, the town would need to come up with \$30,000 to pay for his vacation, sick time, etc. If he waited until January 3<sup>rd</sup> (his anniversary), this would come out of next year's budget (with no line). This would impact hiring decisions as well.

If two or three people are also retiring at the same time, the town would need to find \$60-\$70,000 to cover. He said a line should be added to the budget to cover any potential instances of this. If no one retires and the money is unspent it would go back into the general fund.

Mr. Rawson said this is important to do to help set up the town to not fail. Mr. Williams said depending on what the town does with assessing, could use some of this to help set up this new line. It is really time to set this up.

Ms. Turgeon asked for information on the policy for vacation time and accrual time for elected and salaried employees. Chief Krauss said only 200 hours of vacation time can be carried over yearly. Because of longevity, he gets four weeks of vacation. If not used by the end of the year, he would lose anything over the 200 hours. That would be a discussion between him and the BOS if he is not able to use all his vacation time because of staffing issues. Sick time is capped at 360 hours. Every January employees start gaining sick time. Ms. Mills asked if this is all budgeted? However, carryover hours are not built into the budget. She recommends they discuss the policy for new employees. Mr. Jacobs said the retirement line should be added. It is a huge liability to the town. If this is done correctly it would be self-sustaining. This will continue to be discussed over the next few weeks.

#### **Meeting adjournment:**

**Board of Selectmen:** Mr. Williams motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Burnham seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**Budget Committee:** Ms. Turgeon motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Hurd seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55PM.

