



**Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes  
Budget Hearing  
January 10, 2024**

**Present:** Marybeth Quill, Chair, Bob Hamilton, Selectman, Karl Pruter, Lori Rautiola, Town Administrator, Laurie May, Finance Director, Mike Cloutier, DPW Director, Members of the public. (Karl Pruter, Vice Chair-absent)

Marybeth opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Selectmen's Announcements: Bob announced there will be a small reception for Frank Morrill at the Meetinghouse on January 11 from noon until 3:00 p.m. Also, former Chief Joseph Collins passed away recently.

Consent Agenda: Payroll & Accounts Payable for 12.28.2024, 1.04.2024. Marybeth made a motion to accept the Payroll and Accounts Payable. Karl seconded the motion and it passed 3-0. Marybeth made a motion to approve the 11.29.2023 minutes. Karl seconded the motion and it passed 2-0-1 (Bob abstained) the 12.20.23 and 12.27.23 minutes are tabled.

Citizen's Forum: Judy Unger Clark announced there will be a MLK Celebration on Sunday with a keynote speaker and on Monday, Jan. 15, keynote speaker, Rindge native, Cindi Jean will be presenting at the Park Theatre on Monday, January 15.

**Public Hearing:** Marybeth opened the hearing for public comment.

Ashley Saari questioned what the final budget number was. It was noted the Board had not voted on a budget figure yet.

David Drouin asked the Board if they had questions about the Conservation Commission budget. Bob noted the line should be cut back to about \$1500 for maintenance. The request was \$5,000 which was \$4,700 over last year due to maintaining more properties and the Commission not being able to keep up with mowing etc. There was a brief discussion on the use of Conservation Funds. The Conservation maintenance line was reduced to \$2500. Marybeth would like to investigate if CC funds from the Land Use Change Tax can be used to maintain the property.

Kathy Dupree stated she has lived here for 6 months, and it was the Conservation trails and natural resources in Town that led to her decision to live here.

Craig Clark questioned in regard to the cemetery flags, if the money for the Veteran's flags were included in the budget. There was a long discussion on flags for the Veterans' graves. Director Mike Cloutier and Lori Rautiola agreed the money would normally come out of the Memorial Day line under Patriotic Purposes for those flags.

Dan Whitney stated he would like to hear what the Selectmen are considering for a budget figure and the proposed warrant articles. The discussion moved to the Board. Marybeth noted the Code Enforcement should be reduced to \$12,000. She requested the Town Clerk's wage to remain flat but Laurie May stated the elected official would then take a reduction in pay due to the new rate being calculated without the first thirteen weeks. Bob noted the total discussed last week was the figure the Board had in mind.



Marybeth reduced Code Enforcement by \$1,000 and \$2,500 from Conservation Maintenance for a total cut of \$3,500. With the \$3,500 cut the total budget number would be \$5,352,734, a difference of \$270,521 over the default budget.

Tina Sbrega, Budget Committee member stated the Town operates very frugally, and looking at the number of the proposed budget over the default there is no more to cut; adding, the operating budget is up only 1.58% even though inflation is up due to fixed expenses, such as utilities, fuel, food, etc. She noted wages and benefits are up, adding she has noticed a lot of deliberations about what is appropriate for wages. She added if the Town is looking to keep employees intact for the benefit of our citizens, then wages should be supported. Marybeth stated she agreed but it was the Board's responsibility to "do the balancing act". Tina added it was important for citizens to understand the work that has been done to try and make cuts. Bob added if the Board doesn't get the budget passed it will have to work off a default budget.

Ashley Saari asked for clarification on the total figures for wages and benefits. Laurie May explained the breakdown for her and checked the formulas in the spreadsheet.

The warrant articles were discussed. Karla Macleod noted to add a seat for the Supervisors of the Checklist for a six-year term. Ashley Saari questioned the proposed Consolidated Bond funds article. Lori Rautiola stated there was money left over in the Consolidated Bond Fund (\$60,000+/-) and was informed by Bond Council that the Town could vote to utilize the money for something else or hold the money aside as unrestricted fund balance for a bond payment if needed.

Roberta Oeser claimed the Town's Police Cruiser account should be renamed to Police Equipment. Lori also noted that she was waiting to hear back from the Department of Revenue on the warrant article for Bridge Aid. Tom Coneys asked what the current Fund Balance was and expressed concern for the terminology of "adding the Selectmen as agents to expend". Roberta Oeser stated the Selectmen should have the authority to expend and gave an example of having the authority to make a decision if a truck breaks down in the middle of the year, the Selectmen can allow the Town to purchase a truck without having a special meeting. Laurie May did a quick calculation and found there is currently about \$2,336,396 in Fund Balance.

Dan Whitney expressed his concerns and explained that the tax payers are trusting in the Board to do what is best for the Town and its people. Bob reiterated the budget amount and recapped the warrant articles which were the CIP requests for Capital Reserve Funds, and the article for the Bridge maintenance which had no tax impact. Marybeth made a motion to close the public portion of the hearing and enter deliberations. Bob seconded the motion and it passed 3-0.

The Board concluded after further discussion to go with the Department Head requested amounts. Karl noted it was a step in the right direction to move forward and attempt to give employee a competitive wage and retain them. Bob asked if all agreed with the proposed budget figure of \$5,352,734 and a default budget of \$5,082,213. The figures were agreed upon by the Board.

The Police Department Capital Reserve fund was discussed. Lori stated she was waiting to hear back from the Department of Revenue (DRA). Bob mentioned the permanent record list shows the account listed as "Police Cruisers". (most likely established for cruisers only in 1974) Lori will determine the



verbiage for the article after speaking with the DRA. The CIP recommends \$50k be placed into the “Police Equipment Fund” as the Trustees have it set up.

There was a discussion on the CIP recommendations and the amount of money the Town should be saving in reserves. The cost of equipment has gone up substantially over the last 10 years. The percentage should be adjusted to cover those increases. Dan Whitney stated the amounts recommended by the CIP are put forth to help the tax rate take the hit when the town does have to buy a piece of equipment or pay for the revaluation, and they should not be considered as “extras” over the budget because they are needed.

Bob made a motion to move forward with the warrant as amended. Karl seconded the motion and it passed 3-0.

Donation from Citizen: Lori stated Tom Coneys had gifted the Town Office staff with a \$100 gift card for Christmas and would like to buy them lunch with it. Lori thanked Tom for the gesture. Karl made a motion to accept the gift of \$100 for the town office employees. Marybeth seconded the motion and it passed 3-0. Chief Malynowski added she did not have a chance to put a request on the agenda, however the Police Department has received donations in the amount of \$800. She would like to use the cash, check and gift card towards unexpected expenses from the passing of former Chief Frank Morrill. Karl noted it should not be limited. Rachel stated it was given to her to use as she sees it fit. Karl made a motion to accept the donation for the Police Department. Marybeth seconded the motion and it passed 3-0.

At 8:20 p.m. Marybeth made a motion to go into nonpublic session pursuant to RSA 91:A-3 II (c). Karl seconded the motion and it passed 3-0.

The meeting reconvened at 8:30 p.m. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Rautiola  
Town Administrator