



***Town of Plaistow ♦ Board of Selectmen***  
*145 Main Street ♦ Plaistow ♦ NH ♦ 03865*

**Plaistow Board of Selectmen Minutes**

**Date:** October 16, 2023

**Meeting Called to Order:** 5:01 P.M.

**Roll Call:**

Select Chairman, Bill Coye – Present  
Select Vice Chairman, Jay Deroche – Present  
Selectman, Darrell Britton – Excused  
Selectman, Jonathan Gifford – Present  
Selectwoman, Tammy Bergeron – Present

Also present: Town Manager, Greg Colby, several members of the Budget Committee (Chair K. Knutsen, D. Gears, R. Anthony E. Kosta, M. Collins), Recreation Director, Ms. Gusler, Library Director Mr. Vinton, Highway Supervisor Mr. Garlington, Police Chief Santoro, Police Captain Mazza, Fire Chief Knutsen and Administrative Specialist, Beth Hossack.

**Public Comment**

None

**Recreation**

Recreation Director J. Gusler states the requested budget for 2024 is about \$22,000 higher than the amount of the 2023 budget. The main reason for the increase is salaries. Another increase is maintenance/groundskeeping.

Note: Budget Committee member M. Collins, arrives at 5:04 P.M.

Recreation Director J. Gusler states this past summer (2023) the recreation program took in about \$94,000 in revenue. Approximately \$96,000 was spent on the program. Fees for the summer recreation program in 2024 will increase with the goal of breaking even. The estimates for the 2024 summer program are to bring \$118,000 in as revenue and spend \$116,000 on the program. Revenue received goes into the general fund.

Selectman J. DeRoche asks when the swales were last cleaned and when they are scheduled to be cleaned again.

Recreation Director J. Gusler replies they were cleaned in 2022 and they will be cleaned in 2024.

Selectman J. DeRoche asks why there is an increase in the transportation line.

Recreation Director J. Gusler replies, they are taking the campers on two (2) field trips per week rather than one (1).

Selectman J. Gifford states many activities are paid for through the revolving fund. He asks the Recreation Director to explain it.

Recreation Director Gusler states the revolving fund is money coming in from fees and money going out for programs. It is not part of the operating budget. Basically, the program pays for itself. Most of the programs for seniors come from the revolving account as well as school vacation programs.

Selectman J. Gifford states there are more programs for seniors than for kids.

Budget Committee Member M. Collins states it is very important to be transparent and show taxpayers what the recreation department does, why it does certain activities and how many people participate.

Recreation Director J. Gusler states the department is very active on Facebook, especially the community page. Weekly pictures of the summer recreation program are posted.

Selectwoman T. Bergeron recommends putting pictures on the cable station as well.

***Selectman J. DeRoche motions to approve the recreation budget in the amount of \$216,190. Seconded by Selectman J. Gifford.***

***Vote: 4-0-0***

***Motion carries.***

### **Library**

Library Director C. Vinton states the Library budget for 2024 is up about 5.2%. For many years the budget was level funded. Most of the increase this year is due to an increase in health insurance costs (up 15.6%) and compensation. A few years ago, the Library changed from a Cadillac health insurance plan to a consumer driven plan, saving the Town money. Library usage is back to normal following the pandemic. Total check-outs of materials is up 4.8% while program attendance is up 19.2%.

Select Chair B. Coye asks, what are some of the programs offered at the Library.

Library Director C. Vinton replies, they offer many programs such as yoga, crafts, book clubs, a movie series, meeting with a specialist. For example, ask a nutritionist, ask a fire chief etc. For some of the adult programs they partner with the Historical Society for humanities presentations. There are all kinds of kids' programs for all ages including babies through teen age years. The year-to-date number of participants in kids programming this year is 8000. The Nelson room is used frequently. It is available 24/7 and approximately forty (40) to sixty (60) different organizations use the room.

Budget Committee member E. Kosta asks about the health insurance rates. Are the listed rates the maximum and after things shake down the rates will be lower or is the number solid?

Library Director C. Vinton replies, the numbers are accurate. He looked at many different plans.

Budget Committee member R. Anthony asks if a high deductible plan with a caveat of funding a reimbursement pool would help.

Library Director C. Vinton replies, he looked into that option, however the Library does not have enough employees for that type of plan.

Budget Committee member R. Anthony asks why the Library is not on the same plan as the Town.

Library Director C. Vinton replies, the decision predates him. The Library Trustees made the decision.

Budget Committee member R. Anthony asks, compared to other Town employees, is the plan better or not for the Town.

Town Manager G. Colby replies, many Town employees belong to Teamsters Unions (dispatch, fire, police and certain Town departments) leaving a small group of employees that fall into the under fifty (50) employee category. Statewide all municipal health insurance plans with fifty (50) or less employees saw an increase of 15% for 2024 health insurance costs.

Selectman J. DeRoche asks if the Library offers an opt-out option for health insurance.

Library Director C. Vinton replies, yes, it is offered, however no one is currently opting out.

Selectwoman T. Bergeron asks if there is a fee for using/renting the Nelson room.

Library Director C. Vinton replies, it depends. If the program is free of charge and open to the public, there is no fee. However, if the meeting is for a specific group of people or a business there is a fee along with a seven (7) page application form.

A question is asked about revenue.

Library Director C. Vinton states the Library averages \$15,000 - \$25,000 per year in revenue. The revenue is not an offset to the budget. It pays for small projects like tree trimming. Library Director C. Vinton adds the library building is twenty-five (25) years old and needs new carpets and a few other items. The library employees plan to put out a survey in the next few months to get the public's input on future changes and/or building needs.

Budget Committee member D. Gerns asks why the line item for online resources for 2023 was \$8,000 yet the year-to-date figure is already \$14,410 and the budget amount for 2024 is only \$9,200. He is concerned that the line item is understated.

Library Director C. Vinton replies, since 2019 the service for Hoopla has more than doubled. Many people use online resources. The budget is a bottom-line budget therefore there is some room for movement in this line.

Budget member M. Collins recommends posting statistics on the Town websites regarding programs and users. Again, transparency will help the general public understand what the Library contributes to the Town.

Selectman J. DeRoche asks if any services could be combined with the Town to save costs, for example booking services.

Library Director C. Vinton replies that would need to be discussed with Town Manager G. Colby and the Library Trustees. He is always open to new ideas. He states the Town does the plowing at the Library and janitorial services are provided by a Town employee.

Budget Committee member R. Anthoney asks about a better use for the grassy area in front of the Library. Is any of it considered wetlands? Has anyone considered using the area for an educational or pollinator garden?

Library Director C. Vinton replies the Library is planning on sending out a community survey in the near future to see what ideas people have. The survey includes the grounds. The Library welcomes new ideas and suggestions.

Budget Committee member M. Collins agrees that the green area should be better used. Perhaps a summer butterfly project with a mother and child to nurture an endangered butterfly and foster it from start to finish would be a great program.

***Selectman J. DeRoche motions to approve the library budget in the amount of \$670,525.***

***Seconded by Selectman J. Gifford.***

***Vote: 4-0-0***

***Motion carries.***

Note: Town Manager G. Colby states the Board just approved a slightly higher library budget than the amount estimated at the last meeting.

### **Highway**

Highway Supervisor D. Garlington introduces himself. He states he has been the Highway Supervisor for twenty-six (26) years. He is happy to have both the Board of Selectmen and the Budget Committee present to hear the department budget discussions. Highway Supervisor D. Garlington states salaries are up based on the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Overtime is also up. The amount is a guestimate since winter weather conditions are unknown. The line item for phones is down because there are only three (3) employees who receive a phone stipend for using their personal cell phones for work. General supplies are down while vehicle maintenance supplies have increased. The highway department does as much of their own repairs and maintenance work as possible to help lower costs. The cost to buy parts is up which is why this line item is up. Certain management tasks are required by law under the MS4 (Storm Water Management) such as street sweeping. Contracted rates for street sweeping are up. Rates for snow plowing contracts have risen. Discussion ensues.

Selectman J. DeRoche asks if the line item for general supplies-traffic can be reduced. It appears we have not spent all of it in years past. He also wants to know if the highway department and emergency management can share barricades.

Highway Supervisor D. Garlington replies, the cost for line painting comes out of the general supplies-traffic budget and that has not been paid yet. As far as sharing barricades the departments use different types of barricades. For different events we might be able to share some barricades. We also lose about twenty (20) cones per year. The replacement cost for new cones are fifty (\$50) per cone.

Selectman J. DeRoche asks if the drainage line item can be reduced. Some years we do not use all of it.

Highway Supervisor D. Garlington replies, last year we encumbered some of the funds because drainage work needs to be done on Willard Way. They need the ground to be frozen to do the work. Last year that did not happen. They are planning on using those funds this year. He also plans on using some of the unspent drainage funds for drainage projects in the new portion of the cemetery.

Selectwoman T. Bergeron asks for an explanation for the increase to the salaries line item when the year-to-date figure seems low.

Highway Supervisor D. Garlington replies, salaries went up due to the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). The reason why the year-to-date figure is down is because they have been running one man short this year.

Budget Committee member R. Anthony asks what amount of funds was unexpended at the end of the year and about savings from the new salt shed.

Highway Supervisor D. Garlington states we have not realized specific saving. There is potential to save money on the purchase of salt, yet it varies. Prices can go up, down, or stay the same. The savings is the fact that we can keep enough salt on hand for what is needed for our roads. Historically we had enough salt for one and one-half (1 ½) storms. Now we have enough salt for eight to ten (8-10) storms.

Town Manager G. Colby states there was \$282 left (unspent) in the highway budget at the end of 2022.

Select Chair B. Coye, asks what the current supply of salt is.

Highway Supervisor Garlington states, about two-thirds (2/3) of the shed is full. It may last until 2024, it depends on mother nature.

Budget Committee member M. Collins thanks D. Garlington and his department for painting the street lines, it is very helpful when driving at night. For a small crew his department does a great deal of work. Next, she asks if the snow plowing rate is set by Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) and governed by the State?

Highway Supervisor D. Garlington replies, it is set by GVW, however we are not governed by the state.

Budget Committee member M. Collins asks who governs it now.

Highway Supervisor D. Garlington replies he sets the GVW based on needs. He will not hire anything under 9,000lbs. Who supplies the cutting edge? The contractors or the Town?

Highway Supervisor D. Garlington replies, the subcontractors.

Budget Committee member M. Collins states we have had some great contractors in the past. Do we still have them and are they ready to go. The Highway department is the most important department, yet they do not get credit. Without them police and fire cannot do their jobs. She asks if the department is ready to go this fall and into next year before the new budget is approved.

Highway Supervisor D. Garlington replies, yes, some of the subcontractors he has had for thirty (30) years. The newest one is at least eight (8 ) years old. He is ready to do to the best of his ability. He believes all the departments work as a team and communication is very important.

Budget Committee member M. Collins states with that said (communication is very important) how can the Highway department be more transparent for the taxpayer. She believes Knowledge is power, educate me.

***Selectman Gifford motions to approve the highway budget in the amount of \$1,040,364 .***

***Seconded by Selectman DeRoche.***

***Vote: 4-0-0***

***Motion carries***

### **Police Department**

Police Chief Santoro introduces himself. He is here with Captain Mazza to present the police department budget. Chief Santoro begins with a quick synopsis of calls. Overall, we are receiving more serious and violent calls. Dispatch employees are handling more calls. Plaistow's dispatch center takes calls for police, fire for both Plaistow and Atkinson. Chief Santoro has been in Plaistow for five and a half months (5 ½). During this time, he has identified several issues which has caused a significant increase in his budget. Some systems have not been maintained. The camera system is not working correctly. The radio system has multiple dead spots, the microwave system is low quality and we have had multiple failures this year. Our telephone system is failing, and the two (2) different systems do not work together. The intercom system has failed and has been disconnected. Many of the vehicle repairs are surpassing the vehicles value. Two (2) vehicles did not pass State inspection. Uniforms are not at all uniform. They are mis-matched and different officers are wearing different uniforms.

Budget Committee member M. Collins wants the officers to be driving safe vehicles. Their lives are irreplaceable.

The police department does bring in revenue. Year-to-date revenue is over one-quarter (¼ ) of a million dollars. The 2024 budget request is \$2,603,057 which is a 9.1% increase over last year. Most

of the increases are for salaries, fuel costs, equipment purchases and fixing/replacing broken systems.

Select Chair Coye thanks Chief Santoro and Captain Mazza for their presentation. He is happy to have Chief Santoro here. The department has improved, and the Chief is more visible in Town.

Select Chair Coye states there is a difference in the budget amount the Board saw at their last meeting compared to the amount proposed tonight. He asks for an explanation of the difference.

Town Manager Colby states, Chief Santoro and Captain Mazza feel there is a need to add another person to the command staff. That accounts for the difference.

Budget Committee member D. Gerns asks how the closing of the Plaistow courthouse has impacted the police department budget.

Captain Mazza replies, the impact has been minimal. Most cases are now done at Salem District Court. We do pay officers overtime to go to court to testify if they are subpoenaed however, they are testifying less because their attorneys are handling as much as they can, thus reducing the amount of time officers are needed for testifying in court. Felony cases are heard in Brentwood and that often does require officers to testify.

Budget Committee member E. Kosta asks if the police department has eliminated the crossing guards now.

Captain Mazza replies no, however they are now part of the school district's budget.

Selectman Gifford asks if there is any revenue generated from Atkinson since we dispatch for them.

Chief Santoro defers to Town Manager to respond.

Town Manager Colby states the answer is yes. He is currently working on a five (5) year contract agreement with Atkinson. The dollar amount will be in the area of \$40,000-\$45,000 per year.

Budget Committee member M. Collins asks the Chief for the total number of sworn personnel.

Chief Santoro replies we have thirteen (13) sworn officers. We are down five (5) officers.

Budget Committee member M. Collins asks for the number of nonsworn, full-time personnel in the police department.

Chief Santoro replies six (6) full-time dispatchers, and two (2) administrative personnel.

Budget Committee member M. Collins asks what revenue comes in for the shooting range.

Chief Santoro replies no money is exchanged. Others using the range pay (in-kind) with goods and/or services.

Budget Committee member R. Anthony asks if we have a K-9 Unit.

Chief Santoro replies, no however starting tomorrow we will have a no cost intern starting. The intern will work on a project to determine the costs and benefits of reimplementing the K-9 Unit back to the department. We hope to make this a reality.

Budget Committee member E. Kosta thanks the Chief for all he does for the Plaistow Community.

Chief Santoro states it is our pleasure to service the residents and businesses of the community.

Budget Committee member R Anthony asks if there an ongoing business review put in place. It seem as though we have been lacking in this area.

Chief Santoro states we are building that as we go along. Especially high-risk things such as firearms inventory, radio inventory, ammunition inventory, and property and evidence inventory.

Budget Committee member Collins asks if the dispatch budget come out of police, fire or is it its own entity.

Chief Santoro replies it come under the police department budget.

***Selectman J. Gifford motions to approve the amended police budget in the amount of \$2,630,057. Seconded by Selectwoman T. Bergeron.***

***Vote: 4-0-0***

***Motion carries***

### **Fire Department**

Chief Knutsen introduces himself. He mentions the junior firefighters earn two (2) high school credits at Timberlane for their participation in the program. He thanks the junior firefighters for all they do. Recently there was an evening fire in a barn on Main Street. The house was saved due to the quick response time of our full-time staff. If we just had on-call staff the house would have been gone. Chief Knutsen states the approved budget for 2023 was \$969,130. The requested amount for 2024 is \$1,534,503. He knows this is a big increase, however revenue will be generated to offset some of this expense. The main reason for the increase is to change the ambulance service.

Currently we have an outside contractor to provide ambulance service to Plaistow and five (5) other towns. There are only two (2) ambulances available to cover all six (6) towns. It is not enough. The contract ends in March 2024. Chief Knutsen has looked at several options and done significant research over the past one and one-half (1 ½ ) years in anticipation of this contract coming to an end. He found the best method to provide ambulance service (which is required by law) is to do our own. We already have the infrastructure, and a new ambulance has been ordered which will be delivered in March. We have equipment, and we have the dispatch team to support the calls. The cost to provide ambulance service is approximately \$687,671 and the expected revenue is about \$400,000. Another reason to provide the service ourselves is as a municipality we are not for profit. We can provide the service more cost effectively than a contracted service since they work for profit.

Budget Committee member M. Collins thanks the Chief for the department's transparency. Much of the information regarding what the department does is easily available to the public.



Budget Committee member R. Anthony asks what is the mechanism that shows how revenue helps to offset taxes.

Town Manager Colby replies the MS424 document includes estimates of revenues and expenses. The difference between the two is the amount to be raised through property taxes.

Chief Knutsen states the majority of medical calls are residential. This is also true for fire calls. Very few fire calls are for commercial properties.

***Selectman DeRoche motions to approve the fire budget in the amount of \$1,534,503 . Seconded by Selectman Gifford.***

***Vote: 4-0-0***

***Motion carries.***

Select Chair Coye thanks the department heads for presenting their budgets and he thanks the budget committee members for attending this meeting. He calls for a five (5) minute recess at 7:56 P.M.

The meeting resumes at 8:08 P.M.

### **Cemetery Construction**

Town Manager G. Colby states the cemetery expansion is coming along well. We are ready for the final phase of work. The final phase consists of grading, looming and seeding and extending the roadway. We have a proposal from Mark Viens and Sons Excavating, LLC for \$67,637. There is approximately \$45,000 in the Cemetery Trust Fund. The Highway department did not spend all of its money from the paving line item in anticipation of completing the cemetery road. There is also some money in the drainage line item. Town Manager Colby recommends using the Trust Fund and money from the highway budget to pay for the final phase. Then a warrant article will not be needed in 2024.

Selectman DeRoche asks once the final phase is complete, the only cost moving forward will be for mowing/maintenance.

Town Manager Colby replies, yes.

***Selectman J. DeRoche motions to accept the proposal from Mark Viens & Sons Excavation, LLC in the amount of \$67,637. The work is for the new section of the cemetery. Funding will come from the balance of the Cemetery Capital Reserve Account. This account has approximately \$45,000. The remaining balance will be paid for from the general fund. Seconded by Selectwoman T. Bergeron.***

***Vote: 4-0-0***

***Motion carries.***

### **Replacement of Town Hall Boiler**

Town Manager Colby states a few weeks ago he mentioned to the Board the boiler at Town Hall was not working properly. Tonight, we have a proposal from Reid Mechanical Corp to replace and fix the system with a more efficient one.

Select Chair B. Coye asks how long it will take to get the work done.

Town Manager G. Colby states it won't take long to do the work. They are scheduling about two (2) weeks out now.

***Selectman Gifford motions to accept the proposal from Reid Mechanical Corporation to replace two existing Munchkin boilers and upgrade to two Airiston HTP Elite Ultra 95% ELUD-285FNB boilers for Town Hall. The total price including installation is \$34,500. The funds will come from the Town Building Trust Fund. The current balance of the fund is approximately \$65,000.***

***Seconded by Selectman DeRoche.***

***Vote: 4-0-0***

***Motion carries.***

### **Purchase of Cruiser**

Town Manager G. Colby states the police fleet has three (3) vehicles with over 100,000 miles each and two of those vehicles are over ten (10) years old. The estimated cost for a fully equipped cruiser in early 2023 was \$72,000. Now that figure has risen to \$82,000. There is about \$100,000 in the police capital reserve account and we still have about \$300,000 available in ARPA funds.

Select Chair B. Coys asks if we purchase two cruisers when we will need to replace more.

Town Manager G. Colby replies we still have two older cars (2011 & 2012) that are working. It is hard to determine a time frame.

Selectwoman T. Bergeron asks if we can use the old vehicles as a trade in to reduce costs.

Town Manager G. Colby replies, we could try to sell them, use them as a trade in or repurpose at least one vehicle to any of the following departments, Building, Recreation or Health.

Selectman J. Gifford states when we purchased two (2) cruisers last year the idea was to keep ahead. He is interested in purchasing one (1) vehicle using capital reserve funds and leaving some money in the fund for the future. Then purchasing a second cruiser using ARPA funds. The Board agrees.

***Selectman J. Gifford motions to direct the Town Manager to purchase two new cruisers. Funds for one cruiser will be withdrawn from the capital reserve fund. The second cruiser will be paid for with ARPA funds. Seconded by Selectman J. DeRoche.***

***Vote: 4-0-0***

***Motion carries.***

### **Rockingham Planning Commission Dues (add on agenda item)**

Select Chair B. Coye reads a memo from the Planning Board. At their October 4th meeting they voted unanimously to recommend the Board of Selectmen pay the annual Rockingham Planning Commission dues of \$8,125.

Selectman J. DeRoche asks Town Manager Colby if this money is included in the budget.

Town Manager G. Colby replies, yes.

***Selectman J. DeRoche motions to direct the Town Manager to pay the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) dues in the amount of \$8,125 based on the recommendation of the Planning Board. Seconded by Selectman J. Gifford.***

***Vote: 4-0-0***

***Motion carries.***

### **Approval of Prior Nonpublic Session Minutes**

The minutes are passed out and reviewed by the Board.

***Selectman J. DeRoche motions to approve and keep sealed the nonpublic session minutes of September 11, 2023. Seconded by Selectwoman T. Bergeron.***

***Vote: 4-0-0***

***Motion carries.***

### **Approve Consent Agenda**

Item Description

1. Accounts Payable Manifest week of October 12<sup>th</sup>, & 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
2. BOS Draft Minutes October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023.
3. One Veterans Tax Credit Application.

***Selectman J. Gifford motions to approve the consent agenda as written. Seconded by Selectman J. DeRoche.***

***Vote: 4-0-0***

***Motion carries.***

### **Town Managers Report**

- The Rockingham County portion of the tax rate will be about 6 cents per 1000 of valuation. We are in a holding place with the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA). The tax rate cannot be set until we hear back from the DRA.
- There is a revenue report in tonight's folders.
- It has been recommended that we change back to the other water disinfection process soon. Most other communities along the water line are also doing this. All the water test results have come back well withing normal range.
- Contractors are working in the area of Partridge Lane on water connections. Soon Walton Road and the Twin Ridge condos will be connected. It will cause a temporary water shut down for one (1) night. These connections will double our water consumption.
- He has been working on the preliminary numbers with the Town of Atkinson regarding dispatch services.
- We heard from Primex that our property liability insurance is up 7% and workers compensation is up 10%.
- The Plaistow Library is still waiting to hear from Primex about their rates.

### **Selectmen's Reports**

Selectwoman T. Bergeron

- Will attend the Elder Affairs Meeting tomorrow.
- Will attend the senior movie next Friday at the Library.

- Will attend the Old Home Day meeting tomorrow.

Selectman J. Gifford

- Will attend the Old Home Day meeting tomorrow.
- Will attend the Energy meeting on Wednesday.

Selectman J. DeRoche

- Will attend the Energy/Community Power meeting at the Library.

Select Chair B. Coye

- Will attend the Recreation Commission Meeting.
- Attended the last Conservation Commission meeting. The commission agreed to donate money to the Recreation Trails on Mt. Misery.
- Worked on a cable show with Fire Chief Knutsen covering questions and answers for our own ambulance service.

### **Events**

1. Toddler Trick or Treat – 10/27/23.
2. Pumpkin Lightening – 10/28/23.
3. Regular Trick or Treat – 10/31/23.
4. Wreath Making – 11/28/23
5. Tree Lightening – 12/3/23.

As there is no further business before the Board, Chair Coye adjourned the meeting at 8:38 P.M.  
Respectfully submitted,

Beth Hossack,  
Administrative Specialist