

## **Budget Committee**

### **October 30, 2019**

**Present:** Jerry O'Connor, Chair; Priscilla Colbath; Paul Romano; Tracey Kolb, School Board Rep; Frank Zappala; Charlie Edwards, Selectmen's Rep; Elizabeth Conner; Denny Miller; Dave Mankus (joined the session at 6:52 p.m.); Kelley A. Collins, Town Administrator; and Toni Bodah, Secretary.

Those also present included: Jim Miller and Tim Ouellette (videographers); Angie Nichols; Sandy Cools; Victor Vinagro; Police Chief John Ventura; Sandy Johnson; and Connie Twombly.

Mr. O'Connor called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. and led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Collins referred to the Parks & Rec budget, previously reviewed by the Committee. At the time of that review, we were still waiting for bids for Park Caretaker (01-45201-590). This bid has since been awarded at a cost of \$23,390.01. Therefore, Ms. Collins suggested the Committee consider adjusting this line to \$23,400, for a new section total of \$186,076. **Mr. Miller moved to increase the line as recommended and approve the new section total at \$186,076. Mr. Romano seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

Ms. Collins distributed a 'cheat sheet' for tonight's schedule, 2019 tax rate information, as well as information related to the recent wage survey. Mr. Miller questioned how much of the unassigned fund balance was used to offset the tax rate. Ms. Collins stated that the voters approved use of \$50,000 for paving the PSB parking lot. The Board of Selectmen chose to use an additional \$200,000 against the 2019 tax rate, leaving the balance at approximately \$1.8 million, or 10.86% of operating expenses. She reminded all that unassigned fund balance is not cash in the bank. It includes uncollected taxes. Mr. Miller asked whether the Board of Selectmen is considering use of the unassigned fund balance for any 2020 warrant articles. Ms. Collins advised that she has just started the process of drafting articles, and the Board has not discussed funding of same. Ms. Collins referred to \$116,000 received from the State several years ago under SB 38. \$10,000 was spent on bridge engineering. We had planned to use \$40,000 for Union sidewalks; however, DoT said "no". That \$116,000 will drop into the unassigned fund balance unless the Board votes for other uses. She will recommend that \$53,000 be put in the Road Construction CRF, and \$53,000 be put in the Bridge CRF; however, she has not yet met with the Board in this regard.

#### **Public Safety – Police Department – Chief John Ventura**

Chief Ventura confirmed that this budget includes the School Resource Officer for a full year. In addition, the wage lines are affected by the 27 pay periods in 2020. Chief Ventura had originally presented an operating budget that included the cost of a new cruiser, rather than run the risk of having that warrant article fail. However, he and the Board agreed to move that appropriation back to the CRF (via a warrant article). He explained that we have been moving from sedans to suv's, and the equipment does not transfer well from one to the other. The cost for the equipment will remain in the operating budget, and it is the last year we will need to purchase new equipment for suv's.

Ms. Conner asked whether the Town receives revenue from violations. Chief Ventura stated the only revenue comes from violation of a Town ordinance or a minor in possession of alcohol. We also get revenue from pistol permits.

Mr. Romano received confirmation that there are AED's in the cruisers. In response to a question from Ms. Conner, Chief Ventura stated he anticipates significant expenditures from the 3 wage lines prior to year-end. **Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$958,469. Ms. Conner seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

**Public Safety – Emergency Management – Chief John Ventura**

This request is the same as 2019. **Ms. Colbath moved the section total at \$2250. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 8-0.**

**Public Safety – Public Safety Building – Chief John Ventura**

Chief Ventura noted that they had underestimated the cost of a full year's use of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. The 2020 proposed budget should be accurate. In addition, there is a new cleaning contract, to include additional cleaning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. The Computer & Communications line (01-42992-820) includes enhanced anti-virus software.

Mr. Miller noted that the CIP committee met with the Chief, at which time discussion included the fact that the building is now 25 years old and will require maintenance. The CIP committee recommends starting a capital reserve fund for this purpose, first to address a new roof. Chief Ventura noted that the parking lot was just completed, one furnace went last year (and the second is the same age), the generator needs maintenance, and several leaks have occurred in the roof over the past year. The roof should be replaced within 1-2 years. Mr. O'Connor noted that the Budget Committee has already heard that the Highway Garage needs work. **Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$112,443. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

**Public Health – Animal Control Officer – Chief John Ventura**

Chief Ventura noted that year-to-date expenditures are down as the vacant position was not filled until August. The current employee will work 24 hours per week, so the budget request remained constant. **Mr. Romano moved the section total at \$25,888. Mr. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

**Financial Affairs – Capital Outlay (PD Grants) – Chief John Ventura**

Chief Ventura advised Mr. O'Connor that the grant application deadline is usually May 1. He advised Mr. Miller that the equipment grant must include a device to track data. Mr. Miller was also advised that NH does have a seat belt law for juveniles. **Ms. Colbath moved the section total at \$22,524. Ms. Conner seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

**General Gov't – Supervisors – Sandy Cools**

Mr. O'Connor referred to 4 elections in 2020. Mr. Miller was advised that the responsibility for developing the Supervisors' budget rests with the Supervisors. **Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$3003. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

**General Gov't – Financial Administration – Angie Nichols**

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[Thanks for the yummy cookies, Angie!] Ms. Conner questioned how much of the increase in the Tax Collector wage line (01-41504-130) is attributable to the extra pay periods. Ms. Nichols advised it includes an increase in the number of hours per week, plus a rate increase. **Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$103,651. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

### General Gov't Land Use – Victor Vinagro

Ms. Conner questioned the clerical line (01-42401-110). Ms. Collins noted it includes funds for Mr. Vinagro (\$12,000) and Ms. Passariello (\$9500) for the time they do work for the Land Use boards (which time had been tracked). Ms. Collins is trying to more accurately reflect the cost of each department's business. Ms. Conner noted that the line for Building Inspector should go down. Ms. Collins confirmed that it does (to \$38,000). In April 2019, both the Shoreland Protection Officer/Co- Code position and the Building Inspector/Co-Code positions went to full-time. Mr. Vinagro's position will remain at full-time. However, when we lost the Building Inspector, that position was reduced to part-time (15-32 hours/week) and Ms. Passariello's position was changed to full-time.

Mr. Miller questioned how much time each week would be devoted to shoreland protection. Mr. Edwards stated that it will depend upon the need at the time. The Code office may be busy one week, while the Shoreland office is busy the next. Ms. Collins stated that the SPO was originally a 10 hour/week, \$20/hour position. That has morphed and now includes more than enforcement—education and assistance is a big part of the position. Mr. Miller referred to the lakes being an important asset to the Town and added he wants to make sure we are devoting enough resources to protect those assets. Mr. Vinagro estimated that he spends about 15 hours per week on shoreland. Ms. Collins referred to the current transitional period.

Ms. Conner asked whether the clerk position will go back to part-time when the part-time building inspector is hired. Ms. Collins indicated that is not likely, adding that the clerk will receive training as a permit tech. Ms. Conner asked if permit revenues are down this year. Ms. Collins advised that all revenues were down through July; however, most have recovered somewhat. Mr. Vinagro advised Mr. Miller that when the SPO/Co-Code and BI/Co-Code were both part-time, one would work Tuesday – Friday, the other Monday – Thursday. When the BI was not in the office, Mr. Vinagro would perform building inspections.

Mr. O'Connor referred to the decrease in the legal line request (01-41911-320) from \$10,000 to \$5000. Ms. Collins referred to anticipating court cases for 2020.

Mr. Miller asked Mr. Edwards whether the Board of Selectmen has any inclination to determine how many inspections are required on a building project, noting that in the past this was left up to the Building Inspector. Mr. Edwards stated that as a member of the Board he would like to be more involved. He believes Mr. Vinagro can narrow the need for inspections and therefore reduce the cost to build. He personally believes the Town of Wakefield overcharges for permits and would like to see them concentrate on big things rather than little things. Mr. Miller referred to 2 Selectmen having contractor experience, and it seems as though the Town should be setting the standard. Mr. Edwards noted that it has been discussed. Mr. Vinagro stated that the former building inspector did 3-4 inspections for insulation.

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He can accommodate this with 1 inspection. He generally would like to do 3 rough inspections at once, then inspect the insulation. Mr. Miller stated that people should have an expectation of the standard number of inspections. Mr. Vinagro referred to life safety, adding that the inspections still need to be done; however, they can be consolidated.

Mr. Mankus noted that it has been great to be able to refer people to Mr. Vinagro regarding questions/issues on the lakes. Ms. Conner agrees Wakefield's permitting fees are high. If we can bring the cost of operating the building department down, can we reduce the fees? Mr. Edwards hopes that will happen. Ms. Collins suggested the Board work on a formula (with Mr. Vinagro) .

Ms. Collins confirmed to Ms. Kolb that it is hoped the \$5000 in the legal line will be sufficient. Mr. Mankus referred to the \$332 expenditure for the planning consultant. He approved of hiring a consultant to review large plans. Mr. Vinagro stated that Mike Garrepy has done a great job for the Town of Wakefield. Mr. Vinagro also utilizes the services of NHMA quite a bit. Mr. Vinagro confirmed to Mr. O'Conner that ZBA and Planning Board members continue to go to seminars. Ms. Collins noted that NHMA's free legal line can be used for generic questions; however, they prefer not to become involved in issues already in Court. **Ms. Colbath moved the section total at \$36,002. Mr. Romano seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

### **Public Safety – BI/Code Enforcement – Victor Vinagro**

IN response to a question from Ms. Conner, Ms. Collins advised that we had been 3 years behind in GIS/911 mapping. Mr. Vinagro and Ms. Passariello have been instrumental in getting caught up. We hope not to get behind again.

Ms. Colbath questioned why the Board reduced the request for Printing/Supplies (01-42401-610) from \$6500 to \$4600. Ms. Collins explained that a former employee recommended purchase of 6 filing cabinets. The Board suggested purchasing 1-3, then go from there. Mr. Vinagro also noted that he has located 6 used file cabinets at a much lower cost. Filing space, however, remains a concern. We could keep some information in digital form; however, we do not currently have that capability. Mr. Vinagro then confirmed to Mr. Mankus that all software listed in the Computer Software line (01-42401-342) is important. **Ms. Colbath moved the section total at \$138,260. Ms. Conner seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

### **General Gov't – Greater Wakefield Resource Center**

Ms. Collins noted that according to the Management Agreement, the GWRC group takes care of the inside of the building, the Town takes care of the outside—as well as any interior emergency situations. There is a capital reserve for the roof and other large repairs. This appropriation is for outside maintenance, and there is no actual plan for its use. Mr. Edwards suggested giving the building to the GWRC. Ms. Collins noted there is a stewardship agreement in place through 2022, during which time the Town cannot dispose of the building. On November 6, the GWRC will address the Board regarding potential grants being sought by Joe Kenney to address the second floor. If additional grants are received, it would push a stewardship plan out by another 20 years. Mr. Miller questioned the voters' involvement in make such a decision. Ms. Collins referred to the Board of Selectmen having the fiduciary responsibility as owners of the property. Although Victor Becker and Joe Kenney have been

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instrumental in finding and applying for grants, they would need to be signed by the Board of Selectmen. Many agencies that originally agreed to take space in this building did not do so. The end result did not match the original intent. Mr. Miller stated that many citizens from surrounding towns receive services at the GWRC. He expects a good debate as the current stewardship period comes to an end, adding that the voters should have a say. Ms. Collins noted that most of those attending the senior meals are from Wakefield. However, surrounding towns should be willing to assist financially. She suggested the GWRC directors meet with the Food Pantry directors regarding the solicitation of funds from other towns. **Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$5000. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

### **Community Services – Patriotic Purposes**

Ms. Collins advised that we always need to purchase Veterans' flags for the cemeteries. She will also replace some banner holders. **Mr. Miller moved the section total at \$1500. Ms. Conner seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

### **General Gov't – Personnel Benefits**

Ms. Conner referred to a number of towns trying to change the retirement benefit. Ms. Collins stated that once you opt in to NH Retirement System, you must stay in it. The Town does not pay Social Security for Police and Fire hired after a certain date. She confirmed to Mr. Miller that the proposal is to offer life/short term and long term disability insurance to 36 full-time employees. She had suggested this 3 years ago as most towns offer same. According to NHMA, 80% of the 234 towns and cities they represent also offer life, long and short term disability insurance. We are currently able to attract good employees, but we must also retain them. She referred to the recent 3% adjustment to the wage chart. This new proposal is the second piece of that effort. The suggested appropriation is for 9 months. Mr. Romano asked how many Police and Fire employees we lose for better paying jobs. Ms. Collins is not sure, as there are many reasons why an employee leaves. She did note that the number of employees leaving is going down. She referred to the cost to hire/train new Fire and Police employees. If we can retain them, it is a good thing. Mr. Edwards agreed. Ms. Collins advised Ms. Conner that employees receive benefits at 35 hours/week. Much discussion followed regarding full-time vs. part-time employment. **Mr. Romano moved the section total at \$1,129,724 (to include an additional \$16,268 for health insurance). Mr. Zappala seconded the motion, which passed 8-1 (Ms. Conner voting against).**

Ms. Collins distributed 'cheat sheets' for Saturday's session, which she will not attend.

**Minutes – Ms. Colbath moved to approve the minutes of October 21, 2019, as presented. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion, which passed 7-0-2 (Mr. Zappala and Mr. Edwards abstaining as they were not present on 10/21/19).**

Mr. O'Connor noted we will need to establish a date/time for reviewing warrant articles. The next meeting of the Budget Committee is scheduled for Saturday, November 2 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. **Ms. Colbath moved to adjourn at 8:09 p.m. Ms. Kolb seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Toni Bodah, Secretary