

**Budget Committee**  
**October 31, 2020**

**Present:** Jerry O'Connor, Chair; David Mankus; Kenneth G. Fifield, Selectmen's Rep; Connie Twombly; Elizabeth Conner; Denny Miller; James Reinert; Paul Romano; and Relf Fogg, School Board Rep. Priscilla Colbath joined the session at 9:24 a.m. Also present were Dino A. Scala, Town Administrator; Toni Bodah, Secretary; and Jim Miller & Ted Taylor, Clearview Community TV. Department Heads/Committee representatives were present as indicated below.

Mr. O'Connor called the posted meeting to order at 9 a.m., leading all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Public Safety – Ambulance**

Mr. Miller referred to Fire Chief Nason's meeting with the CIP Committee, at which Chief Nason referred to the drastic increase in ambulance calls during the month of August. The Chief had planned to turn in an old ambulance (when he purchases another). However, given its low trade in value, as well as the increase in calls, Chief Nason plans to keep the older ambulance as a back-up. Mr. Miller noted that this department does spend much money; however, it is taking in a lot on the revenue side. Mr. Fifield estimated revenues to date to be in excess of \$221,000. Mr. Reinert asked about the collection rate of the private billing company with whom the Town has a contract. Mr. Scala believes it to be in excess of 88%. Mr. Reinert questioned whether the Town has looked at other billing companies. Mr. Scala advised it may have done so prior to his tenure. **Mr. Fogg moved the section total at \$544,466. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

**Public Safety – General Fire**

Ms. Twombly requested a breakdown of salaries; however, it was ultimately determined that she was actually questioning the salary of fulltime employees, which salaries are included in the Ambulance budget previously approved.

**Mr. Fogg moved the section total at \$210,605. Mr. Miller seconded the motion.** Mr. Reinert questioned the request for \$3000 in the Training line (01-42201-330), the explanation for which refers to 'New EMS Protocols'. Mr. Reinert stated these protocols are put out by the State, for which there is a free on-line course. Mr. Scala will obtain clarification from Chief Nason. Mr. Reinert reiterated the course is provided at no charge and is a 1-hour on-line course. Mr. Scala suggested the wording in the description column may be incorrect. Again: He will check with Chief Nason.

Mr. Fogg asked whether the Town still has a PILOT program with White Mountain Medical, noting that Town employees were getting shots there free of charge. Mr. Scala is not aware that Town employees receive shots there free of charge. It was noted that PILOT agreements go through the Board of Assessors. Discussion followed regarding the recent sale of the Medical Center, the purchaser, whether it is still a not-for-profit organization [HCA now owns the property and is a for-profit organization who will pay property taxes and will not offer free shots to Town employees.] Mr. Fifield believes the Town has not received immunizations through the PILOT program in a long time.

Mr. Reinert referred to the Medical Supplies line (01-42201-810). He questioned whether the Town has any contracts with medical supply vendors, as some may offer a discount if it has a contract with the Town (up to 25% off). He noted this appropriation seems excessive for such a small Town and suggested

the Town explore discounts via a contract. Mr. Scala will speak with Chief Nason. **The motion then passed 9-0.**

**Public Safety – East Wakefield Fire**

**Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$6811. Mr. Fogg seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

**Public Safety – Union Fire**

**Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$6230. Mr. Fogg seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

**Public Safety – Forest Fires**

**Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$2000. Ms. Twombley seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

**Community Services – Libraries**

**Mr. Fogg moved the section total at \$173,410. Ms. Twombley seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.** Mr. Miller noted he would like the Budget Committee to be updated as to the Gafney Library's expansion project. Mr. Scala noted that the Highway Department has inspected the area of the drainage line. The goal is to be able to do inside work during this winter. Funds are in line (through Profile Bank), although the Gafney plans to continue fundraising. Mr. O'Connor stated the Gafney Library has met with Planning Board.

**General Government – Heritage Commission – Phil Twombley**

**Ms. Twombley moved the section total at \$14,453. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 10-0 (Ms. Colbath now being present).**

Beryl Donovan of the Gafney Library joined the session at 9:19 a.m. and was asked to provide an update of the Library's expansion project. Ms. Donovan stated that the former barber shop has been demolished. The water lines are being put in. They hope to get the foundation in prior to winter. The Library has raised over \$800,000 in pledges and donations. In addition, they have secured a \$1 million loan with Profile Bank, although they hope to work that down quickly via donations. The Library has done private fundraising to date but will be approaching the public over the winter. The new building will include space for the youth library, more space for teens, an adult sitting area and more space for staff. They are working with Victor Vinagro to obtain a building permit. The actual construction is expected to begin over the next couple of months.

Mr. Miller asked about use of the existing basement, given the flooding issues. Ms. Donovan stated that area will become a community room, with a private entrance. It would be used for meeting space and a space to operate various library programs. She noted that his project is not part of the current expansion project. Eventually, they hope to bring the Literacy Program back to the Gafney Library. Mr. Miller offered his compliments to Ms. Donovan and the entire Gafney Library organization. Ms. Donovan stated that most of the thanks go to Dick DesRoches.

**General Government – Cemeteries – Phil Twombley and Jackie Keating**

**Ms. Twombley moved the section total at \$34,510. Mr. Fogg seconded the motion.** In response to Mr. Miller, Mr. Twombley advised that the new cemetery (Stonehedge) has 15 'residents'. The Lovell Lake Cemetery is only being used for cremation lots—no new burial lots are being sold there. \$600 of the cost for a 'Right to Inter' goes into the Cemetery Expendable Trust Fund, to be used at the discretion of

the Cemetery Trustees for any cemetery in Wakefield. Mr. O'Connor added that the Expendable Trust Fund is separate from the perpetual care funds. He noted that for the older cemeteries, one would receive a deed for their purchase of a burial lot. Now the Cemetery Trustees sell a Right to Inter, and no deed is issued. Mr. Twombly advised Mr. Miller that there are 140 cemeteries in Wakefield, about 40 of which receive maintenance at varying degrees. Mr. Reinert was advised that the \$600 buys a Right to Inter; there is a separate cost to open/close the site, which is handled by the funeral home. Mr. Twombly advised Mr. Fogg that at they are selling Rights to Inter in Section A only at Stonehedge Cemetery, on the left-hand side of the cemetery. Mr. Twombly also advised that although a well has been dug, the Trustees have not moved forward with that, for which they have a capital reserve fund. **The motion then passed 10-0.**

#### **Community Services – Conservation Commission**

Mr. O'Connor noted that this appropriation reflects an increase of \$500 over the 2020 budget. Mr. Miller stated there is close to \$250,000 in the Conservation Fund, which is fed by the land use change tax. Mr. Miller would encourage the Conservation Commission to look for property to purchase that would promote conservation. Mr. O'Connor noted that Fund includes both designated and undesignated funds, with the balance of designated funds (for the purchase of conservation property) being around \$180,000. Mr. Fogg advised that the Conservation Commission is currently looking at a 31-acre parcel in the Willey Road area. The process to purchase would include a public hearing. He stated that nearly 51% of land mass in Wakefield is either in conservation or current use. Mr. Miller hopes that some of the larger private tracts could be purchased to avoid future development. He understands it is difficult to find the perfect property to purchase. Mr. Romano noted that 2 good-sized parcels sold privately recently. It is unfortunate that the Town was not able to move quickly enough to purchase either. Mr. Mankus referred to the option of putting a conservation easement on property so that the land would only be used for agricultural purposes. **Ms. Colbath moved the section total at \$4896. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 9-0-1 (Mr. Fogg abstaining).**

#### **Human Services – Public Assistance**

**Mr. Fogg moved the section total at \$56,345. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

#### **Human Services – Outside Agencies**

VNA/Hospice \$9000 – (No rep present.) Mr. Miller noted the 2020 appropriation has not yet been expended. In the past, the Budget Committee has been hesitant to approve funds when an organization has not requested the previous year's approved appropriation. Mr. Scala referred to a software issue which has since been addressed. Mr. Miller noted it is a waste of everyone's time if funds are not requested. Perhaps the Town should send a reminder to those organizations. He added it makes one wonder whether the organization needs the money if they don't ask for its release. Mr. Fogg suggested establishing a deadline by which funds must be requested. It was agreed to table this request until the organization is contacted.

Ossipee Concerned Citizens – (No rep present.) **Mr. Miller moved the request at \$17,000. Mr. Romano seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

Starting Point – Deb Weinstein referred to their 24-hour emergency services and shelter. In April – June they had 2554 people in emergency shelter because of COVID. Last year they had 4800 bed nights for residents of Carroll County. 34 individuals from Wakefield were served, comprising 8.74% of those served in Carroll County. Their request is based upon the number of county residents served. **Mr. Fogg moved the request at \$4666. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

Northern Human Services – Valeda Cerasale was present via Zoom. She advised 148 Wakefield residents were served in 2019, for a value of \$106,823. They are seeking level-funding. Ms. Cerasale spoke to the various services provided. Mr. O'Connor asked whether they receive Federal funds. Ms. Cerasale stated they have not received much in either State or Federal funding. **Mr. Romano moved the request at \$4300. Mr. Fogg seconded the motion, which passed 9-0 (Mr. Miller was out of the room during this vote).**

Tri-County CAP – Lisa Hinkley advised that all services are included in this request, rather than just fuel assistance. The request is based on 2010 census numbers and the number of residents served. Discussed the difference in the 2020 vs. 2021 requests. Mr. Miller was advised that 174 Wakefield families received fuel assistance, with 148 families receiving assistance with electric. **Mr. Fogg moved the request at \$11,425. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

Greater Wakefield Resource Center – Victor Becker noted the GWRC had a difficult year due to COVID. They were essentially closed since early March. The support for the meals-on-wheels program has increased over 50%. They were able to resume senior meals via 'take-out' lunches beginning in August. Limited inside lunches began in early September (with restrictions), and attendance is increasing, including new attendees. Several other programs are beginning to return. Mr. Becker stated the GWRC would like to work towards self-sufficiency by reducing the amount being requested from the Town. Mr. Becker advised Mr. Miller that administration of the meals-on-wheels program is included in this request. **Mr. Miller moved the request at \$27,500. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

AWWA- Jon Ballanoff advised they are seeking level-funding. AWWA's main goal is to protect the water quality via various programs. The YCC was still able to operate this summer. AWWA continues to seek State grants to assist property owners near the lakes with failing septic systems. Mr. Ballanoff stressed that Town support for these efforts is critical. Mr. Ballanoff advised Mr. O'Connor that the Town of Acton contributes \$10,000 annually. **Mr. Fogg moved the request at \$15,000. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

White Horse Addiction Center – Mitch Yeaton thanked the Committee for its years of support. He noted the Center has received several commendations this year. The Center did not shut down during COVID but did revamp operations (although they are now back to 90% in-person service). 24 of their clients are from Wakefield. There were many visits into the various resource centers, and 24-hour emergency support services are available. Mr. Yeaton stressed the impact of COVID on children. He added that they were not able to fundraise in their usual manner due to COVID. Mr. O'Connor confirmed to Mr. Romano that the Budget Committee has authority to increase the appropriation should it so vote. **Mr. Romano moved the request at \$5000. Mr. Reinert seconded the motion.** Mr. Scala advised that the Board of Selectmen did not meet with outside agencies, instead turning the decision of funding over to the Budget Committee. Mr. Fifield noted that the Board did discuss whether to make recommendations

on these requests; however, it was believed the agencies would be better served via their presentation to the Budget Committee. Therefore, the Board of Selectmen made no recommendation on any of the requests from outside agencies. Mr. Fogg asked Mr. Yeaton whether school closures had an effect on the number of child patients. Mr. Yeaton noted that because a child is not in school, there are fewer adults able to recognize that the child may not be in a safe situation. In addition, not seeing your friends is very difficult for children. **The motion then passed 10-0.**

CASA – Julia LeFleur stated that 6 children from Wakefield were assisted during the past year. CASA has about 600 volunteers, and this appropriation goes to support those volunteers. COVID caused the reports of neglect/abuse to decline; however, they expect a surge in cases once the situation is back to normal. Ms. Twombly noted that CASA has not yet requested release of its 2020 appropriation. Ms. LeFleur will address that issue. **Ms. Twombly moved the request at \$1000. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

Food Pantry – Mr. Miller advised the Food Pantry was open throughout COVID, serving 60-70 families each week. Their FIT program is based on WIC guidelines. Mr. Miller noted that families have trouble supporting their children when school is closed. Of all the Food Pantry volunteers, only the cleaner is paid. Mr. Miller stated that the request should be reduced from \$7000 to \$6000. Ms. Conner confirmed that the Food Pantry receives support for the FIT program. **Mr. Fogg moved the request at \$7000. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion.** Mr. Fifield suggested increasing the request to \$9000. Mr. Miller stressed that the Food Pantry can get by on \$6000. Ms. Twombly expressed thanks to all the wonderful people connected with the Food Pantry. Mr. Romano agrees with increasing the request. Ms. Conner stressed that the Food Pantry does its own fundraising and has a generous support base. She stated that the Town can use the additional funds being suggested in other ways, agreeing with Mr. Miller that the request should be reduced to \$6000. Mr. Miller advised Mr. Reinert that the FIT program does not continue when school is in session. It will be reactivated should the local school close. **The motion then passed 9-1.**

Cross Roads House – Jessica Parker noted that although Portsmouth seems far away, they do provide service to the Wakefield area. Their emergency/transitional shelter also provides meals. Ms. Parker spoke to the change in their operations due to COVID. Mr. O'Connor noted that the Town's Welfare Director has spoken previously in favor of this resource. **Ms. Colbath moved the request at \$1500. Mr. Fogg seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

Children Unlimited – Barbara Ross thanked the Committee for its support. She advised they have a subcontractor in Wolfeboro who focuses directly on Wakefield. **Mr. Fogg moved the request at \$1500. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

Cornerstone VNA – Kerrie Landry is grateful for the in-person meeting. Cornerstone has always had the technology in place to be able to keep contact with patients. She spoke to their services/programs offered. They also use the 2010 census information to calculate their request for funds. The value of services provided to Wakefield residents was in excess of \$50,000. They receive no Federal funding other than Medicare and Medicaid. Priority is given to those towns who provide funding. Mr. O'Connor spoke to the importance of the services provided. **Ms. Colbath moved the request at \$4000. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

WPI – Victor Becker noted that WPI was on the brink of dissolution, as the manageable projects for which it formed had been accomplished. However, recently the Board of Selectmen have agreed to move forward with the east fire stair addition project. With that decision, WPI is back in business! Therefore, WPI is requesting a \$10,000 appropriation for 2021. He provided a summary of the east fire stair project, adding the need to revisit the existing plans and get updated cost estimates. Funding for the project would involve WPI funds, public support and a Town warrant article. Discussion followed regarding the existing plans, as well as funding to cover the cost to update the estimated project cost. The potential impact on Town Hall operations must be considered. Mr. Becker advised the plans include a small addition to each floor, in the form of meeting/office space on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors and a code-compliant egress from the stage, as well as space for mechanical equipment for future air conditioning on the opera house level. Mr. Becker advised Mr. Fogg that LChip funding may be available. **Mr. Fogg moved the \$10,000 request. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion.** Mr. Fifield stated that the Board of Selectmen is in favor of moving forward with this project, although there may be confusion about the funding. Mr. Miller noted that the CIP committee just completed review of the 5-year plan, and this project was *not* included. He recommended the cost/plan be included on the CIP quickly so there are no surprises to the community. Mr. Fogg assumes that the existing plan is still applicable and should be used for any competitive bidding. Ms. Colbath can put a placeholder in the CIP document for this project. **The motion then passed 10-0.**

**Mr. Fogg moved to table confirmation of the bottom line of this section until we hear from VNA/Hospice. Mr. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

**Mr. Romano moved to adjourn at 11:12 a.m. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Toni Bodah, Secretary