

Budget Committee
November 2, 2019

Present: Jerry O'Connor, Chair; Priscilla Colbath; Paul Romano; Frank Zappala; Relf Fogg, School Board rep; Denny Miller; Elizabeth Conner; Kenneth S. Paul, Selectmen's rep; and Toni Bodah, Secretary.

Also present were Fire Chief Todd Nason; Jim Miller and Tim Ouellette (videographers); Dick DesRoches; Pam Wiggin; and various agency representatives as noted below. At 9 a.m. Mr. O'Connor called the posted meeting to order and led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Safety – Ambulance – Chief Todd Nason

Chief Nason noted that the wage line (01-42152-110) includes the recent adjustment to the wage chart, which also impacts the holiday line (01-42152-190). Mr. Miller questioned whether additional staff will need to be added to each shift due to multiple calls. Chief Nason stated they are doing well so far with call personnel. Mr. O'Connor was advised that ambulance revenues year-to-date are at approximately \$194,000. Discussion followed regarding the increased number of calls compared to 2018. Chief Nason estimated that about 85% of those calls result in transport. **Mr. Fogg moved the section total at \$535,165. Mr. Romano seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

Public Safety – General Fire – Chief Todd Nason

Chief Nason noted that after meeting with the Selectmen, the wage line (01-42201-120) was increased. However, the Chief would like to reduce this line in an attempt to offset a portion of the increase in the ambulance budget. Therefore, he would like the Committee to approve \$77,000 in that line. Mr. Fogg asked about CRF appropriations for equipment. Chief Nason noted that last year we discussed the cost of both a truck and an ambulance. He is still trying to determine a price for a rescue vehicle. The ambulance CRF has \$73,000, so he believes we could push that out another year. Discussed the need for a rescue boat, which he has not yet had an opportunity to investigate. Mr. Miller cited \$450,000 to \$470,000 for a rescue vehicle. Chief Nason is looking at other options. He is also looking into whether anything could be transferred from the current rescue vehicle to a new vehicle.

Mr. O'Connor referred to the low expenditures in the clothing line (01-42201-290). Chief Nason advised he usually places a fall order, holding back to see how the budget is going in case vehicle maintenance is required. Mr. Romano questioned the process used without a rescue boat. Chief Nason clarified that they do have a 12' aluminum boat, but they can't do much with it in the winter so they go across the ice with lines. Mr. Romano asked who makes the final decision on such a purchase. Mr. O'Connor explained the process of the department head discussing this with the Selectmen, then the Selectmen presenting the proposal to the Budget Committee—perhaps in the form of establishment of a capital reserve fund. Mr. Romano stated this equipment is very important for the safety of residents and personnel. Chief Nason advised Ms. Conner that Tuftonboro has this equipment, and we rely on them. Ms. Colbath noted that the CIP committee recommends appropriating \$45,000 for this in 2020.

Mr. Miller noted that this budget went down, which is not usual. Chief Nason explained that some of the costs are actually being covered under the public safety building budget. **Mr. Fogg moved the section total at \$199,777. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

Public Safety East Wakefield and Union Fire – Chief Todd Nason

Chief Nason advised he has added the cost of a telephone line in each location for Internet in order to monitor the heat remotely.

He advised Mr. Romano that these buildings are not monitored by a contracted firm. **Mr. Miller moved the East Wakefield Fire total at \$6230. Mr. Fogg seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

Mr. Miller moved the Union Fire total at \$6230. Mr. Zappala seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.

Public Safety – Forest Fires – Chief Todd Nason

Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$2001. Mr. Zappala seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.

Community Services – Libraries

Gafney Library – Dick DesRoches and Beryl Donovan – Mr. Miller asked whether any funds come from the SAU for the adult learning program. Mr. DesRoches advised that the testing center is funded by the SAU. In addition, those taking the test must pay a State mandated fee. Mr. DesRoches noted that they had discussed the percentage of their budget for Wakefield and Brookfield. The Town Administrator had pointed out that for other contracted services, the Town of Wakefield charges the Town of Brookfield 12.3%. He stated that the residents of Brookfield also have the option of using the Wolfeboro library, as their children attend school in that district. Mr. DesRoches believes it is unlikely that Brookfield will be willing to appropriate more than 10% for the Gafney's budget. He did note that the Gafney may be ready to begin its planned expansion next year.

Ms. Colbath noted that she believes the School Board may have reduced the appropriation for HiSET (formerly GED) testing from \$6500 to \$3000. Mr. Fogg advised that was put back into the SAU line. Ms. Donovan advised she is working with Principal Gregoire on this.

Mr. DesRoches spoke to the difficulty in finding an area of the budget to cut without reducing hours of operation. Ms. Conner asked about their fundraising efforts. Mr. DesRoches referred to their annual year-end appeal. Ms. Donovan stated that it is difficult to ask the Town for money. She distributed a fact sheet for 2018, noting that 40% of the Wakefield community utilizes the Gafney. Libraries have changed over the years. Many patrons use the computers, make job applications and receive computer training. There are monthly art exhibits, and, yes, there are still books on the shelves. Staff work with patrons regarding reading and viewing options, running "Tween" programs, STEM and STEAM projects with kids—basically providing education in many different ways. When the expansion occurs, there will be more space for programs. AARP holds a tax service in the winter, and the Knit Wits meet in the library to make hats for cancer patients. The resources for the residents are manifold. Ms. Donovan stressed that we should be proud of our library and added that the Gafney should not be afraid to ask for funding. **Mr. Paul moved the section total at \$173,410. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 8-0. [This motion included the Gafney Library, Wakefield Library and the Adult Learning Program.]**

General Gov't – Heritage Commission – Pam Wiggin

Ms. Wiggin noted there is a small increase in lines for salary, fuel and supplies. She will continue to encourage members to attend more training, although there are no expenditures year-to-date. Mr. Miller asked about the status of Turntable Park. Ms. Wiggin advised they received a grant for \$18,500 and have been working with the Town and State to extend the lease for that property. Several members of the Commission, as well as the Town Administrator, met in Concord to try to move things along.

We are currently in a 'carry-over' stage with the lease. The architect indicates there are some artifacts located sub-surface. Ms. Wiggin states this is a sensitive historic site. If the Town is eventually able to purchase this property, the fair market value may be reduced due to the existence of these artifacts. We have also determined there is another underground tank. She noted that the railroad transferred approximately 1 acre of land to the Town a number of years ago. The Commission hopes to tie this property together with the project in Union. Mr. Miller asked who will ultimately decide whether to lease or purchase the property. Ms. Wiggin stated that the Board of Selectmen would decide. She hopes the Town will be able to purchase; however, she believes that the State only has a long-term lease on the table. **Mr. Fogg moved the section total at \$14,727. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

General Gov't – Cemeteries

In response to Mr. Miller, Mr. O'Connor advised that approximately \$1500/quarter is realized in interest from invested cemetery funds. **Mr. Fogg moved the section total at \$34,510. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

Community Services – Conservation Commission – Relf Fogg

Mr. O'Connor noted that the Commission still has restricted/unrestricted funds totaling \$131,000. In response to Mr. Miller, Mr. Fogg stated that the Commission does not have any property in mind to purchase. Mr. O'Connor asked whether the unrestricted funds could be used to fund camperships. Mr. Fogg stated that the fund is for conservation-based items. He noted they had more interest in 2019 and continue to encourage more youth to attend. Concern was expressed that the funds may not be used. Ms. Colbath noted that 1 Commission member is now in charge of generating interest to attend camp. She noted that the campers' family also must contribute to this effort. **Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$4396. Mr. Romano seconded the motion, which passed 7-0-1 (Mr. Fogg abstaining).**

Human Services – Public Assistance - Arlene Fogg

Ms. Fogg referred to increasing the line for her assistant in order to accomplish more training. Eventually, she will take over for Ms. Fogg. Ms. Conner asked whether the Director's wage line (01-44411-110) is affected by the 27 pay periods. Ms. Fogg advised that it is; however, she will be gradually cutting back her hours during the second half of the year. **Mr. Fogg moved the section total at \$46,841. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

Mr. O'Connor called a recess at 10:02 a.m. and called the meeting back to order at 10:16 a.m.

Human Services – Outside Agencies

Central NH VNA – David Emberly – Central NH VNA is seeking level funding at \$9000. Mr. Emberly reviewed the history of the services provided. They have a new location at 645 Main Street in Wolfeboro. They turn no one away for inability to pay. Mr. Miller referred to funding for hospice. Mr. Emberly stated that funding comes from Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance and private pay. A doctor's certification is required for hospice care. **Mr. Paul moved the request at \$9000. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

Mr. Fogg moved to hear from Cornerstone VNA at this time. [No second; however, the Committee did hear from Cornerstone VNA.] Julie Reynolds & Kerrie Landry – Ms. Reynolds reviewed services provided and area covered.

Ms. Landry provided stats for Wakefield. Visits have increased. They also provide care regardless of ability to pay. The Town funding goes towards un- and under-insured participants. **Mr. Fogg moved the request at \$4000. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

Ossipee Concerned Citizens – This request is for level funding. **Ms. Colbath moved the request at \$15,012. Mr. Zappala seconded the motion.** Mr. Becker explained that this program is for ‘meals on wheels’. This request represents the cost for OCC to prepare the meals for which GWRC coordinates delivery. The meals served at the GWRC are subsidized by the State. **The motion then passed 8-0.**

Starting Point – Deb Weinstein – Ms. Weinstein reviewed the services provided and stats for Wakefield residents. This organization works with Wakefield Police Department and provides transition housing, as well as short-term housing. They are seeking level funding. **Mr. Miller moved the request at \$3291, which is the Selectmen’s recommendation. Mr. Zappala seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

Northern Human Services – **Mr. Fogg moved the request at \$4300. Ms. Conner seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

A brief discussion of the American Red Cross followed. No request was received from this organization.

Tri County CAP Energy – Lisa Hinkley – Ms. Hinkley noted they requested level funding at \$6000. She reviewed stats and the process used. Ms. Hinkley also referred to their outreach efforts. Mr. Miller asked how many homes in Wakefield applied for fuel assistance last winter. Ms. Hinkley cited 177 homes. She explained to Mr. Miller that the amount of assistance provided is based on a formula. Ms. Colbath noted that the Selectmen reduced this request to \$5000 and asked how that would affect operations. Ms. Hinkley stated Wakefield residents will still be served. She added that they are trying to make up for the short-fall in funding, adding that staff has been reduced. They have to adjust depending upon the funding available. Ms. Hinkley advised Mr. Zappala that the value of services provided to Wakefield residents was \$278,749.63 for heating assistance, electrical assistance and weatherization.

Mr. Fogg questioned the next request for Tri County CAP Homeless. Ms. Hinkley stated that Tri County CAP administers a number of programs out of the same building, each having its own budget. She advised Mr. Miller that this is not a new program, but it is a new request. Ms. Colbath questioned why the Selectmen moved \$1000 from the energy program to the homeless program. Mr. Paul advised that the request for the homeless program was received a little late so the Board moved \$1000 from energy. He stressed that all these requests are important; however, we must live within our means. The residents will see an increase in their taxes this year. Discussion followed regarding the difficulty in working to keep a budget in line. Mr. Zappala noted that many residents contribute in other ways, such as the ‘Neighbor Helping Neighbor’ fund on our Eversource bill. Ms. Hinkley stressed that they are always grateful for any funds received. **Mr. Fogg moved the request for energy at \$5000. Mr. Zappala seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

Mr. Miller moved the request for homeless at \$1000. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion. Mr. Fogg was advised that an account number for this line will be assigned by the Finance Clerk.

The motion then passed 8-0. Ms. Fogg noted that the homeless outreach is very difficult and needs better sources of funding.

GWRC – Victor Becker – Mr. Becker spoke to the variety of programs offered at the GWRC. Two principal programs involve senior meals. The GWRC organizes delivery of meals to approximately 30 recipients 5 days a week, the meals being prepared by Ossipee Concerned Citizens. In addition, they run a senior meals program 3 days a week at the GWRC. The cost of the meals is subsidized by the State and are prepared at the facility. Mr. Becker noted that the GWRC has reduced its overall request. They are partnering with the Pride of Wakefield Volunteers to publish the community calendar. In addition, they are working on several small fundraising projects. Therefore, they hope to better implement the promise that the GWRC would not need financial support from the Town of Wakefield. 2 other towns are now contributing toward their operating budget. In several years, they hope to complete the second floor, which will result in additional office space rentals. **Mr. Fogg moved the request at \$29,000. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

WPI – Victor Becker – Mr. Becker noted that WPI greatly reduced its 2020 request due to the fact they have finished most of the projects they can handle on their own. The renovation project of Town Hall is sort of on hold. WPI put together a proposal for the next important piece of the project, being the addition of fire stairs on the east end of the building. This proposal is now in the hands of the Town Administrator. If/when the project is approved, WPI does not have much they can do. If this project ultimately is rejected, WPI will likely dissolve. Mr. Becker spoke to the plans developed by Salmon Falls Architecture. **Mr. Fogg moved the request at \$1000. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

Mr. Paul asked about the status of the balcony project. Mr. Becker advised that a mechanical engineer determined that if we could shift the burden of the fully loaded balcony (49 people) off of the 2 slender metal rods, that would relieve any question about code. It had been noted that “it ought to meet code; however, there is not a danger”. However, when discussed, the Selectmen agreed it could be a liability so no use is allowed without special exceptions approved by the Selectmen. This exception was granted for the World Music Festival in 2014. We would need to install temporary support from the balcony to the floor of the hall. Also, there is always a possibility of someone falling off the balcony. WPI took this project off the table until fixed seating (as required by the State Fire Marshal at a cost of \$50,000) is installed and additional metal headrails at the base of all stairs. There are structural issues—we would need to sister the joists in the ceiling of the administrative floor, which would be costly and disruptive.

AWWA – John Balanoff and Dick DesRoches – AWWA is seeking level funding. Mr. Balanoff referred to their efforts to protect water quality on our lakes. He spoke to the Youth Corps program, educational programming at Paul School and their current work on a State of NH grant for failing septic systems on the lakes. This is a cost-share program. **Mr. Fogg moved the request at \$15000. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion.** Mr. Miller asked about the process to determine whether a system is failing. Mr. Balanoff stated that the dye tests of the past are very inconclusive. Now they base this process on physical sponging water on the surface. The attempt is to identify tanks at risk of failure. Those over 30 years old are likely at high risk. Mr. Balanoff advised Mr. Fogg that the property owner would need to follow up with the State Subsurface office. Mr. DesRoches stressed there is no intent to be a program to replace all septic systems on the lake. Rather it is a demo program for 10 sites. **The motion then passed 8-0.**

White Horse Addiction Center – Mitch Yetman – Mr. Yetman cited their added services for 2019. They saw 19 Wakefield residents during the past year. He referred to various statistics and noted they have a pilot program with the hospital in North Conway. It is anticipated they will expand this program in 2020. Their goal is full continuum care. Mr. Yetman spoke to the gap between the cost to provide services and funding received. Mr. O'Connor asked whether there is any supervision to the food/clothing program. Mr. Yetman referred to donations received from food banks. **Mr. Zappala moved the request at \$2500. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.** Ms. Fogg stated that White Horse has never refused her call, adding they are extremely helpful.

CASA – Mr. Paul moved the request at \$750. Mr. Romano seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.

Wakefield Food Pantry – Mr. Paul moved the request at \$7000. Mr. Romano seconded the motion. Mr. Miller noted they have 72 volunteers, only 1 of which is paid to clean the building. They only ask for the funding from the Town to cover overhead (which goes up every year). **The motion then passed 8-0.**

Cross Roads House – Mr. Fogg moved the request at \$1000. Mr. Romano seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.

Children Unlimited – Barbara Ross – Ms. Ross indicated they serve the entire county, all children under 21. Basically, they connect people to other resources. They have served 9 Wakefield families this year. Most of their referrals come from DCYF and hospitals. **Mr. Miller moved the request at \$1500. Mr. Fogg seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

Minutes – Ms. Colbath moved to approve the minutes of October 30, 2019. Mr. Romano seconded the motion, which passed 7-0-1 (Mr. Fogg abstaining).

The material for review of the proposed school budget will be available on November 6. The first meeting is scheduled for November 12 @ Town Hall. 2 meetings are scheduled; another will be scheduled if needed. Mr. Miller noted the Budget Committee will need to review the Town's warrant articles. He would also like to see the Town's projected revenues at that time. Perhaps this will be scheduled for December. The public hearing will be in January.

Mr. Fogg asked about the deadline for petition warrant articles for Budget Committee review. Mr. O'Connor noted the Committee only reviews articles which appropriate funds. Mr. Fogg suggested the purpose of an article might be to save money. Mr. O'Connor stated the Committee might consider such an article. Mr. Miller referred to the possibility of an article to increase the Board of Selectmen from 3 to 5 members. No money would be appropriated, but it might cost more to pay stipends to 5 members. Mr. Paul suggested that the approved appropriation would be split among 5 members instead of 3. Discussion followed as to when such an article would become effective if passed.

Mr. Paul moved to adjourn at 11:34 a.m. Mr. Romano seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Toni Bodah, Secretary