

Town of Milton
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
July 25, 2023

ATTENDANCE:

Members: Laura Turgeon (Chair), Bob Carrier, Renata Gamache, Peg Hurd, Kim Wischnewski, Stephanie Mills, Claudine Burnham, Mike Beaulieu

Absent: Stephanie Mills

Public: Chief Nick Marique- Milton Fire Department, Mackenzie Campbell- SAU #64, Katherine Ayers

Laura Turgeon, Chair, opened the session at 6:00PM.

1.) Pledge of Allegiance: Laura Turgeon, Chair, led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2.) Roll Call:

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

3.) Discussion with Mackenzie Campbell, School Finance Manager, regarding school expenditures, revenue & grant reports: Ms. Turgeon thanked Mr. Campbell for attending the meeting to provide clarification regarding discrepancies in the school's expenditure reports.

Line-items needing additional information:

Salaries – ABA Tutors MES: This is ~\$16,000 over the budget. Mr. Campbell explained this is paying for outside Special Ed as part of a student's IEP.

Food Services contract: There has been an increase in price; the contract is going out for bid.

Guidance Support Health: This is over due to a former employee taking the health insurance buyout and hiring of a new person who has taken the health insurance.

Guidance Software: Ms. Turgeon noted there are a lot of software line-items in the budget. The Guidance software is linked to the college system to help students plan for their futures.

Personal Development for Middle & High School Teachers: Ms. Hurd explained in the upcoming year's budget will include \$400 for all teachers to take college credit towards their required personal development.

Ms. Turgeon requested a list of acronyms that are used in the reports to help minimize confusion.

Facilities: Ms. Turgeon indicated the operations/maintenance/building repairs are really over the budget and asked for additional information. Recent expenditures include a new boiler; ramp/railing/skirting to modular replaced; bleacher railings/stairs/under supports; two lifts required by ADA that were not approved by the Trustees and came out of the maintenance budget. Ms. Turgeon said the maintenance/building repairs are projected to be ~\$300,000 over budget. Mr. Campbell explained that it was all needed at this time. It was questioned if the replacement of the MES and Nute walk in cooler would come out of Maintenance Trust Fund and

not the over expended Building repair budget.

Mr. Beaulieu asked if summertime, when students are not in school, is the most important time to perform maintenance projects? If yes, does this mean the entire maintenance department is working during the summer months? Mr. Campbell said yes, summer is a good time to focus on school repairs/maintenance issues. Mr. Beaulieu asked why the Maintenance Director has not been there on many days when he should be there? Ms. Turgeon said the District is over on the facilities line-items, not salaries and discussing what days someone is working is not part of the discussion. Chief Marique requested a point of order as Mr. Campbell, as Finance Director, was at the meeting to discuss finances and not to discuss the Facilities Director.

Ms. Wischniewski said it would be helpful for the committee to have a list of prioritized projects. Ms. Turgeon agreed and said they would like to see a 'plan of attack' – Mr. Campbell said it sounded like they were asking for an asset management plan.

Mr. Carrier had questions about the grant report and clarifications on the meaning of allocation. Mr. Campbell explained allocated amounts on the report indicate the award amount from the government to the school.

Ms. Turgeon thanked Mr. Campbell for attending the meeting and answering questions to provide clarification.

4.) Discussion with Chief Marique regarding expenditures to date:

Ms. Turgeon thanked Chief Marique for attending the meeting to help provide clarification on expenditures of the Fire Department.

Ms. Turgeon said the overtime line is a huge issue; currently the line-item is 129.88% over the budget. She asked about hiring and if there is any way to slow the current spending? Chief Marique explained overtime is only for full-time employees; at the 50%-year mark, the Full-time line-item is 5% over. Adding a 3rd full-time position would help curb overtime rates, however they have not hired anyone yet. He also said most small towns have current openings and are experiencing the same hiring difficulties.

The part-time line is 129% over. Chief Marique said in 2022 the BOS decided all part-time salaries would be charged to the part-time line-item to get a clear picture of Fire Department expenditures, especially part-time salary. Ms. Burnham said it was understood at the time that the line-item would be over; however, it was important to have a true reporting of the line. In prior years, shift coverage had been charged to the revolving account. Chief Marique provided history on the evolution of part-time salary. He indicated that all the line items have continued to increase, while revenue has been leveling out. He said there is a lot of misunderstanding around all of this.

Regarding decreasing revenues, Ms. Turgeon said this is a big issue as people are not paying their ambulance service bills. It's also important to realize that if monies keep coming from the revolving fund, there will not be anything left to pay for what it's supposed to pay for, which is a new ambulance. She acknowledged the Fire Department has been struggling for a while. However,

it's a large amount of money they are spending which they do not have. Chief Marique said it's also important to realize that prior to PT working the 24-hour shifts, the full-time employees covered all of that. Last year, the Fire Department was \$200,000 over the budget; \$100,000 came from the General Fund \$100,000 came from the revolving fund, approved by the BOS.

Mr. Carrier said the town needs to prioritize the three top budgets – Fire, Police, Highway. Ms. Turgeon asked where in the Fire Department's budget can slow downs occur? Chief Marique – equipment purchases, training and uniforms, some maintenance – this will save ~\$26,000. Also, \$52,000 approved to hire a full-time employee starting July 1st is just sitting there until a hire occurs. It was asked if they could use that money to pay part-time until hiring takes place? The BOS could approve that change. Chief Marique still would like to hire a full-time. He said he has made the committee aware of these issues for several years. Ms. Turgeon stressed getting away from using the revolving fund for items like diesel for the ambulance which is charged to the revolving account while the diesel for engines is charged to the budget. She asked why all department budgets increased their fuel, electric and heat costs except for the Fire Department? Chief Marique said he has been knocked previously for any increase in the budgets. Ms. Turgeon said it's important to understand the true costs and asked Chief Marique when he is developing his budget to use the true cost. Chief Marique stressed the top priority will continue to be to provide service when someone calls 911.

Ms. Turgeon said a continuing issue is the increase in private payers or Medicare which is non-negotiable cost and pays less than regular insurance. With insurance carriers, we would typically receive 80-90% in collection fees. Chief Marique said he has looked at increasing rates, however, Milton is already at the higher rate of averages. Chief Marique said there continues to be a lot of moving pieces.

FD Building Maintenance line-items have seen higher expenditures due to some recent costly repairs including generator, overhead doors, etc. Chief Marique said really other than the part-time line-item, the rest is in pretty good shape and looks good.

Ms. Turgeon asked about bringing private EMT services to Milton. Chief Marique noted that Stuarts just recently pulled out of Wolfeboro and he does not think any of the companies will even really want to bid on covering Milton. Ms. Turgeon said she would like to see if it could be a viable option. Chief Marique said he has the information and does not think it would be viable. Ms. Turgeon said the EMS is currently running in the red. Chief Marique – it's also bringing is \$150,000-\$200,000 in revenues to the town.

Chief Marique said he will continue to make sure the station is staffed. Ms. Burnham said it's important to recognize when someone needs help or is having an emergency, they call the Fire Department.

Ms. Turgeon thanked Chief Marique for attending the meeting and helping to answer their questions.

5.) Review/Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Carrier motioned to approve the May 23, 2023, minutes with corrections. Ms. Burnham seconded the motion.

Laura Turgeon, Bob Carrier, Renata Gamache, Kim Wischnewski, Claudine Burnham voted Yes. Peg Hurd, Mike Beaulieu abstained. Motion Carried – 5/2/0.

6.) Other business that may come before the board: There was no other business.

7.) Public Comments or Questions on Budget Committee Meeting Topics: Katherine Ayers said people watching the meeting either live or via the recording only see a solid white screen and nothing that is being projected. Ms. Burnham said the system can be configured to show the screen.

8.) Next Meetings: August 22, 2023

9.) Adjournment:

- a. Ms. Hurd motioned to adjourn at 8:35PM; Seconded by Ms. Wischnewski. All were in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amy Winslow-Weiss, Recording Secretary – Budget Committee