

**Board of Selectmen
October 4, 2022**

Present: Richard C. Edwards, Chair; Kenneth G. Fifield; Dino A. Scala, Town Administrator; and Toni Bodah, Secretary. Mr. Edwards called the posted meeting to order at 5:03 p.m., the purpose being to continue review of the proposed 2023 municipal budget.

Assessing Operations – Ken Paul

Mr. Paul referred to having contracted several years ago for utility assessments, which has proven worthwhile. We are waiting for the cost of next year's contract, so the New Property Assessment line (01-41522-312) will need to be revisited. Mr. Edwards questioned whether the current pay rate for the Assessing Tech is in line with the wage study. Mr. Scala noted that Ms. Bickford is rather unique in this regard. Mr. Paul confirmed that Ms. Bickford is much more than a data entry clerk, being close to qualifying as an actual assessor.

Mr. Edwards questions the use of information obtained online by the Assessing Department (such as Google Earth). Mr. Paul stated that resource is used, in part, to determine whether comps are accurate. Mr. Edwards disagrees with this practice, stating that no other towns use Google Earth for this purpose. Mr. Fifield has no issue with this budget; however, he noted this department seems to be less accountable than others. People have a right to know where complaints come from. Mr. Scala indicated the Board may be questioning the use of Google Earth to find issues, rather than to check on complaints received. Mr. Paul questioned at what level is it acceptable for an individual to have insufficient/inaccurate information—is it 1 shed? 2?

Mr. Fifield stated the issue is more one of accountability than using Google Earth as a tool. He is not opposed to people paying their fair share, but one should be able to see how the issue started. Mr. Edwards believes it is spying and would like the Assessing Department not to use it, although he understands it is not his decision. Perhaps it is ok if there is a reason to view an area using Google Earth—because of a complaint—but we should not be looking for something to do. Mr. Paul indicated we should be checking assessment cards for accuracy so other taxpayers do not pay in excess. Mr. Fifield noted that if someone is selling their property and the information does not agree with information on the assessment card, one cannot just assume the information is true. You should give people time to address any discrepancy and you should be able to advise that individual how/why the information was checked. **Mr. Fifield moved the section total at \$87,918. Mr. Edwards seconded the motion, which passed 2-0. [Note: This section will be revisited when the cost of the utility assessment contract is known.** Mr. Scala stated we should be consistent in addressing issues.

Welfare – Amber Marcoux and Arlene Fogg

Ms. Marcoux noted the office is starting to get quite busy, so she increased hours for Ms. Fogg from 5 to 10/week. After referring to wage study data, it was decided Mr. Scala would develop a revised wage line for these positions, which the Board will consider at a later date. Mr. Fifield suggested adding \$1000 to the Director's line (01-44411-110) to cover an anticipated change. **Mr. Fifield moved the revised section total at \$55,532. Mr. Edwards seconded the motion, which passed 2-0.**

Police Department – Chief Mike Fenton

Surprise! The request figures for the Postage line and the Equipment Maintenance lines were transposed (and will be corrected). Chief Fenton noted that Equipment Maintenance line (01-42101-630) has been increased significantly as all costs involved have increased significantly. Chief Fenton noted that the price of gas was higher when he developed this draft budget; however, it will likely increase again. They use DoT or Irving, whichever is less expensive.

Chief Fenton advised Mr. Edwards that total mileage is tracked each year. If he does get 2 more officers back, there will be more patrol miles. **Mr. Fifield moved the section total at \$1,154,357. Mr. Edwards seconded the motion, which passed 2-0.**

Animal Control – Chief Mike Fenton

Chief Fenton reduced this budget slightly. **Mr. Fifield moved the section total at \$12,900. Mr. Edwards seconded the motion, which passed 2-0.**

Emergency Management (Civil Defense) – Chief Mike Fenton

Mr. Fifield moved the section total at \$3500. Mr. Edwards seconded the motion, which passed 2-0.

Public Safety Building – Chief Mike Fenton

Again, the cost of electricity and heating fuel has increased. The Telephone line (01-42992-341) includes stipends for use of personal cell phones for the Chief and LT. It may need to be adjusted again if the defibrillator lines should be included here. Chief Fenton will discuss with Chief Nason. **Mr. Fifield moved the section total at \$129,207. Mr. Edwards seconded the motion.** Mr. Edwards noted that the building needs to be washed. Chief Fenton is unsure whether funds will be available to accomplish that in 2022, but he hopes it can be done in 2023, when he anticipates not having as many unanticipated expenses. **The motion then passed 2-0.**

Discussed the sally port project, which may cost about \$75,000. Perhaps we should put \$35,000 in the CRF for the next 2 years. The fire bay also needs work. Chief Fenton has spoken with Chief Nason and Capt. Beveridge in hopes of including that cost in the CRF as well.

Other Business

Mr. Fifield moved to execute the waiver for Map 201, Lot 52 on Old Stage Road pursuant to the Payment Plan Agreement between the property owner and the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Edwards seconded the motion, which passed 2-0.

Mr. Fifield moved to adjourn at 6:38 p.m. Mr. Edwards seconded the motion, which passed 2-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Toni Bodah, Secretary

Approval of Minutes:


Richard C. Edwards, Chair

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Mark P. Duffy


Kenneth G. Fifield