

BOARD OF SELECTMEN	SEPTEMBER 21, 2021, at 8:00 A.M.
TOWN OF HAMPTON FALLS	TOWN HALL

FINAL

Budget Work Session #1

PRESENT: L. Gargiulo, Chair, M. Lane, Vice Chair, E. B. Beattie, Selectman, K. Anderson, Interim Town Administrator, R. D. Webb, Town Secretary.

R. Dirsra, Police Chief; R. Veno, Police Lieutenant; J. Lord, Fire Chief; S. Grant, Town Clerk/Tax Collector; M. Sikorski, Building Inspector; R. Hilliard, Road Agent; B. Forgione, Library Trustee; Jonathan Bohm, Cemetery Trustee; Mary Ann Hill, Conservation Commission Chair.

4210/4413 Police Department/ Animal Control: Police Chief Robbie Dirsra and Lieutenant Ryan Veno. The budget increase of \$26,800 over last year (\$19,075) is primarily due to full-time step increases, and the hiring of an officer with more experience, which saved on future training costs. Part-time staff is at the top step, so hours were reduced from 20 to 16. The “Police Secretary’s” hours were increased to add a half-day on Fridays to enable the scanning records project. Overtime (OT) wages were discussed with the result that the Selectmen requested an accounting of accrued OT as “comp time”, that has not yet been paid. There is concern, by the Selectmen, of available cash flow at different times of the year and a desire to understand underspent and unexpended accounts more thoroughly. K. Anderson requested Department Heads look at their “Other/Miscellaneous” accounts, and to reassign those monies to correct accounts to enable more specific budgeting. Toward that end, Chief Dirsra rebalanced accounts to minimize monies in miscellaneous/other categories. An increase for 2022 is “Other Services, Watchguard”, at \$4,725. Additionally, “Materials” increased by \$2,325 to improve maintenance; and training classes registration fees have increased, from \$100 to an average of \$400 per class. It was noted that there is a local car wash owner who currently provides the Hampton Falls’ Police Department cars with free car washes, thereby enabling a considerable cost-savings to the community of that value; therefore, the line item for car washes for the Police Dept is currently \$50. The dollar amount for gasoline rate will be released from the State in November, so that is TBD, added at that future date.

Animal Control: The same person has held the position of Animal Control Officer for numerous years, and due to personal issues, has not been active in the position for more than a year. The Police Dept staff have been the “defacto” Animal Control Officer, thereby removing their ability to cover Police calls when they are out on Animal Control calls. Chief Dirsra has explored the idea of potentially contracting with the Town of Seabrook to share the Animal Control Officer position at a cost of \$10,000 for 4-hours per week (which is a bit more hours than Hampton Falls uses currently). The Police currently get approximately 3 calls per week on average, for a rural community with many animals. The Selectmen agreed that they would like to see some additional options to this staffing issue, by asking the Police and/or Fire Dept staff to see if anyone is interested in the position, and then also post the position to see if a resident is interested.

4215/4220/4290 Fire Department/Ambulance/Emergency Management: Fire Chief Jay Lord. Ambulance is looking for a \$1,000 increase, but the Chief proposes to leave salaries alone except for a COLA increase rate TBD later this Fall.

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Fire hose and ladder testing was completed this year (every two years), and \$5-6,000 may be returned to the Town at the end of the year. Due to the Fire Department's maintenance program in place, they have no huge maintenance expenses expected.

Emergency management there is a large increase in this number for next year, however, it is a 100% reimbursable expense for drills and exercises, etc.

4140 Election, Registration, Statistics: Stephanie Grant, Town Clerk / Tax Collector. S. Grant proposed a reduction of \$4,000 even though the number of elections will go from one in 2021, to three elections in 2022 (March, Sept, and Nov). The issue to resolve is transporting the election equipment back and forth from Town Hall (where it is stored) to the LAS School for each election. Elderly residents complained of the walking distance to vote at the LAS school location. E. Beattie commented that there needs to be a long-range plan developed in time for the federal election in 3 years. There was a discussion about the voting booths and costs of more portable options, and numbers of voting spots required (33) for a federal election.

The number of residential renters has increased to approximately 100, and many do not own cars. A discussion about Airbnb's in Town led to an inquiry with the Zoning Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector who clarified that Hampton Falls has a permissive zoning ordinance, so that if a specific land use is not expressly listed as a Permitted Use, in the Zoning Table of Use Regulations, that the land use is Prohibited. It was recommended that the issue of temporary housing rentals be brought to the Planning Board's Ordinance and Regulations Committee.

Lastly, S. Grant said that she wants to increase the number of hours the Town Clerk / Tax Collector is open by redistributing the staff, with no budget increase.

4240/4411 Building Inspection/ Health: Mark Sikorski, Building Inspector. L. Gargiulo inquired how the increase of four-hours weekly has worked over the past year, and M. Sikorski responded that he is much more accessible and efficient utilizing his cell phone, for example people can contact him during off hours, to set appointments before he gets into the office. He stated that it was important to keep in his budget the part-time clerical position (partial time of Deputy Town Clerk) to continue the scanning of Building documents project. K. Anderson said that at year end she would reclassify the portion of the Deputy Town Clerk's hours to reflect the hours worked in the Building Department. Additionally, the goal is to establish a public access computer terminal, to be able to access Building documents electronically in Town Hall, especially during days and hours when the Building Inspector is not scheduled in Town Hall.

4312/4316 Highway/Street Lights: Russ Hilliard, Road Agent. There is an increase of \$13,000 for roadside mowing and brush cutting that was lowered by \$3,000 for this current year by not doing the vertical cutting of 10-feet, but next year it needs to be done. Tree limb removal and prevention is something the Road Agent wants to get a state arborist to identify which trees and limbs to cut to manage aging roadside trees before they become problematic and impact utility lines. Cold patch budget has been increased. Culverts and pipes budget has been decreased. Road sand budget has been increased with a desire to use more sand than salt. It was recommended to use less salt near any aluminum culverts, as the salt corrodes the aluminum; further, it was suggested to install new signage at those culvert locations stating, "Low Salt Area". There was a

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discussion identifying “concrete box culverts” as the best culvert material and design with the longest projected longevity, as the example on Drinkwater Road attests. E. Beattie said that it would be beneficial to use as least salt as possible. He also suggested the US Dept of Agriculture office in Epping may be able to assist with the tree identification that R. Hilliard needs.

Street Lights: K. Anderson presented that the Street Lights budget was reduced for next year based on the current costs.

4191 Planning Board: K. Anderson described a decrease of \$2,000 as money held over from the Route One Study Committee. E. Beattie commented that the budget for the Planning Board was money well-spent for a volunteer board that works to uphold the character of the community through their decisions. The budget was level-funded except for the step increase in the Secretary’s rate of pay.

4192 Zoning Board of Adjustment: K. Anderson described the budget was level-funded except for the step increase in the Secretary’s rate of pay. In 2020 there were several months of no cases before the ZBA, whereas the ZBA has been active with applications for variances, special exceptions, and waiver requests and has held 4 of 8 meetings, so far in 2021.

4520 Parks and Recreation: K. Anderson described the increased proposal for repairs and maintenance, specifically mowing of the Town Common and Governor Weare Field, from \$9,200 to \$27,000. M. Lane said that the athletic field needs to be mowed more frequently (2x/week) and at a shorter height from the end of August through early October, as the grass is so thick (at mowing 1x/week) that the younger soccer players are challenged to get the soccer ball to roll on the grass. In the Spring there also is a period that would need more frequent mowing for a few weeks. Discussion indicated that the vendor (Bateman) may have misunderstood the request and doubled their pricing for the entire year, instead of targeted dates for more frequent mowing, for example in July, and August the mowing could revert to 1x/week as the grass does not grow much in the heat of summer. Additionally bagging the cut grass could be added 2x/year. Mowing at the Town Cemeteries was also discussed, identifying that the cemeteries need to be in top condition for Memorial Day at the end of May. K. Anderson said that she would write an RFP for mowing for six months of the year for Parks and Recreation, Cemeteries, Library, Public Safety Building, and Town Hall. E. Beattie asked K. Anderson to follow-up with Bateman to get a revised proposal based on the discussion of increasing the mowing frequency at peak use and reducing it at non-peak usage.

4550 Library: Beth Forgione, Library Trustee. The Library’s budget proposal for 2022 is the same as it was last year, except for a \$2,000 increase for computers and landscaping which may including a sprinkler system and poison ivy removal, due to all Library programs being held outside. There was money approved a couple years ago to install a new walkway, that the Library Trustees would like to implement. The walkway proposal was to connect parking from the Public Safety Building (PSB) to the Library, without walking along the street, and was located far enough back from the road beyond potential plowed snow piles. The general idea is in preparation for a return to Library programs inside the building, to improve the parking access for handicapped parking on-site, with overflow parking in the adjacent PSB lot, and have the

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walkway installed to connect those two locations. The walkway plan was for permeable pavement lined with lit bollards. B. Forgione agreed to provide the plan to the Budget Committee.

4193 Heritage Commission: K. Anderson described the \$500 increased budget request for the Heritage Guidebook printing for the Tricentennial event next summer. K. Anderson said that the Heritage Guidebook printing expense would be eligible to be funded via the Frying Pan Lane funds. Unspent Heritage Commission monies get turned over to the Commission at the end of the year. The Frying Pan Lane fund gets funded annually with approximately \$50,000 to be spent for specific purposes. The Heritage Commission budget proposal, except for the Heritage Guidebook printing expense, is level-funded for the next year.

4611 Conservation Commission: Mary Ann Hill, Chair. The proposed budget for the Conservation Commission in 2022 increased from \$8,200 to \$11,580 in the following areas, namely: Mowing the Raspberry Farm used to be a free service that the Town obtained from a hayer who mowed for free in exchange for being able to sell the hay and keep the proceeds. The former hayer recently passed away, so the cost of haying needs to be budgeted for 2022. The costs of fertilizer and lime also need to be budgeted for 2022. And lastly, a second Summer Intern position is requested for 2022 to assist with removal of Invasive Plant Species. During Summer 2021 the Summer Intern generated a GIS map depicting Invasive Plant Species throughout Hampton Falls, which needs to be added to the Town's website.

4195 Cemeteries: Jonathan Bohm, Cemetery Trustee. There is a need to go to weekly mowing of the cemeteries to keep people satisfied, so the Cemetery Trustees' budget increased by 50%. Given the earlier discussion about going out to bid for mowing, the Cemetery mowing budget could potentially be reduced as a result. E. Beattie explained that the Selectmen are looking to do an RFP and asked J. Bohm to work with K. Anderson to delineate the specifics of mowing for the cemeteries. M. Lane reiterated the need to reduce the frequency of cutting mid-July to August, then add liming to increase the integrity of the grass, before weed control and overseeding, to focus on one cemetery at a time for lawn quality improvement (start with Oaklawn and Westview cemeteries). L. Gargiulo said it may be challenging to find a vendor with enough capacity to handle the entire town's mowing needs. Perhaps the RFP could be written with an incentive do the athletic fields, and, that the cemeteries are a requirement, as well as write a separate RFP only for the cemeteries. The complaints received regarding cemeteries were for Dodge and Oaklawn cemeteries.

4150/4153, 4711/4721/4723 Financial Admin/Legal/Bond Principal/Bond Interest Interest on Tax Anticipation Notes (4155 Employee Benefits Reviewed Last): K. Anderson said that there will be review of the Town Administrator's job description / job ad at the Selectmen's meeting 09/22/2021 with discussion about the wording of the ad, specifically the salary, number of hours, etc. The proposed budget increase, in terms of Election officials, is the increase in the number of elections from one in 2021, to three in 2022. K. Anderson looked at utilization of tuition and decreased the amount by 50%.

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Financial Admin: The financial admin audit amount decreased as the Town is in the second year of a 3-year contract. Last year had the cost of the tax recommittal. Internet cost is higher, as higher speeds are required for data management.

K. Anderson presented an analysis of postage costs, which resulted in the proposal of a postage meter that will yield an annual savings of \$825 in costs of envelopes and postage alone, not including the savings of staff time/trips to the Post Office. The Selectmen were unanimous in their support for implementing a postage meter at Town Hall as soon as possible.

Legal: K. Anderson proposed to increase the Legal budget from \$10,000 to \$15,000; however, L. Gargiulo said that he did not think the budget amount needed to be increased. Additionally, K. Anderson reported that the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) did not utilize any Legal services the past year, whereas, the Planning Board has already overspent their Legal budget. As a result, K. Anderson rebalanced the ZBA and Planning Board legal budgets to \$4,000 each.

Health Insurance: K. Anderson stated that by October 15th the Health Trust public hearing will set the rate, which she can then plug into the budget.

Bond Interest: K. Anderson said that there was no change in the budgeted amount for Bond Interest as the principal stays the same at \$125,000. Debt service reduces to \$15,860. Keep \$1,000 interest for Tax Anticipation Note.

4194 Government Buildings: K. Anderson proposed that “Other Professional Services” generator services is new for 2022. Repairs and maintenance were increased due to planned water pump replacement. Government Buildings include: Town Hall, the Public Safety Building, and the Museum.

4196 Insurance: K. Anderson reported that the insurance rate is due in mid-October. Additionally, the Town received a recent credit of \$3,179.

4130 Executive: K. Anderson stated that Executive budget was decreased by \$2,000 for 2022. There was discussion regarding a contingency fund with a balance of \$14,000, and it was the consensus of the Selectmen to delete the contingency fund.

4323/4324 Solid Waste Collection/Solid Waste Disposal: There were no proposed changes to the Solid Waste Collection nor Solid Waste Disposal budget for 2022. L. Gargiulo inquired about the cardboard revenue, with the response year-to-date at \$391; however, the full cost of the cardboard collection needs to be budgeted, even though the Town receives some off-setting revenues. K. Anderson reported that some recycling prices are improving as markets return to “normal” over time. NRRA has contracted with a Massachusetts company to purchase crushed glass.

4415/4442 Health Agencies and Welfare: K. Anderson reported that Test Pit inspection line item is increased to cost \$3,500 and the Town gets reimbursed for that expense, but it is necessary to gross budget for the cost.

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Welfare: K. Anderson said that the welfare budget was reduced a bit due to a reduction in use.

Health Agencies: K. Anderson said that flat budgets are anticipated, however not all agencies have submitted their budgets yet. Rockingham Nutrition program increased their request from \$775 to \$1,475 as demand increased over the past year.

Ritchie McFarland Children's Center has requested an increase from \$900 to \$2,100.

K. Anderson said that there will be an updated Expenditures and Revenue report for the Selectmen at the next Budget Committee meeting October 19, 2021.

The next Board of Selectmen's Budget Work Session has been scheduled for Tuesday, October 19, 2021, at 8:00 AM at Town Hall.

MOTION To adjourn at 11:15 AM.

MOTION E. Beattie

SECOND M. Lane

UNANIMOUS