

# *Town of Plaistow ♦ Budget Committee*

*145 Main Street ♦ Plaistow ♦ NH ♦ 03865*



## **BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Meeting: October 24, 2023**

**Call to Order: 6:31pm**

### **ROLL CALL:**

Katie Knutsen, *Chair* - present  
Doug Thompson, *Vice Chair* - present  
Richard Anthony, *Budget Committee*- present  
Ted Carves, *Budget Committee* – Present  
David Gerns, *Budget Committee* – Present  
Elizabeth Kosta, *Budget Committee* -present  
John Sherman, *Budget Committee* – excused  
Jay DeRoche, *Selectmen's Representative* - present  
Darrell Britton, *Selectmen's Alternate* - excused  
Greg Colby, Town Manager/Finance Director - excused

### **Agenda Item 4: Review/Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the September 19, 2023 meeting were reviewed.

*J. DeRoche moved, second by D. Thompson, to approve the minutes as issued*

*The motion was approved 5-0-3 (T. Carves, M/ Collins, D. Gerns abstaining)*

### **Agenda Item 5: Budget Related Public Comment**

There were no comments from the public.

### **Agenda Item 6: Budgets**

a) Executive - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$263,037 and the request for 2024 is \$273,828 a difference of \$10,791, a 4.1% increase.

R. Anthony asked about the Rentals & Leases line and where the \$12,000 difference was coming from. J. DeRoche said the charge for the lease has increased and there is an additional machine from the previous year as well as an increase for the Town website. R. Anthony asked about the unanticipated expenses line; J. DeRoche said there is for things like a septic or boiler failure which might come up. M. Collins asked how long the Town Managers salary was under contract for; J. DeRoche said he had a five-year contract when he became Town Manager and they are negotiating an extension after 2.5 to 3 years. J. DeRoche noted that Greg Colby is both the Town Manager and Finance Director and is paid that part of his salary through the Finance department. M. Collins asked how long the contract is for; an answer will be available at the next meeting. She also asked for the details of the postage meter; an answer will be available at the next meeting

***D. Thompson moved, second by M. Collins, to approve the Executive budget as presented***

***The motion was approved 8-0-0***

b) Town Clerk - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$134,122 and the request for 2024 is \$138,197, a difference of \$4,075, a 3.04 % increase.

The increased items were pointed out. R. Anthony asked about the postage machine; J. DeRoche explained that all departments use the same machine and the postage is charged back to the departments on usage.

***T. Carves moved, second by L. Kosta, to approve the Town Clerk budget for \$138,197***

M. Collins asked how much money the Town Clerk brings in and goes back into the operating budget. J. DeRoche said a revenue sheet was presented at the last Board meeting and he would get that to the Committee.

***The motion was approved 8-0-0***

c) Elections - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$14,635 and the request for 2024 is \$37,000, a difference of \$22,365, a 152.82 % increase. She noted there will be four elections in 2024.

J. DeRoche noted there was a warrant article for the voting machines last year, anticipating the need to buy a machine from the State, which are still being vetted, and it is likely the money will

not be spent, and will go back into the General Fund, so there is money in this budget for purchasing a machine. He noted the current machines will be out of service in 2024 or 2025. J/

***L. Kosta moved, second by T. Carves, to approve the Elections budget as presented***

DeRoche noted that the \$12,000 budgeted would be for three machines. M. Collins asked if we would get credit for the machines that go back to the State; J. DeRoche said no.

***The motion was approved 8-0-0***

d) Finance - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$150,495 and the request for 2024 is \$149,610, a decrease of \$885, a 0.59 % decrease.

R. Anthony asked why data processing shows a 50% reduction. J. DeRoche said this is based on the trends from the current year which are less than anticipated.

***D. Thompson moved, second by M. Collins, to approve the Finance budget for \$149,610***

***The motion was approved 8-0-0***

e) Assessing - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$110,120 and the request for 2024 is \$118,520, an increase of \$8,400, a 7.63% increase

J. DeRoche said the increase is mainly due to the Assessing contract. There was discussion of the office hours and the number of people who work in it.

***D. Gerns moved, second by D. Thompson, to approve the Assessing budget for \$118,520***

***The motion was approved 8-0-0***

f) Tax Collector - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$53,540 and the request for 2024 is \$53,001, a decrease of \$539, a 1.01% decrease.

***D. Thompson moved, second by T. Carves, to approve the Tax Collector budget for \$118,520***

***The motion was approved 8-0-0***

h) Insurance - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$182,782 and the request for 2024 is \$195,577, a difference of \$12,795, a 7% increase.

It was noted this is the Primex insurance cost and the Town is part of a CAP program which kept the increase to this amount.

***L. Losta moved, second by D. Gerns, to approve the Insurance budget as presented***

***The motion was approved 8-0-0***

i) Legal - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$97,500 and the request for 2024 is \$80,000, a decrease of \$17,500, a 17.95% decrease.

***M. Collins moved, second by L. Kosta, to approve the Legal budget as presented***

***The motion was approved 8-0-0***

j) Human Resources/Personnel - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$2,183,951 and the request for 2024 is \$2,419,719, an increase of \$235,768, a 10.8% increase.

J. DeRoche noted that most of the increase is due to health insurance costs and increases to FICA, Medicare, NH retirement, and unemployment compensation. R. Anthony asked about the performance management line; J. DeRoche said they are merit raises for performance and these are not mandated by contract. There was a question about how sick leave works and about buy back. Town employees can give back an amount of their sick time and they get a prorated amount of money for it. This is not automatic, employees must ask for it. Some sick leave can be carried over into the following year. It was agreed to get more information on this.

***M. Collins moved, second by D. Gerns, to approve the Human Resources/Personnel budget as presented***

***The motion was approved 7-1-0 (R. Anthony opposed)***

j) Planning - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$102,696 and the request for 2024 is \$109,429, an increase of \$6,733, a 6.56% increase.

There was a question about the RPC Circuit Rider; J. DeRoche said it is the consultant from the Rockingham Planning Commission who assist the Planning Board. He noted there had been a part time planner employee prior to the RPC Circuit Rider.

***J. DeRoche moved, second by D. Thompson, to approve the Planning budget for \$109,429***

***The motion was approved 6-0-2 (R. Anthony and M. Collins abstaining)***

M. Collins asked about the plotter; it was explained that it is a special copier for large plans.

k) Zoning - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$5,150 and the request for 2024 is \$5,350, an increase of \$200, a 3.88% increase.

***J. DeRoche moved, second by T. Carves, to approve the Zoning budget for \$5,350***

***The motion was approved 8-0-0***

l) General Government Buildings - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$381,170 and the request for 2024 is \$401,225, an increase of \$19,355, a 5.07% increase.

The permanent positions salary increase, custodian overtime increase, need for building repairs was noted. R. Anthony asked about a \$3,000 vehicle maintenance request when only \$84 has been spent so far and if some maintenance is expected in the last quarter of the year. M. Collins suggested that snow blower expense, tractor fuel, and general maintenance on a truck can eat up a lot of money. She asked if local vendors were used for these services and was told yes.

More information was requested.

***D. Gerns moved, second by D. Thomson, to approve the General Government Buildings budget for \$401,255***

***The motion was approved 7-1-0 (R. Anthony opposed)***

m) Cemeteries- Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$10,500 and the request for 2024 is \$10,500 no change.

***J. DeRoche moved, second by L. Kosta, to approve the Cemeteries budget for \$10,500***

***The motion was approved 8-0-0***

n) Advertising/Regional Associations- Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$26,000 and the request for 2024 is \$25,500 a decrease of \$500, decrease of 1.92%

***D. Thompson moved, second by T. Carves, to approve the Advertising/Regional Associations budget for \$25,500***

***The motion was approved 8-0-0***

o) Cable- Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$36,900 and the request for 2024 is \$36,100 a decrease of \$800, decrease of 2.17%

***J. DeRoche moved, second by L. Kosta, to approve the Cable budget for \$36,100***

***The motion was approved 8-0-0***

p) Conflict of Interest- Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$250 and the request for 2024 is \$250, no change.

There was a question about the need for a post office box; it was suggested it might be for confidentiality. It was noted the price of boxes is increasing and the amount may need to be adjusted.

***M. Collins moved, second by R. Anthony, to approve the Conflict of Interest budget for \$250***

***The motion was approved 8-0-0***

q) Other General Government- Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$325,000 and the request for 2024 is \$290,000 a decrease of \$35,000, decrease of 10.77%

R. Anthony asked about service contracts for IT; he was told the Town uses Systems Engineering for all IT. He asked why the Police Department would be purchasing service contracts to maintain what they have. J. DeRoche said they are looking to purchase some

additional software and anything they did for the camera systems would be negotiated and paid through the Police budget. T. Carves asked about the reduction to the MS4 Stormwater line; J. DeRoche said that the work to hookup residents to the municipal water has proceeded well, and as not too many remain to be connected the needed funding amount has been reduced.

***J. DeRoche moved, second by D. Gerns to approve the Other General Government budget for \$290,000***

***The motion was approved 8-0-0***

r) Police- Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$2,376,203 and the request for 2024 is \$2,603,057 an increase of \$104,612, an increase of 4.4%

J. DeRoche said the Chief had done a good job of explaining the budget at the Board of Selectmen's meeting which members of the Budget Committee had attended. R. Anthony addressed the issue of uniforms and asked why there is such a large increase. It was noted there was no uniformity of the uniforms being worn. He asked about the hold up in expenditures for the current year; several ideas were expressed. M. Collins noted that years back police were given three uniforms, along with boots, vest, weapon belt. T. Carves noted they are CBA governed employees and there is an article on uniforms. It was agreed to get more clarification on this issue and the increase in the budget.

There was discussion of repairs to and maintenance of the antenna on the building. Clarification was asked for regarding this matter. It was noted repair cost should be incorporated into the CIP. There was discussion about how to replace a tower.

R. Anthony questioned the need for \$2,000 to keep the canine budget line open. J. DeRoche said there is an intern working on getting information to restart the canine program.

***L. Kosta moved, second by D. Gerns to approve the Police budget for \$2,603,057***

***The motion was approved 7-1-0 (R. Anthony opposed)***

s) Fire- Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$969,130 and the request for 2024 is \$1,534,503 an increase of \$565,373, an increase of 58.43%. She noted the reason for the increase is due to the ambulance service the Town will be using. She noted that Chief Knutsen and Selectman B. Coye had a video made which is available for viewing. She said they have estimated \$400,000 in service billing which would go into the General Fund.

R. Anthony asked about the line for FD Equipment and whether the projected purchases could be made with the amount left in the 2023 budget. Ch. Knutsen said there are hoses and a ladder coming in and she did not know if there were invoices for these coming in now. It was suggested the 2023 actual may not be up to date. Ch. Knutsen will ask for more information on this and equipment maintenance, training, and medical services. It was noted training goes on throughout the year and its budget is likely to be spent.

***L. Kosta moved, second by R. Anthony to approve the Fire budget for \$1,534,503***

***The motion was approved 7-0-1 (K. Knutsen abstained)***

t) Inspections- Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$139,664 and the request for 2024 is \$185,850 an increase of \$46,186, an increase of 33.07%.

There were questions about the vehicle lease. J. DeRoche said the Building Inspector had a vehicle in the past which had maintenance issues and they are looking to lease a new vehicle lease. He noted that two police vehicles will be replaced and they may be repurposed or sold after fixing them to pass inspection. There was a question about the \$900 budget line for seminars.

***J. DeRoche moved, second by T. Carves to approve the Inspections budget for \$185,850***

***The motion was approved 8-0-0***

u) Emergency Management- Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$32,550 and the request for 2024 is \$37,225 an increase of \$4,675, an increase of 14.36%.

It was noted that the equipment purchase line showed the largest increase. M. Collins asked if the department has had new equipment or has used public works equipment in the past. Ch. Knutsen said the Highway Dept. and Emergency Management use different types of cones and barriers. R. Anthony asked for more narrative on the budget.

***T. Carves moved, second by M. Collins to approve the Emergency Management budget for \$37,225***

***The motion was approved 7-1-0 (R. Anthony opposed)***



### **Agenda Item 8: Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on November 7, 2023 at 6:30 pm in the Town Hall second floor meeting room. The remaining budgets will be considered and then the Committee will be done until the warrant articles are ready. H. DeRoche suggested they wouldn't be ready until late November or December.

### **Agenda Item 7: New Business/Old Business**

R. Anthony asked about the school budget and the potential impact on the average Plaistow taxpayer. L. Costa said there are eight more budgets to go through which will take several weeks more. Everything has been submitted to the State but their determination has not come back. Once the information comes in the Board of Selectmen will begin their process. J. DeRoche said the increase to the budget is due to several things, including that costs have gone up, health insurance has increased, and other factors. The increase is 3.44% for the 2024 budget but the ambulance service, which will have some offsetting revenue, brings the increase up another 6.2%, which is a large increase. R. Anthony noted that not many people get a 10% income increase every year and that need sometimes is more than can be borne. He suggested the audited financials show the Town over budgets in the realm of \$200,000 every year. There was discussion of contractual obligations and increases, insurance and liabilities. There was discussion of tax abatements and subsidies.

### **Agenda Item 11: Adjournment**

There was no additional business presented. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Charlene Glorieux  
Recording Secretary