

Budget Committee
November 2, 2022

Present: Jerry O'Connor, Chair; Denny Miller; Dave Mankus; Tom Daniels; Ken Fifield, Selectmen's Rep; John Parker; Howie Knight; Marc Taliaferro; Priscilla Colbath; Bob Ouellette, School Board Rep; Elizabeth Conner; Michelle MacDonald, Finance Clerk; Dino Scala, Town Administrator; and Toni Bodah, Secretary. Those also present included Police Chief Mike Fenton; Angie Nichols, Tax Collector; Victor Vinagro, Shoreland Officer; and Raetha, Starting Point. Mr. O'Connor called the posted session to order at 6:30 p.m. and led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Safety – Chief Mike Fenton – Mr. O'Connor noted that the largest increase relates to salaries, which was discussed in September. Chief Fenton advised there are currently 2 vacant positions. An offer was extended for one position, without success. Mr. Daniels referred to the large increase in the Holiday line (01-42101-190) and the low year-to-date expenditures. Chief Fenton noted part of the reason for low expenditures is the vacant positions. He anticipates that will not be the case in 2023. Mr. Miller referred to the \$21,442 listed for build/install of the new cruiser. Chief Fenton advised that some equipment can be transferred from older vehicles, but not all. He also advised there are currently no unused vehicles at the Police Department. Gas is purchased through the State of NH or at Irving, which has been less expensive lately. Mr. Fifield stated that Irving bills the Town monthly and automatically eliminates the tax and includes a fleet discount.

Mr. Daniels referred to all wage lines, some of which note that COLA and/or merit are not included. He asked whether any of those lines include COLA. Mr. Scala advised that all departments excluded COLA and anticipated merit increases. He added that merit increases will be included in the Payroll Contingency line (01-41551-190). Mr. Scala anticipates that the Selectmen will consider the CLOA next week. Mr. Fifield noted that the Board has reviewed every wage line meticulously and has made adjustments where necessary. However, they do not want to slide backwards, so the Board is discussing 3% or less for COLA, which would be effective April 1, 2023. **Mr. Knight moved the section total at \$1,154,357. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Public Safety – Civil Defense – Chief Mike Fenton – Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$3500. Mr. Knight seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.

Public Safety – Public Safety Building – Chief Mike Fenton – Mr. Miller stated that the \$23,000 to be appropriated for #2 fuel could be reduced to \$13,000 if we were equipped to use propane, and stressed we should determine how to proceed for the long term. Mr. Scala advised Town buildings were recently evaluated with this in mind, and we may have a proposal next week. Discussion followed between BTU's and costs.

Chief Fenton requested that the Custodial line (01-42992-360) be increased to \$21,750, reflecting the new contract, for which there was only one proposal. The adjusted bottom line would become \$132,029. Mr. Scala noted that the Electricity line (01-42992-410) for the PSB is spot-on; no change is required. **Mr. Knight moved the revised section total at \$132,029. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Public Health – Animal Control – Chief Mike Fenton – Chief Fenton advised this has always been a part-time position and is currently held by a civilian, rather than a certified officer. Due to his efficiency, the number of hours has been reduced. This individual uses the PD's pick-up truck.

Budget Committee

November 2, 2022

Page 2

In response to Ms. Conner, Chief Fenton advised that the AC officer is available by phone; or pertinent information is obtained at the station and saved for his next shift. **Mr. Daniels moved the section total at \$12,900. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Financial Affairs – Capital Outlay – Chief Mike Fenton – The Board of Selectmen has not yet reviewed this section. Chief Fenton shared some anticipated grant information. Mr. O'Connor suggested the Committee review this section in December when warrant articles will also be reviewed. Mr. Scala confirmed to Mr. Miller that the Selectmen will prepare a warrant article to reduce the percentage of the land use change tax going to the Conservation 03 Fund. Chief Fenton advised Mr. Fifield that he will not be looking for any grant for new equipment.

Mr. Fifield invited Chief Fenton to comment on proposed financial support of Starting Point. Chief Fenton confirmed his department utilizes their services for many domestic violence issues. They share a good working relationship, and Starting Point provides great services.

Mr. Miller referred to the sally port project, which was discussed last year as a potential safety issue. We will need an appropriation to address this in 2023.

Starting Point – Raetha – Mr. Miller questioned how the requested appropriation was determined. Raetha advised they use a percentage of victims served, plus a base amount per town. She had no information as to why Starting Point did not submit a request for 2022. They have 3 facilities, including a shelter in Carroll County, a walk-in service, as well as an office at Huggins Hospital. Mr. Miller stressed the importance of seeking payment of this request should the Budget Committee approve same; otherwise, it is unlikely funding will be granted in the future. **Mr. Knight moved the request at \$6864. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Gen'l Gov't – Voter Registration – This department is seeking level funding. **Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$2557. Mr. Knight seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Gen'l Gov't – Financial Administration – Angie Nichols – Mr. Knight asked whether we have a new contract for the audit. Mr. Scala advised this is a multi-year contract. Perhaps the increase relates to the possible need for a single audit, based on the amount of grant funds received. Mr. Scala suggested the rate listed in the explanation column for the Deputy (01-41504-110) should be changed to \$21.02, based on the \$350 the Selectmen added to this line. It was noted that the Selectmen had estimated the increase for this line when they were adjusting the relevant wage line. [Listed wage of \$20.02 accurate—no change necessary.—tb] **Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$117,962. Mr. Knight seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Gen'l Gov't – Land Use – Victor Vinagro – In response to Mr. Miller, Mr. Vinagro stated YTD revenues exceed \$13,000. **Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$15,102. Mr. Knight seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Public Safety – Code Enforcement/Building Inspection – Victor Vinagro – This department will obtain a vehicle from the DPW (via the Transfer Station) and will no longer need to rely on use of a personal

vehicle. Mr. Daniels was advised that the Clerk's wage line was adjusted. YTD revenues are \$132,565. **Mr. Knight moved the section total at \$189,072. Mr. Miller seconded the motion.** In response to Mr. Miller, Mr. Vinagro stated they have issued permits for 52 new homes this past year, each permit being valid for 2 years. Although he was unsure of the number of additions permitted, he noted that a significant number of seasonal homes were converted to year-round dwellings, especially on the lakes.

Mr. O'Connor noted the Town should no longer need to pay for repairs on personal vehicles now that this department has 2 vehicles. **The motion then passed 11-0. [Note: The Committee will need to review this budget as they were not made aware of a change in 2 wage lines by the BoS.—tb]**

Mr. Fifield noted that the mindset is that it is best to provide a Town vehicle for employees that need to utilize a vehicle on a regular basis as part of their job. Mr. O'Connor can understand driving a personal vehicle to attend a meeting, but he did not imagine that an individual would need to utilize a personal vehicle on a regular basis to conduct Town business. Mr. Knight noted that this situation creates a liability issue. Mr. O'Connor noted that a number of years ago a Town seal was adopted, and he questioned why that seal is not used on all Town vehicles. Mr. Fifield agreed that since the adoption of that seal, a number of department heads seem to have used whatever design they choose. He agrees all should be using the same seal.

Ms. Conner asked whether employees take vehicles home. Mr. Fifield advised that depends upon the situation. If snow is predicted, the DPW Director may take a Town vehicle home as he will need to come back out. Several officers may take a vehicle home in various situations. Mr. Vinagro stated he occasionally takes a vehicle home if he has an early appointment for an inspection. He personally drives about 20 miles in that situation, while the Building Inspector would drive 7-10.

Gen'l Gov't – Greater Wakefield Resource Center – Mr. Knight moved the section total at \$1. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.

Community Services – Patriotic Purposes – Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$1500. Mr. Knight seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.

Gen'l Gov't – Personnel Benefits – This section cannot be completed until the Selectmen decide on a COLA. Mr. Miller referred to the contract with Brookfield, which has been at the same percentage for a number of years. This formula is based on population, which figures Mr. Scala will check. Discussed the number of calls for service. Mr. Fifield's experience indicates Wakefield is on the 'upside' of the situation. He noted Brookfield also contributes to large projects—such as, building the PSB—as well as to our relevant capital reserve funds.

Mr. O'Connor questioned who makes the decision as to whether to participate in the mutual aid system. Mr. Miller stated that, with respect to fire, Chief Nason decides whether to call in, or respond to, mutual aid. Mr. Fifield advised that the police enter such agreements on an individual basis, rather than belonging to an organization. The Fire Department belongs to Ossipee Valley Mutual Aid, which is more encompassing. The DPW mutual aid came about with emergency road washouts. Mr. Scala added that

Budget Committee

November 2, 2022

Page 4

in such a situation, he would hear from the DPW Director, following which a consensus from the Selectmen would be obtained.

Mr. Scala offered the following information based on questions raised at the October 29 meeting: He shared information regarding the land use change tax going into the Conservation 03 Fund. The correct path would be to adjust the percent of that tax to go into that fund. Mr. Scala has reached out to the Chair of the Heritage Commission but has not yet received an answer regarding why they are not using their 04 fund for the mini-split. The balance of that fund is \$80,693. Mr. Twombly has indicated that if the Budget Committee removes the cost of the mini-split from the operating budget, he will likely present a warrant article for same. Not all of the 04 funds are restricted. Mr. Fifield would want to know how much of the balance is not restricted. If that is a sizable amount, he would expect it could be used for the suggested purpose. Based on research conducted by Ms. MacDonald, Mr. Scala offered the following adjustments to various electricity lines:

Heritage Commission 01-41913-410 reduced to \$4500 – **Mr. Knight moved the revised line to \$4500. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Town Hall 01-41941-410 reduced to \$14,500 – **Mr. Miller moved the revised line to \$14,500. Mr. Knight seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Town Hall Annex 01-41942-410 increased to \$2200 – **Mr. Knight moved the revised line to \$2200. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Street Lighting 01-43161-410 increased to \$38,000 – **Mr. Knight moved the revised line at \$38,000. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Parks & Rec 01-45201-410 decreased to \$2200, plus the \$1080 for another purpose in that line, for a total line at \$3280. **Mr. Miller moved the revised section total to \$236,449. Mr. Fifield seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Highway Department 01-43122-410 decreased to \$7000 – **Mr. Knight moved the revised line at \$7000. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Transfer Station 01-43241-410 decreased to \$11,000 – **Mr. Knight moved the revised line at \$11,000. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

East Wakefield Fire 01-42202-410 decreased to \$1300 – **Mr. Knight moved the revised line at \$1300 (new section total \$7300). Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Union Fire 01-42203-410 decreased to \$1000 – **Ms. Conner moved the revised line at \$1000 (new section total at \$9014). Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Sewer 02-43262-410 increased to \$12,500 – **Mr. Knight moved the revised line at \$12,500 (new section total \$134,527). Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.**

Ms. MacDonald confirmed that she will continue to track these costs.

Minutes – Ms. Colbath moved to approve the minutes of October 27, 2022, as presented. Mr. Knight seconded the motion, which passed 11-0.

The Committee will meet with the School on November 7, 2022, in the Town Hall conference room, as the opera house will be set up for voting. **This meeting adjourned without objection at 7:56 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted, Toni Bodah, Secretary