



**BOARD OF SELECTMEN/BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
JOINT SESSION  
MEETING MINUTES**

**Present:** Roberta Oeser, Chair, Bob Hamilton and Karl Pruter, Selectmen, Sara Gravell, Town Administrator, Laurie May, Finance Director, Lori Rautiola, Executive Secretary, Members of the Community

**CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The meeting was called to order at the Meeting House with the Pledge of Allegiance on November 10, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**Selectmen's Announcements:** Roberta announced assessments are up a substantial amount and residents should call KRT directly if they feel their assessments are inaccurate.

**Citizen's Forum:** Holly Koski asked if residents should call now or wait until the tax rate is set regarding the assessments. Roberta responded they should call as soon as possible.

**Consent Agenda - Approval of:**

- Minutes 10/21/2020
- Payroll 11/12/2020
- Accounts Payable 11/12/2020

Bob made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Karl seconded the motion and it passed 3-0.

**Old Business:**

Roberta announced the Board would be presenting a Boston Post Cane to the eldest Rindge resident. Lori will have it ordered.

Code Enforcement Complaints: Sara noted a memo was returned to the Board on the Sportsman's Drive complaint with the junkyard. Roberta noted a complaint was called in on a property on Robbins Road where someone was conducting a commercial business within the residential property. It was noted Sara will send the new owners located in the old Sears building a letter to inform them of the sign ordinance and to apply for a sign permit.

## JOINT SESSION WITH BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Budget Committee Members Present: Sharon Rasku, Phil Motta, David Graham, Cheryl McCabe Charron, Dan Whitney, and Tom Coney

Police Department: Chief Dan Anair stated the health insurance is up a bit due to an Officer who was not previously using the health insurance benefit but would like to start.

Operating Budget: Dan Whitney questioned why the Department was only looking for \$750 this year when it was overspent by \$600 in 2020. Chief Anair explained when budgeting for the ballistic bullet proof vest last year the price for the ceramic plates was not added in so the budget was overspent. He stated \$750 will be enough for 2021.

Comfort Canine: Dan Whitney questioned the increase from \$350 to \$2,500. Roberta mentioned it was in the budget last year, however, it was budgeted under weapons and ammo, adding, weapons and ammo have increased in price. Chief Anair mentioned he could try to decrease it but at least \$1,700 of the funds will be for taser cartridges and equipment for recertification trainings in the next couple years. He continued stating the Department also needs to purchase a specialty round for all Academy trainings. Dan noted he has an officer going to the Police Academy in January and realistically the Department would most likely be sending another officer within the same year since the turnover rate is so high.

The discussion continued on the Comfort Canine Program. Sharon Rasku asked if they had received a dog. Chief Anair stated they had not due to complications out of their control. Sharon also asked if any donations had been accepted and Chief Anair responded he did not want to take or ask for donations at this point until the Department physically has a dog. Cheryl McCabe Charron asked for a recap on the intentions for veterinary care/food etc. for the dog. Max Rocheleau stated the Department has a dog being donated to the Department and requests have been made through Walmart in hopes the dog will be given free veterinary care. Anything not covered by donations will be the responsibility of the Officer in charge of the animal, in this case, Max will be the one caring for the dog. Cheryl asked what the \$2,500 would cover. Chief Anair responded those funds would go towards the cost of crates, and outfit for the cruiser for the K-9 unit, as well as supplies for the animal both at the Department and at the residence of the Officer caring for the dog. This cost will be drastically reduced after year one of having the dog.

Chief Anair requested the Department add a ninth officer. He gave several reasons for the need. He gave a cost analysis on adding the ninth officer, adding the cost to the taxpayer on a home valued at \$200,000 would be \$21.00 annually. Chief Anair explained each week the Department has one open shift that needs to be filled which ends up costing the Department \$17,000 a year in overtime. By adding the ninth officer, this would reduce the OT budget by about \$15,000 and allow the Department a bit of breathing room in case someone goes out sick. Dan Whitney questioned if the salary was a low level salary and if so would this mean sending another officer to the Academy. Chief Anair responded it was a low level and most likely the Department would need to send another officer to the Academy. Rindge is on the low end for salaries and officers can go to the next town over and make much more. He continued stating, Jaffrey and Keene are two of the highest paid surrounding towns and both are having a hard time filling positions. Dan Whitney stated it is important to inform the Town what no one wants to hear, but what everyone needs to know and understand.

Cheryl questioned the high turnover rate of officers. Chief Anair stated Rindge is not competitive enough and many use it as a training ground; adding, it takes six months just get a new officer trained before they can go on their own (16 weeks of the academy and 12 weeks of field training). The Town is paying for six months of salary before the officer can be on their own, plus the cost to outfit them with a vest, uniforms etc. The reality is the Town is paying \$60-70,000 before they are able to be out patrolling. The Department would be considered lucky to have them for three years and the process starts all over again. Chief Anair stated it was foolish to spend that amount of money and not be able to retain our officers; adding, it is a revolving door but until Rindge can compete with surrounding towns it will continue to be this way. Cheryl mentioned to adjust the pay in order to retain our current officers.

Chief Anair mentioned the Department's Office Manager, Nick Roy completed an analysis on the number of officers in comparison to a town's population and learned Rindge should have 12 officers based on population. Chief Anair also noted he gets several complaints as to why our officers are not out patrolling and are constantly at the station. He stated people do not understand the amount of paperwork officers are required to do, adding, every time they have an interaction, it generates a report which means more paperwork, adding the Department's record management system is out of date so the process takes even more time away from the officers. The software should be much more efficient. Dan stated in 1999 the software was purchased as a base model. He continued stating he would like to add two new modules to upgrade which would reduce the amount of time by one third. The cost to upgrade is \$25,000 which he placed on the "wish List".

Tom Coney stated he understands and respects Chief Anair's concerns and he is not opposed; however, a number of things need to be addressed and that may not happen in one or even two years and hiring another officer is not going to solve the problem. Chief Anair responded hiring another officer will not solve the revolving door issue but it will allow the Department to function better. Tom added a multiyear plan should be established in order to solve the revolving door issue. Tom asked what would be the Chief's first priority to start the process of the closing the revolving door. There was discussion on surrounding town's salaries. Chief Anair stated it was not fair to ask which priority was more important, our Officers getting a raise or allowing them to be in a safer environment with two officers on duty. He stated he would not put a cost on an officer's life. Both are needed, officers are working nine days in a row with no time off which leads to another issue, the burnout rate. Chief Anair stated he does realize the Town cannot afford both but the problem needs to be addressed.

Rindge Resident, Jolene Little stated her husband had recently saw a study on Police Budgets that was conducted on all the NH town Police Budgets. The study was based on a per capita basis per population of NH towns. Each residents was found to cost the town \$194.00 per person. Jolene added she could only find the population for in Rindge for 2018 which was 6,273. According to the study, the Rindge PD Budget should be at \$1,217,000 (2018), which means Rindge would be short \$244,000. Roberta noted that is 25% of the Town's budget as a whole. Jolene asked if you could place this on a warrant article. Roberta responded it is complicated, if the money is not allocated in the budget then it is advisory only. The money needs to be budgeted.

Jeff Seppala, Rindge resident and Police Officer stated how important it is for people to realize the high burnout rate. He recalled back in 2018, he had three days off in the whole month of May and he had close to 90 hours two separate weeks. Jeff stated it may not help the revolving door issue directly but it will allow for officers to have the needed time off and which would also help the burnout rate, which in his opinion is a huge factor. Roberta agreed working that many hours is dangerous.

Roberta and Bob concurred the revolving door has been an ongoing issue for the last 30 years. Bob stated it is a very tough job. Cheryl noted having the ninth officer would relieve some of the pressure, however, it is not going to solve issue but having a multiyear plan with upgrades to technology would be helpful. Bob agreed with the need for the ninth officer. Bob stated for the eighth officer, there was grant money and would like to look into that. Bob continued stating the federal government should be coming up with more grant money for the Community Oriented Policing (COP) Grant to meet the needs of our community. Roberta noted the money from any COP grant would not be available until the end of the year. Chief Anair stated he did not disagree with the grant, however, he stated there are too many moving pieces and the Department would not see any funds until October at the earliest. It does not rectify the situation the Department is in currently.

Holly Koski mentioned the Town is growing at a significant rate, several new developments are being constructed and the Town does not have enough officers to handle the population currently.

Animal Control Budget: Sergeant Rachel Malynowski presented the animal control budget. The budget will remain the same as last year. Sergeant Malynowski noted the mileage costs are down this year most likely due to people remaining at home but the mileage line will remain the same.

Executive Operating Budget: Bob noted the \$3,000 wage increase is part of the three year contract which brings the amount up to what the position paid two years ago. Roberta noted it was done in step increments. Tom Coney noted it was a significant increase.

Elections: The budget will go down due to fewer elections. Sara noted the checklist will need to be purged this year so there would be a slight cost for that.

Town Office Budget: Laurie May, Finance Director noted a large increase to the audit expenses due to the possibility of the Tax Collector retiring. When the Tax Collector retires it triggers a recommit audit which will cost \$2,000.

Laurie stated the payroll will be done in house starting this year but will be a 6-9 month process to get things switched over so she budgeted accordingly for Paycheck Services. Cheryl questioned the new software for in house payroll if the Town would be required to upgrade at certain times and Laurie responded, no upgrades are required, only if the Town so chooses. Tom questioned the amount of employees covered under this budget. Laurie May stated the wages are for three positions, the Finance Director, Bookkeeper, and Executive Secretary.

Treasurer: This budget was decreased due to wages for 52 weeks not 53 weeks. The amount is set at \$5,598.

Technology: Sara noted the Town will have free internet services with Consolidated Communications starting in January. Sara also mentioned the PD server was in tough shape and there was \$3,000 in the budget for hardware. It was noted servers for the PD and Fire Department will be added to the "Wish List". Roberta suggested adding \$1,500 to hardware. The Board concurred and raised the hardware to \$4,500. Sara noted there may be a slight increase in tech support as Doug (Umbral IT Technologies) had some recommendations for storage and the amount requested to renew his contract.

Dan Whitney questioned the Board stating, if the BAC suggested and requested \$25k be added to the Police Department for software, what line would it be under and Roberta responded it would be under the technology budget.

Roberta questioned the amount for the website and if this would line would remain the same since Sara and Lori had been working on a redesign of the website. Sara noted it would be \$6500 up front and the \$2,000 annually would remain.

Trustee of the Trust Funds: The budget will remain flat at \$125.

Assessing: Roberta noted last year the Board moved the wages for the Assessing Clerk down to Assessing Contractor. The Board concurred to move funds back to the wages line for the Assessing Clerk but will discuss at a later time.

Insurance: This budget will remain flat.

Historical Operating: Sara noted Karla mentioned heat could go up. Roberta noted this budget has remained the same for years and stated \$4,100 is a lot of money on oil. Dan Whitney mentioned discussing further at another meeting.

Welfare Department: Roberta explained there would be a \$9,000 decrease to the rent assistance line bringing the amount to \$10,430. This adjustment was in part of not being needed as well as the POOR Account the Welfare Department can tap into if needed.

Patriotic Purposes: This budget will remain level at \$2,875.

Other Business: Roberta noted earlier in the year the Board voted to approve the Cost of Living increase (COLA) on the pay plan. She added the Department Heads contracts are not automatic as they are not part of the pay plan so the Select Board authorizes. The Board concurred contracted employees not on the pay plan will get the 1.3% COLA increase. Laurie questioned if the contacted employees should be taken off the Pay Plan. Roberta stated those employees negotiate in their contracts so they do not need to be on the Pay Plan.

Sara gave an update on the Wellington Bridge and the final plans have been submitted. The Town will put it out to bid soon.

Holly Koski questioned asked if the positions for the Assessing Clerk and the Code Enforcement Officer had been posted. Roberta responded the job descriptions are being complied and will be posted soon.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Rautiola  
Executive Secretary