

Budget Committee

January 12/14, 2021

Present: Jerry O'Connor, Chair; Ken Fifield, Selectmen's Rep; Connie Twombly; Relf Fogg and Peter Kasprzyk, SWP Rep. Members present via Zoom: Priscilla Colbath; Denny Miller; Paul Romano; Dave Mankus and Elizabeth Conner (joined the session in progress). Also present were Dino Scala, Town Administrator; Rosemary Stewart; Jim Miller and Max Gehring (Clearview TV); and Toni Bodah, Secretary. Others were present via Zoom as well.

Mr. O'Connor called the posted meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. and led all in the Pledge of Allegiance. He then referred all to the Town's proposed warrant articles and reviewed as follows:

#2 - \$50,000 for the Bridge Construction CRF (current balance \$232,301.10).

Ms. Twombly moved to recommend this article. Mr. Fogg seconded the motion.

It became apparent at this time that we were experiencing technical difficulties with Zoom (those on Zoom were not able to hear those present in person). Despite the best efforts of Mr. J Miller and Mr. Gehring, the issue could not be resolved. At 6:30 p.m., Mr. O'Connor recessed the meeting to Thursday, January 14, 2021, at 6 p.m. (which date/time had been included in the posting for this meeting).

On Thursday, January 14, 2021 at 6p.m., Mr. O'Connor called the session back to order. At this time those present, in addition to Mr. O'Connor, included Ken Fifield, Selectmen's Rep; Relf Fogg and Connie Twombly. Members present via Zoom were Priscilla Colbath; Paul Romano; Denny Miller; Elizabeth Conner; and Dave Mankus. Also present were Dino Scala, Town Administrator; Jim Miller and Max Gehring (Clearview TV); Tom Daniels; and Toni Bodah, Secretary. Various School/SAU personnel were present (in person and via Zoom).

In response to Mr. O'Connor, it was estimated that 6-8 Budget Committee members plan to attend Deliberative Session in person. Mr. Scala explained that as it now stands, only those individuals attending in person will be able to vote.

Mr. O'Connor then redirected all to Article #2 on the Town's warrant, for which there is a motion on the floor in favor of recommendation. **The motion passed 9-0.**

#3 - \$60,000 for the Ambulance CRF (current balance \$171,519.18). **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend article #3. Mr. Twombly seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

#4 - \$50,000 for the Fire Truck CRF (current balance \$388,423.86). **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend article #4. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

#5 - \$25,000 for the Highway Heavy Equipment CRF (current balance \$51,692.45). **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend article #5. Mr. Twombly seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

#6 - \$25,000 for the Highway Truck CRF (current balance \$12,137.89). **Ms. Twombly moved to recommend article #6. Mr. Fogg seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

#7 - \$10,000 for the Transfer Station Heavy Equipment CRF (current balance \$5233.18). **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend article #7. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

#8 - \$31,625 for the Invasive Species ETF (current balance \$1689.34). **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend article #8. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

#9 - \$34,000 for the Police Cruiser CRF (current balance \$1839.06). **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend article #9. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion.** Mr. Fifield explained that this article is for replacement of a cruiser; article #10 (@ \$20,000) is for future replacement of a command vehicle. They will seek an additional \$20,000 next year as well. **The motion then passed 7-1 (Ms. Twombly voting against; Ms. Conner off-screen).**

#10 - \$20,000 for the Police Cruiser CRF (current balance \$1839.06, as stated above). **Mr. D Miller moved to recommend article #10. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion.** Mr. Fogg asked about this vehicle. Mr. Fifield advised that every ± 8 years, the command vehicle is replaced, which is either a pick-up or a suburban. Mr. D Miller stated that the CIP Committee is in support of these vehicles. The plan is to replace the K-9 vehicle, then the command vehicle, every 3 years. **The motion then passed 9-0.**

#11 - \$2500 for the Technology CRF (current balance \$1207.16). **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend article #11. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

#12 - \$10,000 for the Town Hall Improvements CRF (current balance \$12,475.58). **Mr. Fifield moved to recommend article #12. Mr. Fogg seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

#13 - \$325,000 for the Highway Construction Project CRF (current balance \$14,423.27). **Mr. Fifield moved to recommend article #13. Mr. Fogg seconded the motion.** Mr. D Miller noted that in past years the Highway Superintendent would address the Budget Committee regarding the roads to be improved. He has no problem with the warrant article; however, the Budget Committee should be in the loop regarding expectation of road projects. Mr. Scala advised that Brock Mitchell will have that information for Deliberative Session, which information can be distributed to the Budget Committee prior to that session. **The motion then passed 9-0.**

#14 - \$6000 for the Assessing Statistical Update CRF (current balance \$5453.09). **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend article #14. Mr. Fifield seconded the motion.** Mr. Fogg advised that in 2023 the Board of Assessors will need to do a statistical update at a cost of \$30,000. That Board had originally requested \$12,533 in this article in order to maintain adequate level of funding. He anticipates an effort at Deliberative Session to increase this appropriation. Mr. D Miller stressed that this update is mandated by the State. The CIP Committee spoke with the Assessing Technician and recommends \$12,533. Her recommends increasing this at Deliberative Session or we will need to put the funds in the operating budget. Ms. Colbath agreed

with Mr. Miller that the CIP supports the original request of \$12,533. Mr. Scala advised that the Board believed it was keeping this in line with past appropriations. **The motion then passed 9-0.**

#15 - \$5000 for the GWRC CRF (current balance \$20,459.70). **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend article #15. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion.** Mr. Scala advised Ms. Twombly that there are no specific projects in mind; but these funds would be used for the exterior of the building. Ms. Colbath believes they may be working towards replacement of the roof. Mr. D Miller noted the Town is getting close to the end of the 20-year commitment. At some point, the Town deserves a presentation from the BoS/GWRC regarding the long-term plan for the building. **The motion then passed 9-0.**

#16 - \$30,000 for the PSB CRF (current balance \$25,280.50). **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend article #16. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion.** Ms. Twombly questioned whether there is a project in mind. Mr. Fifield noted that during the recent renovations, they had planned on addressing the sally port; however, they ran out of time. The plan now is to renovate the sally port with 3 separate doors, with one bay specifically for use in bringing in prisoners. Until that is accomplished, we do not meet code for prisoner transport. Mr. D Miller added that the building is now 20 years old and the roof is beginning to leak, which must be addressed. Ms. Twombly questioned how much either project would cost. Mr. D Miller stated the CIP has the roof listed at \$60,000. **The motion then passed 9-0.**

#17 - \$25,000 Public Works Building CRF (current balance \$25,280.50). **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend article #17. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion.** Mr. Scala noted we will eventually replace the existing building. Mr. Fifield added that there are currently 2 proposals. One group is looking at a combined Parks & Rec/Highway building. Another thought is that we are going to have to do something so we should begin to put funds aside. Mr. Fogg asked whether the Board would consider an ICF rather than a wood or steel building. Mr. Scala anticipates they would consider all possibilities. **The motion then passed 9-0.**

#18 - \$50,000 for the Wastewater Treatment CRF (current balance \$72,821.17). **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend article #18. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion.** Mr. Scala noted that the pump stations are in dire need of attention. **The motion then passed 9-0.**

#19 - \$10,000 for the Cemetery Maintenance CRF (current balance \$2065.86). **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend article #19. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

#20 - Establish a Cardiac Monitor CRF and appropriate \$62,000 for that fund. **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend article #20. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion.** Mr. D Miller advised that the CIP Committee discussed this with Fire Chief Nason. Typically, we trade-in the oldest ambulance. However, the current one has such little value that we will keep it and have the availability of a 3rd ambulance. The cardiac monitors we have will no longer be able to be maintained and must be replaced. Mr. Fifield noted the 3rd ambulance will not only be a spare, it will also be used if we receive transport requests. Mr. Scala advised Mr. O'Connor that Chief Nason currently has 2

quotes: 2 monitors for \$67,000; 2 monitors for \$80,000. The State has extended the life of our current monitors so we can get another year out of them. Mr. Fogg asked if the 3rd ambulance would require additional employees. Mr. Fifield stated that is not anticipated; however, it could likely result in increased revenue. Mr. Scala referred to there being a number of days when both ambulances are out--especially in the summer. Revenues were projected at \$350,000, 78% of which was actually realized. **The motion then passed 9-0.**

#21 - Operating Budget (\$6,129,657) and Default Budget (\$6,128,129). **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend article #21. Ms. Twombly seconded the motion.** Ms. Twombly asked whether the tax impact is lower than last year. Mr. Scala believes it is lower. **The motion then passed 9-0.**

Minutes: Ms. Twombly moved to approve the minutes of January 6, 2021, as presented. Mr. Fogg seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 (Mr. D Miller and Mr. Fifield were not present for the vote).

Mr. O'Connor opened the Public Hearing at 6:48 p.m. He directed all to the 4-page budget summary. He read the total appropriation for each section, asking for comments as follows:

General Government - \$1,921,887

Mr. Daniels noted that the 2020 budget included an extra pay period, and asked whether that has been removed for the 2021 budget. Mr. Scala advised we have budgeted for only 26 pay periods for 2021; however, wage lines were also adjusted to reflect wage increases. Mr. Scala advised Ms. Twombly that the new pay chart is public knowledge.

General Government Buildings - \$340,699

Public Safety - \$2,022,206

Public Works - \$683,275

Solid Waste - \$470,528

Animal Control - \$25,888

Human Services - \$118,891

General Assistance - \$46,345

Community Affairs - \$365,758

Financial Affairs - \$0

Sewer Budget - \$128,059 (anticipated revenues to off-set this budget)

Mr. Scala noted that the Operating Budget is \$1521 higher than the Default Budget. He referred to the large increase in Personnel Administration. This relates in part to a 2020 discrepancy in the cost vs. appropriation for health insurance. In addition, the cost of this insurance has increased 6.4% for 2021.

Mr. Fogg referred to grant revenue. Mr. Scala referred to reimbursement received from the CARES act, as well as the Highway Block grant. Rooms & Meals will only be 40% of previous years. Mr. Fogg referred to the School's practice of gross budgeting.

Mr. O'Connor referred to the \$6121 in grants under Capital Outlay. Mr. Fifield confirmed these are highway safety grants. The Town pays the employees, but is reimbursed 100% by the State. He expects several departments to see increased revenues--namely, Ambulance and Transfer Station. If that occurs, we hope to be able to keep the tax rate lower.

Mr. O'Connor directed all to the Town warrant articles and asked for questions. Mr. Daniels commended the Town Administrator, Board of Selectmen and the Budget Committee on the outstanding job of putting together the 2021 budget and offered several comments: 1) He hopes that \$12,533 is appropriated for the statistical update in order to avoid a 'bubble' in the tax rate. 2) He also hopes that, moving forward, the Board of Selectmen give consideration to putting funds for police cruisers in the operating budget, rather than in warrant articles. Mr. Daniels noted voters may be confused when they see 2 articles. He believes a cruiser is need each year, while the other 2 vehicles need to be cycled in. 3) He questioned why the Town pays \$50,000 for something only used by a few (referring to the Wastewater Treatment article) and why it is not paid through the Sewer Fund, which is actually funded by the users of the system. Mr. Scala noted that some people agree. Mr. Mitchell is looking into grants so that the taxpayer does not have to pay. If the system fails, the Town must fix it. Mr. Scala added that the lines have been scanned and are in good shape. Just the 2 pump stations require attention. Mr. Fogg added that the school is connected to the sewer system, so the greater town does benefit from the system. Mr. Miller suggested bonding the project should it cost \$200,000 - \$300,000. In that event it may be expedient for the Town to procure the bond, with the district to pay the Town back later.

Mr. Scala reminded all that the 2021 Deliberative Session will be held at the Paul School (to allow for social distancing) on January 30 at 9 a.m.

Mr. O'Connor closed the public hearing for the Town Budget and Warrant Articles at 7:14 p.m. Mr. Scala and Ms. Bodah left the session and are grateful that Ms. Colbath will provide minutes for the remainder of the meeting/public hearing.

Respectfully submitted,
Toni Bodah, Secretary