

**JOINT SESSION  
BOARD OF SELECTMAN AND BUDGET COMMITTEE  
2021 BUDGETS REVIEW  
SEPTEMBER 26, 2020**

**ATTENDEES:**

**Board of Selectman Committee:** Andrew Rawson (Chair), Matt Morrill, Claudine Burnham

**Budget Committee:** Humphrey Williams (Chair), Claudine Burnham, Peg Hurd, Larry Brown, Lisa Gautreau, Danielle Marique, Mike Beaulieu

**Public:** Bob Carrier

**Staff:** Ernest Creveling, Julius Peel, Kathy Wallingford, Patrick Smith, Karen Brown, Fire Chief Nicholas Marique, Police Chief Richard Krauss, Michelle Beauchamp (via phone)

Board of Selectman: Chair Andrew Rawson asked to motion the meeting to order at 8:07AM. Claudine Burnham seconded the motion. All in favor – Yes.

Budget Committee Roll Call to open the meeting: Larry Brown – Yes, Danielle Marique – Yes, Lisa Gautreau – Yes, Peg Hurd – Yes, Claudine Burnham – Yes, Humphrey Williams – Yes. (Note: Mike Beaulieu arrived at approximately 8:25 A.M.)

Mr. Williams announced Mr. Thomas McDougall's immediate resignation from the Budget Committee due to time constraints. The committee members accepted the resignation with sadness and give thanks to Mr. McDougall's work with the committee and acknowledge he will be missed.

Mr. Williams and Mr. Rawson explained that the purpose of today's joint meeting is to review all departments proposed 2021 budgets and to ask questions.

Pledge of Allegiance recited

**Proposed 2021 Budget Presentations:**

**1.) Ernie Creveling, Town Administrator**, gave an overall history of budgets which includes comparisons by years from 2016 to current. (Refer to PowerPoint presentation.) The goal as set by the Budget committee is to have all budgets below default budget which was acknowledged to be a teamwide and hard effort.

Mr. Creveling reviewed each budget line-item categories for 2021 proposed General Fund Town Administration Budget. (Refer to PowerPoint presentation).

Question from Mr. Williams: Referring to a note about redistributing budget items in the amount of \$8,300 to Legal Services, but that is not reflected. After some explanation, it was noted that the amount reduced was eventually in large part to meet the goal of default budget or below.

Question from Ms. Marique: What constitutes miscellaneous under Professional Services and why isn't the miscellaneous component under the Miscellaneous line. Mr. Creveling responded that it was for something that may come up during the course of the year requiring engineering or other professional services.

## **2.) Assessing Budget, Kathy Wallingford**

Ms. Wallingford indicated there are many changes concerning the Registry of Deeds.

Question from Ms. Hurd: Regarding the assessing software support – report indicates bill is not paid – is this accurate? Typically the bill is reviewed and paid at the end of the year.

Question from Mr. Brown: Regarding the early system accuracy issues – Ms. Wallingford indicated they are working to address these specific issues and feel confident the new service provider understands the program and able to address all concerns.

Ms. Wallingford reminded board committees of her plan to retire in 2021 and there will be a need to provide extensive training for her replacement.

Chair Mr. Rawson suggested the next 3 budget presentations be from the largest overall departments and will have the most impact.

## **3.) Police Department, Chief Richard Krauss**

Chief Krauss indicated 85% of budget goes to salary, retirement, FICA/Medicare (as in previous budgets). The current budget is down ~\$12,000 due to hiring freeze to March of 2021.

(Refer to Chief Krauss presentation handouts). New position remains in budget; current session may require additional overtime to cover limited number of positions.

Question from Mr. Beaulieu: What will the grant be used for? Chief Krauss indicated the grant will be used to replace bullet proof vests which typically have a 5-year shelf life.

Chief Krauss explained that new state mandated policies will more than likely require additional training for each police officer from 8 hours to 24 hours. This training may or may not be offered through the Academy. There will be higher costs associated with training outside the Academy.

Chief Krauss also indicated a change regarding hiring/testing of potential new hires. Currently each potential hire completes a mail-in psychological evaluation. State mandated rule change, which may happen January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 will require in-person testing which will again increase overall cost to the process.

Question from Mr. Beaulieu: Where is the money coming from to cover overtime and shifts if not in current budget? Chief Krauss indicated that he would continue to cover additional shifts, calls may take longer, officers may respond individually rather than as a team which will put their safety at risk.

Mr. Williams indicated that Chief Krauss is a credit to the Milton community and appreciates him working to control the budget for 2020.

Mr. Rawson asked Chief Krauss to let the boards know immediately once he has the new rules/policies and if there is a need for budget increase.

Question from Mr. Beaulieu: Does Milton also assist other towns – what is that relationship? Chief Krauss indicated all towns work very well together. Each town has very high hiring standards and that even though there are many possible changes to the hiring process, all chiefs will continue to work with each other.

#### **4.) Fire Department, Chief Nicholas Marique**

Chief Marique indicated the largest part of their budget is personnel (salary, retirement, benefits, etc.). Chief Marique presented a five year overview of the department. (Refer to Chief's presentation handouts). Currently in 2020, expenses have increased over income, primarily due to overtime. The percentage of public calls have remained fairly the same from previous year. Current training for this year is much lower than previous primarily due to COVID. Those monies are being used elsewhere. He also indicated that all station lights are LED which leads to an overall tremendous savings.

Question from Ms. Hurd: Why are there different retirement rates between Fire and Police for NH? Fire is currently much higher.

Question from Mr. Larry Brown regarding Ambulance revolving account? Why do operating expenses increase every year? Chief Marique explained this is due to inflation, staffing changes, protocol changes and equipment changes. It's imperative that shifts are always filled and ambulances are well-stocked. Mr. Williams mentioned the change in Frisbee Hospital status and Chief Marique stated he was unsure whether the change in Frisbee Hospital status will have any effect on ambulance supplies. Some expenses were covered by GOFEEER and they are working to collect unpaid ambulance bills to help cover expenses. Current ambulance rates are on the higher side (compared to region).

#### **5.) Highway Department, Patrick Smith**

They are currently down 2 FT position equivalents; this has helped the department to maintain the 2020 budget. The department is trying to absorb required salary increases into the budget. The 2019 raises were not reflected in the default budget. Mr. Smith indicated \$44,000 was due to overtime pay during the winter months. In addition, Mr. Rawson explained that raises were given to help address overall retention concerns and the need to keep salaries competitive to reduce employee loss.

Mr. Smith indicated the 2021 proposed larger budget reflects the need to put the 2 FT salaried positions back into the budget. This is somewhat inaccurate as this increase will be spread over 3 years. (Refer to Mr. Smith's presentation handouts).

There is an ~\$39,200 difference from the 2020 default budget as compared to 2021 proposed budget as indicated by step increases in salary.

#### **6.) Government Buildings, Patrick Smith**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

Regarding to supplies line item, Mr. Smith indicated he is unsure if any monies will be received from the state due to COVID for 2021.

#### **7.) Solid Waste, Patrick Smith**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

Mr. Smith explained that state regulations and overall tipping fees make the budget difficult to control. As before, disposal constitutes the largest section of the budget at nearly 37%.

Question from Ms. Hurd: It appears that some line items use a revolving account. How does the revolving account get funded? Mr. Smith explained that this account is primarily funded by items brought into the transfer station.

#### **8.) Recreation, Karen Brown**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

Ms. Brown indicated that many items were shutdown in 2020 due to COVID and the department is not currently running any programs. There was an increase in the budget of \$10,000 due to wages.

Question from Mr. Williams: Is there a reason why we are open in November? Ms. Brown explained that there is someone there all the time and that the playground never closes.

#### **9.) Supervisor of the Checklist, Karen Brown**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

As part of the 2021 proposed budget, it should be noted that the state mandates an annual checklist purge. Because of this office supplies line item will increase.

#### **10.) Trustees of Trust Fund, Karen Brown**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

Ms. Brown indicated this is a flat-line budget and will have no change from 2020 to 2021.

#### **11.) Milton Free Public Library, Betsy Baker**

There will be a .49% increase from \$59,708 (2020) to \$60,002 (2021). The library constitutes 1.34% of the overall town budget. The default budget will remain the same. There is a requested very small salary increase which will also impact FICA/Medicare).

Ms. Hurd gave kudos to Betsy for keeping the library's overall presence going throughout 2020 in the midst of COVID and continued to provide services to patrons.

#### **12.) Tax Collector, Michelle Beauchamp**

Because of current situation, Ms. Beauchamp gave her presentation via phone. (Refer to presentation handouts).

Over 80% of the overall budget is due to personnel including salary, FICA/Medicare, benefits, etc. The proposed 2021 budget includes a \$5,000 increase primarily due to salary increase.

Ms. Beauchamp explained that the current position hours does not include many additional responsibilities and duties that have been carried out over the past year (like onboard new employees). Her goal is to create longevity in employees and that since 2012 there have been 9 part-time employees. Ms. Beauchamp thanked the staff for their work and diligence during the past year. The staff endured much abuse on social media and feels this was unwarranted. She also indicated that due to the ongoing situation she more than likely will not run for the position again and encourages all to be aware of the impact and to plan for this transition. Ms. Beauchamp also asked why do most services shutdown when the tax collector is absent from the position and feels this is not an effective way to run the position.

During 2020, Ms. Beauchamp explained that the postage line item noticeably increased due to COVID. Mr. Williams asked if this increase would be reimbursed through GOFEEER? Ms. Beauchamp indicated that they try to minimize postage by including sewer bills with the tax bill.

**13.) Budget Committee, Humphrey Williams**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

Mr. Williams indicated that all committees were asked to have their 2021 budgets come in under the default budget and the Budget Committee reduced our budget from \$2,600 to \$2,300.

**14.) Insurance & Benefits, Ernest Creveling**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

**15.) Cemetery, Ernest Creveling**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

The proposed 2021 budget will reflect a \$999.00 decrease.

**16.) Planning Codes, Ernest Creveling**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

The proposed 2021 budget will reflect an increase of \$4,000 due to wage related issues (SS/Medicare).

**17.) Planning Board, Ernest Creveling**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

There will be a decrease from 2020 to 2021.

**18.) Zoning Board Adjustment, Ernest Creveling**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

Will use escrow

**19.) Conservation Committee, Ernest Creveling**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

There will be a decrease from 2020 to 2021.

**20.) Emergency Management, Ernest Creveling**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

The budget will remain the same.

**21.) Outside Appropriations / Welfare, Ernest Creveling**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

There was a discussion regarding the best way to reduce the budget without hurting groups and town citizens who rely on these benefits. Currently, voters will decide which groups receive funding and should be educated on how many families receive services/benefits and how Milton residents are being served overall.

Mr. Rawson is interested to know what exactly it would mean to eliminate any of the programs. Ms. Hurd questioned if cutting any of these social services makes sense, especially at this current moment.

Mr. Williams suggests keeping all line items at \$1.00 so they remain in the current budget. It was also suggested that it would be helpful to have all representing agencies attend future meeting to explain their services, how it is used to help individuals and how Milton citizens are benefitting from their service. Mr. Beaulieu then asked should \$1.00 be left in the budget or zero out?

Mr. Rawson made a motion to leave \$1.00 as a placeholder for all outside appropriations where the budget indicated \$0.00. Claudine Burnham seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

**22.) Economic Development, Ernest Creveling**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

The budget will indicate a decrease of \$999.00 with placeholders.

**23.) Debt Services / Principles, Ernest Creveling**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

Interest will be carried forward and cut unanticipated expenses.

**24.) Treasurer, Ernest Creveling**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

There will be no changes except for corrections to FICA/Medicare.

**25.) Sewer, Ernest Creveling**

(Refer to presentation handouts)

Will need to update final budgeting processes.

Since there were no additional questions, Andrew Rawson, Chair, motioned to adjourn the meeting. Claudine Burnham seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Mr. Humphrey Williams also motioned to adjourn the meeting. Peg Hurd seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Meeting was adjourned at 1:05PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Weiss – Budget Committee Recording Secretary,

Minutes approved – November 12, 2020