



Town of Plaistow ♦ Budget Committee
145 Main Street ♦ Plaistow ♦ NH ♦ 03865

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting: November 7, 2023

Call to Order: 6:33pm

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* - present

Ch. Knutsen that Richard Anthony would not be present at the meeting.

Agenda Item 4: Review/Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the October 24, 2023 meeting were reviewed.

D. Thompson moved, second by R. Carves, to approve the minutes as issued

The motion was approved 7-0-0

Agenda Item 5: Budget Related Public Comment

Nolan Pelletier, 24 North Ave., Plaistow said that times are getting tough and the Budget Committee really needs to look at the department budgets and not rubber stamp them because everyone is struggling and questions must be asked. He said he had questions about the Police tower and suggested the better question is to ask why it is in disrepair, noting the Safety Complex is relatively new. He suggested that communications equipment that doesn't talk to all parties leads to inefficient use of personnel and elevated costs. He asked the members to ask serious questions and trim the fat where it is found in the budgets.

Agenda Item 6: Budgets

a) Highway Department - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$989,108 and the request for 2024 is \$1,040,364 an increase of \$51,256.00, a 5.18% increase.

Ch. Knutsen said the major contributing factor is a \$30,000 increase in salaries and \$15,000 increase to snow plowing due to a rate increase to accommodate the operating costs. D. Gerns asked about overtime costs exceeding budget in 2022 and 2023 and asked why when the storm season was not extreme. G. Colby said the season was hard and the \$20,000 expense was for overtime snowplowing. He said overtime is up as well because there has been a vacancy all year and having three people handle a four person work load. He said they are still looking for two full-time people for the department. He noted these are CBA positions and the Town is limited; that the contract was renegotiated to have wages to offer but they cannot find candidates. M. Collins suggested using a short-term temp service to get a candidate in and see if they will stay. G. Colby said he would look into it.

L. Kosta asked if the salary increases are due to the CBA and was told yes. She asked about the HW general supplies-traffic line. G. Colby said this is for cones and barricades and they had held spending this year because the snow budget had been overspent this year. He said the numbers in the budget were through September and in October they had spent almost \$34,000 and that full budget line is likely to be spent this year. He noted this equipment is perpetually being replaced due to wear and tear as well as the disappearance of cones. M. Collins asked what the Highway Grounds Maintenance line means. G. Colby said it's the grounds fertilization and maintenance including sprinklers and a contractor for landscaping. He noted due to the shortage of help a few years ago they started to outsource the mowing and maintenance of all Town properties including PARC. M. Collins applauded Dan Garlington for getting the most from his available dollars and doing a good job, noting the crew that works all night allows the fire and police to get where they need to go.

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

The motion was approved 7-0-0

b) Street Lighting - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$112,500 and the request for 2024 is \$95,000, a decrease of \$17,500, a 15.56 % decrease.

She noted this is for the replacement with LED lights. M. Collins asked if with the increase in LED light the budget will continue to decrease. J. DeRoche said the project is completed and all the lights have been converted. There is a five year plan to pay down the costs of all the conversions so the line will decline over the next few years.

D. Gerns moved, second by D. Thompson, to approve the Highway budget of \$95,000.

The motion was approved 7-0-0

c) Solid Waste Collection - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$1,009,478 and the request for 2024 is \$1,014,958, a increase of \$5,480, a 0.54% increase. She noted the Town is under contract. J. DeRoche said that going January there will be going into year three of a five year contract, and that around year four the Select Board will begin looking for a new contract.

D. Thompson moved, second by D. Gerns, to approve the Solid Waste Collection budget for \$1,014,958

J. DeRoche noted that residents can help reduce the cost by recycling. The recycling rate is \$20/ton while the trash rate is \$82 or \$84/ton. The cost of contaminated loads of recycling was discussed. J. DeRoche said contaminated recycling is charged as trash and the trash rate will be \$91/ton in 2024. There was a discussion of what constitutes contaminated recycling and the training and documentation for the townspeople. It was noted that the committee is not currently in place but could be reinvigorated. Possible help from the Boy Scouts was discussed. R. Anthony had arrived during this discussion and spoke to plastic bags as the worst contaminate for fouling up the sorting machinery.

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

d) Solid Waste Disposal/Landfill - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$37,500 and the request for 2024 is \$38,500 an increase of \$1,000 a 2.67 % increase.

J. DeRoche noted the majority of the budget is to monitor the cap, which is required by law. Ch. Knutsen noted that engineering went up by \$2,500 but grounds keeping went down the same amount. There was discussion of the specialized maintenance needed for the cap.

T. Carves moved, second by M. Collins, to approve the Solid Waste Disposal/Landfill budget for \$38,500.

The motion was approved 8-0-0

e) Health - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$90,450 and the request for 2024 is \$99,178, an increase of \$7,728 a 9.65% increase. She said the permanent position went up by almost \$2,000 and the part time position went up \$3,400. Mosquito control increased by \$2,000. There was discussion of department revenue.

D. Gerns moved, second by D. Thompson, to approve the Health Department budget for \$99,178.

The motion was approved 8-0-0

f) Human Services - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$46,884 and the request for 2024 is \$46,887, an increase of \$3.00.

L. Kosta moved, second by D. Thompson to approve the Human Services budget for \$99,178.

The motion was approved 8-0-0

g) Welfare Administration & Assistance - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$39,666 and the request for 2024 is \$38,910, a decrease of \$756, a 1.91% decrease.

J/ DeRoche asked if there were any updated expenditures for the budget. G. Colby said that through October the expenditures are at \$22,293 and there had been \$5,000 spent in rent assistance this week and the budget is likely to be overspent. M. Collins asked if proof is needed for a request and if there is a payback system. G. Colby said they need to meet the program requirements, and that some liens are outstanding. He noted the welfare office does everything by the book and very thoroughly. He said there is an extensive network of other area non-profits to which they are pointed first.

T. Carves moved, second by D. Gerns, to approve the Welfare Administration & Assistance budget as presented

The motion was approved 8-0-0

h) Recreation - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$194,111 and the request for 2024 is \$216,190 an increase of \$22,079, a 11.37% increase. She noted that the major increase was for part-time salaries from 57,000 to 78,000. This is for the summer program and attracting the kind of camp counsellors needed to monitor the children enrolled in the program.

M. Collins asked for clarification of RC Electric @ Fields line and the well pumps for five homes and what the water issue is. G. Colby said there were issues with the ground water and those homes are hooked into the municipal water system. J. DeRoche said they would look into it but he believes it's related to the BeeDee site which is right by PARC. G. Colby said the may possibly be contaminated wells due to road salt from the old highway garage. They will look into it.

R. Anthony asked if the budget would be revisited when the new information was obtained.

D. Thompson moved, second by T. Carves, to approve the Recreation budget for \$216,190

M. Collins asked about the revenue from the summer program. Ch. Knutsen said she didn't know what the summer program had brought in but currently the department has brought in \$98,170.

G. Colby said that the summer program would bring in nearly that whole amount of revenue.

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

i) Patriotic/Cultural – J. DeRoche noted that the Board of Selectmen have not yet voted on this budget as they will have the presentation at their next Meeting. Ch. Knutsen said this budget will be discussed at the Budget Committee's next meeting.

j) Conservation - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$7,225 and the request for 2024 is \$8,425, an increase of \$1200, a 16.61% increase. L. Kosta asked about the upcoming Public Hearing for the Conservation Committee and the certified mailing done by the Committee. G. Colby said this was paid for by the Conservation Commissions Fund which has accumulated over the years. M. Collins asked if there is any selective cutting that brings in revenue or if the local scouting groups are helping with trail maintenance. J. DeRoche says the Boy Scouts help to maintain the trails once or twice a year. There was discussion of the water testing done as part of the MS4 Stormwater management requirements.

M. Collins moved, second by R. Anthony, to approve the Conservation budget for \$8,425.

The motion was approved 8-0-0

k) Debt Service - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$568,198 and the request for 2024 is \$556,829 a decrease of \$11,369, a 2% decrease. R. Anthony asked what had been retired to bring a decrease to this budget. G. Colby said there is a predetermined debt schedule and it is being paid off. The original bond was \$8.5 million and it is down to \$6.4 million. There was a question about an increase in interest income; G. Colby explained that the Town has access to the NH public deposit investment pool and the interest rate has increased to around 5.4%

R. Anthony asked about the water system and the block of water that was bought to be sold to users, and the recent purge that was needed. G. Colby said the Town was reimbursed for the water that was used to flush the system.

D. Gerns moved, second by M. Collins, to approve the Debt Service budget for \$556,829.

The motion was approved 8-0-0

l) Library - Ch. Knutsen noted the 2023 budget was \$637,534 and the request for 2024 is \$670,525, an increase of \$27,284, a 4.28% increase. She noted salaries are up by almost \$13,000 and the health, life and disability insurance increase if \$19,445.

M. Collins asked if the Library had a janitor that works in that building alone. G. Colby said the library is his primary assignment, and that he could be available for other buildings if needed. There was discussion of the Library's hours and the amount of traffic the building has. M. Collins wished to have more factual information about the number of visitors. She wished that more departments would be more transparent in general for quicker answers to the public.

T. Carves moved, second by D. Gerns, to approve the Library budget for \$670,525

The motion was approved 8-0-0

Agenda Item 7: New Business/Old Business

Ch. Knutsen addressed requests for more information from the previous meeting.

Executive: Ch. Knutsen noted one of the questions was on the line item for rentals and leases and how long the copier lease was for. She said it is an ongoing process, that instead of buying a new copier it is leased for three years and then turn that machine in, get a new one for another three year lease.

Human Resources/Personnel: The question was about sick leave buy back. She noted that this does not have to do with retiring personnel, and read the following into the record:

The Personnel Plan Section E states: There will be a minimum of twenty (20) sick days in the sick pool for all employees in this plan after a period of four years. To obtain this minimum, an employee must take only the minimum allowed sick days for a period of four (4) consecutive years. After the four years, an employee may buy back the amount of unused sick days, leaving the minimum amount of twenty (20) days in the pool.

An employee may accumulate up to, but no more than a maximum of ninety (90) days in the pool. Upon the employee leaving her employment with the Town of Plaistow, she will be paid