



## *Town of Plaistow ♦ Budget Committee*

*145 Main Street ♦ Plaistow ♦ NH ♦ 03865*

### **BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Meeting: December 8, 2020**

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

### **ROLL CALL:**

Maxann Dobson, *Chair*  
Sam Cafiso, *Vice Chair* - remotely  
Peter Bracci, *Budget Committee*  
Darrell Britton, *Budget Committee*  
Bob Hamilton, *Budget Committee*  
Dennis Heffernan, *Budget Committee* - remotely  
Laurie Milette, *Budget Committee*  
Robert Zukas, *Budget Committee*  
Julian Kiszka, *Selectmen's Representative*

Also present were:

Mark Pearson, *Town Manager*, remotely  
Greg Colby, *Finance Director*, remotely  
Dean Zanello, *Cable Coordinator*

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

The minutes of the November 10, 2020 meeting had been distributed in advance.

- **R. Zukas moved, second by M. Dobson to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2020 meeting**

Discussion: S. Cafiso asked if the minutes had been revised to include the question he had put to J. Sherman that had not been included when the minutes were last reviewed. C. Glorieux read the section aloud. There was no further discussion.

J. Kiszka noted that a Roll Call vote should be taken because some members were not present in person. Ch. Dobson said a Roll Call had already been taken and it would add greatly to the length of the meeting if this was done for all the budgets on the agenda (17). Voting by voice and raised hand went forward.

**VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

The minutes of the November 17, 2020 meeting had been distributed in advance.

- **R. Zukas moved, second by B. Hamilton to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2020 meeting**

**VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

#### **Agenda Item 6: Discussion of Budgets**

Ch. Dobson asked if the committee members had a chance to review the emailed questions she had sent to G. Colby and M. Pearson.

**Finance:** Ch. Dobson noted there were no submitted questions for Finance and asked for a motion to open discussion.

- **B. Hamilton moved, second by R. Zukas to take the Finance Department Budget for \$182,825 under consideration.**

There was no discussion.

**VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**Legal:** Ch. Dobson noted there were submitted questions for Finance and asked for a motion to open discussion.

- **R. Zukas moved, second by P. Bracci to take the Legal Department Budget for \$81,000 under consideration.**

Discussion: In answer to submitted question G. Colby and M. Pearson noted that the increase to the budget was due to over 60 Right-to Know requests starting in September and averaging 10 per week requiring legal counsel to be engaged to comply with the laws. D. Britton said he had never heard of so much money budgeted for the Right-to-Know law and asked what has changed. J. Kiszka said that legally he cannot publically announce something that was heard in private session. He noted the issue is still ongoing and involves legal counsel. M. Pearson reported that legal expenses concerning the individual are running \$3-4,000 a month and they are not sure when it will be resolved.

**VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**Planning:** Ch. Dobson noted there were submitted questions for Planning and asked for a motion to open discussion.

- **R. Zukas moved, second by D. Britton to take the Planning Department Budget for \$81,000 under consideration.**

Discussion: In answer to submitted question G. Colby and M. Pearson noted that the Planning Administrative Assistant works with several committee and on average the split is Planning 60%, ZBA 15% and Energy 5%, as well as special projects for the Town Manager averaging 20%. Also they noted the Water project will start talking more time. D. Britton asked if the income from Planning goes into the General Fund and M. Pearson said that Planning expenses come out of the General Fund.

**VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**HR/Personnel:** Ch. Dobson noted there were submitted questions for this budget and asked for a motion to open discussion.

- **D. Britton moved, second by B. Hamilton to take the HR/Personnel Department Budget for \$1,910,526 under consideration.**

Discussion: In answer to submitted questions G. Colby and M. Pearson noted that employees have different health plans to choose from and those who choose to take the Town health plan pay 15% of the cost while the Town pays 85%. Asked if the percentage stays the same if an employee takes the family plan, M. Pearson said yes. B. Hamilton asked how many people had opted out of the health insurance and G. Colby said approximately five.

G. Colby note that the 2020 Performance Management budget is \$25,000 and it is being level-funded for 2021.

**Point of Order:** J. Kiszka cited a regulation requiring Roll Call votes if any member attends a meeting virtually. Ch. Dobson asked if this requirement came about with the COVID regulations and was told yes. He said the BOS has been doing this all along and it has always been the rule. Other committee members said that if the rule has been around for a while, the Board of Selectmen did not enact it until the previous week. Ch. Dobson said she would keep going and that people viewing the votes could see the hands raised and if there is an issue the committee will retake all the votes later.

**VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**Zoning:** Ch. Dobson noted there were no submitted questions for this budget and asked for a motion to open discussion.

- **D. Britton moved, second by R. Zukas to take the Zoning Budget for \$1,050 under consideration.**

There was no discussion.

**VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**General Government Buildings:** Ch. Dobson noted there were submitted questions for this budget and asked for a motion to open discussion.

- **P. Bracci moved, second by D. Britton to take the General Government Buildings Budget for \$348,650 under consideration.**

Discussion: In answer to submitted questions G. Colby and M. Pearson noted that renovation of the Town Hall Annex cost \$13,483 of which GOFERR reimbursed \$10,921. The funds to pave and stripe the Town Hall Annex parking lot came from the 2020 budget as approved by the BOS. The old court house is being used due to COVID and social distancing. There was discussion about using an office in the Safety Complex. G. Colby explained that equipment that takes care of the buildings is taken from building to building such as lawn mowers, snow blowers, etc. and there is no cost allocation. Vacuums are specific to the buildings.

The breakdown of income per department will be addressed at the next meeting.

**VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**Insurances:** Ch. Dobson noted there were no submitted questions for this budget and asked for a motion to open discussion.

- **D. Britton moved, second by R. Zukas to take the Insurances Budget for \$142,416 under consideration.**

Discussion: D. Britton asked how often the insurances go out to bid. G. Colby said there is really only one carrier, though he does monitor others. R. Zukas asked why the BOS increased the cost over the Town Manager's request and G. Colby said the original request was an estimate and they had the actual increase by the insurance company by the time the BOS voted. D. Heffernan asked if that would be the final figure and G. Colby said yes.

**VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**Advertising/Regional Assn:** Ch. Dobson noted there were no submitted questions for this budget and asked for a motion to open discussion.

- **B. Hamilton moved, second by D. Britton to take the Advertising/Regional Assn. Budget for \$26,500 under consideration.**

There was no discussion.

- **VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**Cable:** Ch. Dobson noted there were no submitted questions for this budget and asked for a motion to open discussion.

- **D. Britton moved, second by M. Dobson to take the Cable Budget for \$31,544 under consideration.**

Discussion: B. Hamilton asked Cable Coordinator D. Zanello whether the Committee could conduct a remote meeting at the Library. D. Zanello explained that a large group is not viable as the Library is not equipped to handle that; a smaller group might be handled but ideally it should be either entirely remote or out of Town Hall. B. Hamilton asked about Candidates Night at the Library and D. Zanello said there is a significant setup and production time that would be worked out in advance. R. Zukas noted the \$2,000 increase for dues and subscriptions and D. Zanello said the bulk was from usage due to COVID. D. Heffernan asked if the Town Garage could be used for Town Meeting and D. Zanello said that is in the works and has been approved by the BOS and will be paid from the Cable Franchise Fund. R. Zukas asked about the cost for equipment repaid always running over the budget. D. Zanello said the increase was due to upgrading the equipment to cover increased remote participation. R. Zukas asked if any of this extra COVID expense is recoverable. G. Colby said much had been covered by the GOFERR grant but that money has run out and future costs will be the Town's. D. Britton asked if there is income from the cable carrier. G. Colby said the Town is in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of its franchise agreement and hopes a new agreement will bring in more income.

- **VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**Other General Government:** Ch. Dobson noted there were no submitted questions for this budget and asked for a motion to open discussion.

- **D. Britton moved, second by B. Hamilton to take the Other General Government Budget for \$196,500 under consideration.**

Discussion: D. Britton said the Town Manager recommended \$130,000 and the BOS added \$4,000 was there a specific reason. J. Kiszka said it was changes in security due to hacking. G.

Colby said the \$4,000 was a reduction from the Executive Budget for technical supplies and equipment and was moved because it was internet related.

- **VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**Building Inspections:** Ch. Dobson noted there was a submitted question for this budget and asked for a motion.

- **R. Zukas moved, second by M. Dobson to take the Building Inspections Budget for \$136,881 under consideration.**

Discussion: The submitted question asked if the admin staff for this department is full time and the answer was yes. R. Zukas noted the budget last year for a temporary inspector was \$400 last year and almost \$4,000 was spent, and this year that budget line is \$500. He asked for the reason for the cost. M. Pearson said the one inspector went out on medical leave which was unanticipated. He noted the Town contracted with a temporary inspector and the \$400 would have covered 10 inspections, but the primary inspector was out of work for a long time. P. Bracci asked if the inspection payment pays this back and the money is a wash. M. Pearson said that was true. D. Heffernan asked if the new inspector would come in at the same rate and M. Pearson said the new inspector is interim and not paid at the same rate. D. Britton asked how inspections in 2019 compared with 2020 and what might be expected in 2021. M. Pearson said he has no idea what will happen in 2021. D. Heffernan suggested the budget is too high at \$105,000 if we are paying less than that right now to the building inspector. M. Pearson said there is also a staff member in the department and the new inspector is not paid at the same rate. D. Heffernan thanked him for clarifying this.

- **VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**Police:** Ch. Dobson noted there were submitted questions for this budget and asked for a motion to open discussion.

- **R. Zukas moved, second by D. Britton to take the Police Budget for \$2,011,175 under consideration.**

Discussion: a submitted question asked for explanation of line 01-4210-20-110 which fluctuates every year. The answer given was the budget number is based on actual police salaries, longevity, ETO buybacks, shift differentials and education stipends and other issues. M. Pearson said the current contract expire in April 2022. It was answered that the department must purchase VOIP licenses and data cards for the recording lines on dispatch phones. It was answered that an increase for gas in 2021 is anticipated as COVID had decrease patrols and response in 2020. The department has 6 of 10 vehicles with high mileage that are out of warranty incurring higher costs, and pursuit rated tires are replaced annually. D. Britton asked how often vehicles are rotated out and replaced. M. Pearson said it is done irregularly, they had

four new vehicles over the last 2 years and do not expect to ask for new vehicles for at least three years.

There was discussion of the crossing guard budget line. D. Britton asked if there would be changes due to remote learning. G. Colby answered the schools are billed for actual costs and if there are no guards there is no cost. D. Britton asked if any more officers would be added and M. Pearson thought the number of officers in the budget will be sufficient.

D. Heffernan asked about how the prosecutor added last year is working out. M. Pearson it is working very well. They had a contract with the Rockingham County Attorney's office which supplied two prosecutors for a lesser price than the Town was previously paying, and they covered everything as well as administrative hearings in Concord and juvenile, and are to provide training to the officers on an annual basis. S. Cafiso asked about the police chief in a part-time position. M. Pearson said it is working well and there has not been one citizen's complaint.

- **VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**Emergency Management:** Ch. Dobson noted there were no submitted questions for this budget and asked for a motion to open discussion.

- **D. Britton moved, second by R. Zukas to take the Emergency Management Budget for \$17,600 under consideration.**

There was no discussion.

- **VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**Highway Department:** Ch. Dobson noted there were no submitted questions for this budget and asked for a motion to open discussion.

- **D. Britton moved, second by B. Hamilton to take the Highway Budget for \$842,165 under consideration.**

Discussion: In answer to submitted questions G. Colby and M. Pearson noted that OT of \$40,000 was a best guess, drawn from a 3-year average of \$52,362.49 and the YTD being on the low side. Ch. Dobson asked about the 3% increase and asked if it happens every year. M. Pearson said yes, it's a five-year agreement and the increase to wages affects the increase to OT costs. G. Colby said years one and two had incremental increases but the rest are at 3%.

It was noted two similar lines had been confused and General Supplies at \$10,000 is an increase over 202 but General Supplies-Traffic is level funded from 2020 at \$30,000. Also the gas and oil budget was a decrease of \$2,200 from 2020.

The only road that was planned for pavement was Red Oak Drive which was shimmed for better plowing and is being allowed to freeze and settle. Money will be encumbered from the Block Grant for the paving.

It was noted the Town has always purchased salt in bulk because the Town piggybacks on the NHDOT bid pricing and must do so. S. Cafiso suggested more salt be bought at better prices since there is more storage space. M. Pearson said this is being done and there is now 400 tons in the new building. He noted the Town could now store 800 tons of salt.

R. Zukas asked about a major increase for crushed stone and asked if there was a project needing over \$10,000 for stone. D. Heffernan noted several emergencies needing crushed stone did come up last year.

- **VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**Health Department:** Ch. Dobson noted there were no submitted questions for this budget and asked for a motion to open discussion.

- **D. Britton moved, second by R. Zukas to take the Health Budget for \$88,617 under consideration.**

There was no discussion.

- **VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**Human Services:** Ch. Dobson noted there were no submitted questions for this budget and asked for a motion to open discussion.

- **D. Britton moved, second by M. Dobson to take the Human Services Budget for \$41,950 under consideration.**

Discussion: D. Heffernan asked if SoRock has come back to the Town again this year. J. Kiszka said they have not provided the requested information and it was unlikely they would come before the BOS in time. Ch. Dobson said it was on the ballot but voted down last year, could they come back again. J. Kiszka said they can try to do it every year if they want.

- **VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

**Recreation:** Ch. Dobson noted there were submitted questions for this budget and asked for a motion to open discussion.



- **R. Zukas moved, second by D. Britton to take the Recreation Budget for \$210,695 under consideration.**

Discussion: Answers to submitted questions were read. Regarding the need for a full-time Recreation Director it was noted there has been one for 20 years and the expectation is that things will return to normal in 2021, that the Rec Director is paid on an hourly basis and it is not a normal 9-5 position but varies throughout the year, and that Elder Affairs has come under Recreation this year. OT pay is possible for this position.

It was noted the budget is level funded from 2020 to continue with drainage and field improvements. D. Britton asked if this work can be done in-house or by contract. M. Pearson said it is done in-house if possible but also contractors are used for what the department cannot do. P. Bracci said he thought the idea had been to sue the Highway Dept. to help with this once the swales had been cleaned out. M. Pearson said that hadn't changed but he had not expected so much growth in the swales and the staff is not trained to do this specialty cutting.

R. Zukas noted the budget is down nearly \$100,000 this year and why the surplus isn't offsetting next year. G. Colby said there is still a lot more to be spent this year and he expects it to be 90% expended by the end of 2020

Summer Rec travel and participating campers were considerably less in 2020; there is an anticipation of returning to normal. M. Pearson said they expect to have money left over from the Summer Rec budget and they will not touch it.

The BOS approved the Rec Impact fees to be spent on some of the PARC field projects and there is no money left.

The Rec Revolving Account has approximately \$35,000 and the last purchase was for MyRec software, which is an annual fee of \$3,500. The rentals fees for PARC are deposited into the General Fund.

M. Pearson noted that it is unusual but if the Summer Rec director qualifies for OT s/he will be paid for it.

Approximately \$118,373 from the REC Impact Fees was used to pay for the new softball field, drainage and trails. Approximately \$40,468 was withdrawn from the REC Capital Reserve account to pay for improvements at PARC.

There were 3 baseball teams and 4 softball teams this year. There are no security cameras at PARC; it's on the plan but there has been no budget yet. REC pays \$150 yearly for Zoom because it is easier and more efficient to give the public access. Ch. Dobson asked if there is a plan to get all Town meetings on one platform. M. Pearson said no, some need higher security and different capabilities.

A question was submitted regarding warrant article P-21-15 requesting money to fence the new ball field at PARC as well as the shortstop fence, dugout, etc. weren't these to be paid for by REC Impact Fees and why aren't they being used for this new construction? The answer given was they were used to pay for the field. B. Hamilton asked for clarification and G. Colby said there is no money left in the Impact Fees, which come only from new building permits for new houses. M. Pearson noted that the fees will accumulate again and be used in this manner.

- **VOTE: 9-0-0. The motion carried.**

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

New Business: Ch. Dobson said she would get the Library budget for the next meeting. She asked if the Town was getting any closer to a new contract for Waste Collection. J. Kiszka said not yet possibly by next meeting. Ch. Dobson asked if the number is based on the JRM contract and M. Pearson said it was a baseline.

Ch. Dobson asked, this being a particularly difficult year, for a consensus of the members where the Committee stands on the budget as a whole, i.e. for 2020 it was decided a reduction was needed. D. Britton asked M. Pearson for an idea of what will be left in the General Fund at the end of the year that to offset the total budget being looked at now. B. Hamilton asked for more information on the COVID grant money; how much has been received, how much we are expecting, and how it affects the surplus budget for the year. G. Colby said there will be a surplus but the Grant money has been used for costs over and above the budget, so those costs have been removed from the budget to give a truer picture of year-to-date expenditures. He said there was roughly \$180,000 in GOFERR money, the Fire Department roughly \$120,000, and there was approximately \$15,000 of election money to offset the extra costs of mail-in ballots. B. Hamilton asked if the committee would see the November budget numbers; G. Colby said he hoped to have them soon. D. Heffernan suggested the Committee is moving along pretty well, and that he wants to see what the budget looks like after the staffing money for the Fire Department is moved to see how comfortable the Committee is with the bottom line. Ch. Dobson suggested the Committee would have a better idea of how to approach the budget once the suggested changes were made and asked G. Colby if it was do-able. He said December 22<sup>nd</sup> would be reasonable as long as there were no other major issues. Ch. Dobson said the Committee needs adequate time to make a decision before the Public Hearing on January 12, 2021.

M. Pearson said that about a week ago he learned that Plaistow has been selected as a regional COVID vaccination site. The logistics and the cost to the Town are not known, nor what might be reimbursable. He said that a major store costs about \$1,700 per hours so a 10 hour storm would be \$17,000. D. Britton asked for his best prediction of what will be left in the budget at the end of the year; M. Pearson said he did not know but G. Colby will be able to hone that in sooner than later.

Old Business: B. Hamilton said he took up Fire Chief Knutsen's invitation to visit him at the station and had a productive meeting. Chief Knutsen said he was planning to request warrant article funding replacing the tower truck, SCBA gear, radios and the fire rescue ambulance over the next few years.

The meeting focused on the ISO rating and the EMT training, as well as staffing of the two-person overnight detail of 158 hours each week. They discussed skyrocketing fire fighter OT and the need to still have regular personnel responding during the 6p-6a time period. They also discussed dangerous sections of roads that always require response and add to this cost. The last 9 months have been covered by the COVID Grant of \$126,592 which annualizes to \$169,000. B. Hamilton noted the cost of all of this on taxpayer bills is hard to determine but the costs are very large. He suggested that the cost of funding the two-person 6p-6a shift should be made by voters.

J. Kiszka said the BOS have created a potential warrant article for this but is looking to the Budget Committee to see whether it should go in the budget or to the voters.

- **D. Heffernan moved, second by B. Hamilton that the Budget Committee is in favor of the Board of Selectmen working with the Fire Department Chief to develop a warrant article for appropriate staffing for the Fire Department**
- **VOTE: 7 (M. Dobson, S. Cafiso, D. Heffernan, L. Milette, R. Zukas, B. Hamilton, D. Britton)-0-2 (P. Bracci , J. Kiszka). The motion carried.**

#### **Agenda Item 10: Adjournment**

There was no additional business presented and the meeting was adjourned at 9:13pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Charlene Glorieux  
Recording Secretary