

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN OF HAMPTON FALLS**

**NOVEMBER 30, 2021 – 8:00 AM
TOWN HALL**

FINAL

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

1) Non-Public Session – RSA 91-A:3 II (a) Personnel

The Board of Selectmen, with the Town Administrator, met in Non-Public Session from 8:00 AM until 8:19 AM to discuss a personnel matter and to discuss related budgetary impacts.

Chairman L. Gargiulo called the meeting to order at 8:20 AM.

2) 2022 Budget Final Review

L. Gargiulo asked K. Anderson to please review the areas of the proposed FY 22 budget with changes. The current budgets stands at a 2.69 % increase at \$2,980,466, that's an increase of \$78,000 from last year. Chairman Gargiulo requested K. Anderson go page by page to give an overview of the changes by section.

Executive: The change was in the Town Administrator's salary went from \$91,100 to \$62,400 that represented going from a full-time position to a three-quarter-time position.

The 4.0 % COLA cost-of-living-allowance increase has been reflected across the entire proposed budget. The total Executive section is currently \$115,107 down from \$143,385 last year.

Elections, Registration and Vital Statistics, and Tax Collection: The Town Clerk was able to reduce a couple of line items that had been double-budgeted. The total budget is currently \$122,136 down from \$122,690 last year. It is a small decrease but includes the 4% COLA wage increase.

Financial Administration: The total budget is currently \$92,288 down from \$95,220 last year, with the decrease primarily the result of a decrease in the wage of the new Bookkeeper position.

Auditing: Decreased a total of \$13,650 from last year because it is not a tax recommittal year, and the town also does not have to do the OPEB update that is done every other year.

Legal: The Legal line item has been flat budgeted, with no changes from the prior year.

Employee Benefits: The Employee Benefits line item increased from \$427,900 to \$448,000 which is mostly because the Town added a full-time Town Secretary position and the increase represents a full year of benefits for that position, with insurance.

E. Beattie asked K. Anderson to address the employee benefits where \$363,000 has been spent this year, and there is \$426,000 budgeted, leaving a balance of \$62,000. K. Anderson responded that the balance will be accounted for as health insurance is approximately \$24,000 per month with both November and December to be paid, plus NH Retirement.

M. Lane had a question about the differences in the bottom line of each department, and wondered why all were not a consistent format.

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K. Anderson responded that there were some line items that were previously in the Executive Section and were moved to Town Clerk /Tax Collector, for example there was the programming of ballot box cards that were listed in both places, so some line items were moved or consolidated. (*That has been corrected.*)

Planning Board: There is no change to the functioning budget, except for the decrease of \$2,000 from last year that represents the amount that was set aside for the one-time expense of the Route One Sewer Feasibility Study Committee.

Zoning Board of Adjustment: The only change is the 4% COLA increase for the Town Secretary, who staffs the ZBA.

Heritage Commission: This Commission is flat budgeted for FY 22, with no changes. This is one of the accounts that if not spent, unspent funds do not lapse to the General Fund, and a check is cut to the Committee.

Government Buildings: The line item of Government Buildings has an increase in the annual generator service, after year one the annual cost for maintenance is \$295.

E. Beattie mentioned that the Museum has a broken window pane, and Beverly Mutrie added that several window panes are cracked and in need of replacement. E. Beattie said that there is money in the budget for repair of government buildings and these repairs should be made. K. Anderson will follow-up on that.

Cemeteries: There is an increase in the Cemeteries line item for mowing to \$12,500 up from \$9,200 last year, which represents an increase in frequency of mowing to weekly with Spring and Fall clean-ups, and no sooner than three days prior to Memorial Day and Veteran's Day. K. Anderson commented that the Fall clean-up was an excellent job, and photos were taken and sent to Mr. Bohm.

M. Lane questioned if the frequency of twice per week was needed for the cemeteries, and K. Anderson responded that frequency was specified to tighten-up the mowing, especially around Memorial Day and Veteran's Day. (*Correction: mowing frequency changed from bi-monthly to weekly.*)

Insurance: There is an increase of \$4,300 to \$36,000 for the Primex property liability coverage.

Contingency Fund: The contingency fund was eliminated.

E. Beattie asked if there was any reason to consider putting money back into the Contingency Fund in lieu of recent discussions, or were the Selectmen comfortable with it at zero, and both L. Gargiulo and M. Lane responded that they were comfortable with the Contingency Fund at zero.

Police: The Police budget has the largest increase to \$651,568 from \$610,000 last year, that includes the 4% wage increase, and an increase to part-time wages for the Police Secretary adding a half-day weekly. E. Beattie asked why there was \$387,000 spent to date this year of a line item of \$512,000 with only one month left of the year, and if the Police Department was anticipating paying out significant payments (\$125,000) in December. K. Anderson responded that the Vacation, Holiday, and Education line of \$2,000

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would be spent this year, and additionally the police officers get paid for all of the eleven holidays in the month of December.

M. Lane asked about the part-time positions, and K. Anderson responded that the part-time positions line may not get completely used this year. Part-time Officers are budgeted for sixteen hours-per-week but not all shifts are filled. K. Anderson looked at the part-time positions annually back to 2019 and separated out the Police Secretary position from the Police Officer positions with the conclusion that the part-time police-related expenses have decreased over the past few years; whereas the biggest change was in the Police Secretary position, as number of days and hours have been increased over the years. In 2019 the wage was \$27,000 and for 2022 the wage is \$41,000. The fifth Police Officer has reduced the part-time Police Officer account from \$82,000 in 2019, before the hiring of the fifth officer, to \$64,000 in 2020 when the fifth officer was hired half-way through the year, to \$52,000 in 2021, to \$45,900 in 2022 for the Police Officer aspect of the part-time positions line item.

M. Lane asked if looking just at the part-time Police Officers budget, is it possible to know how far under budget the line item is currently and whether we are overbudgeting the part-time police officers line item. E. Beattie wants the budget in 2023 to show Police Clerical as one line item, and then Police Officers as a separate line item, although both are part-time. The part-time account increased to \$91,000 from \$87,000 last year, an increase of \$4,000 regardless of distribution. Of the \$91,000 there is \$41,000 for the Police Secretary, leaving \$50,000 in the part-time Police Officers account. K. Anderson responded that the biggest unknown within that \$50,000 is the \$16,889 that is the vacation coverage for full-time Police Officers. The budget is written as if everyone takes all their vacation time, so if someone sells back their vacation time then that is time that does not need coverage.

E. Beattie inquired about the Telephone line item in the Police budget, where \$10,000 was budgeted, and \$6,900 was spent this year and then \$10,000 is requested again for next year. L. Gargiulo asked if some of the increase was due to the speed of the Internet being increased, that we are paying Comcast more for the increased internet speed, and K. Anderson confirmed that.

E. Beattie asked K. Anderson for an analysis showing how much from each account was turned back to the Town's General Fund at the end of the year, to more accurately budget for next year. He prefers "real-time budgeting" as opposed to making the budget more than what is needed and then refunding the unspent amounts.

M. Lane asked about the decrease in the Police Miscellaneous account. K. Anderson asked all of the Department Heads to look at their "Miscellaneous" accounts and to reassign the costs to specific purposes, so that only a maximum of \$1,000 remains in any miscellaneous account.

Ambulance: The Ambulance line item was flat budgeted, with the only change being the Fire Chief's COLA increase.

Fire: The Fire line item change was a small decrease under machinery and equipment for hoses.

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Building Inspection and Code Compliance: The line item for Building Inspection and Code Compliance has a small increase due to the wage. There is an additional increase of \$500 to add a public access computer terminal, to enable the public greater access to the files, as part of the digitization project of the Building Department files.

Emergency Management: The Emergency Management line item has a large increase to \$15,500 from \$7,000 last year, however this work is entirely reimbursed by the State of NH. This is a drill year, and the first of the trainings was held last week.

Highway: The Highway line item was increased by \$15,000 over last year. \$2,500 of the increase was added to the Core Services for the Road Agent. Additional increases detailed as part of the total increase were: tree limb removal, roadside mowing and brush-cutting, maintenance and repairs for cold-patching, signs, and sand. Additional sand was requested to allow for more sand in the salt/sand ratio.

Street Lights: The Street Lights line item has decreased based upon what the Town is actually spending. K. Anderson was contacted by a representative of Unutil to do a change to all of the street lights in Town to LED, at no cost to the town. The town only has eight (8) street lights, so the savings would be minimal, but the company is willing to do the paperwork and switch-out the bulbs on behalf of the Town.

Beverly Mutrie asked if that work would involve the lights at the Library parking lot, and K. Anderson agreed to check.

Solid Waste Collection: The Solid Waste Collection line item is a flat budget. It is a five-and-a-half-year contract, so there is no change.

Solid Waste Disposal: The Solid Waste Disposal line item has increased a small amount due to the tonnage quantity of disposal of recycling. E. Beattie commented that the more cardboard is recycled, the more the tonnage goes down.

Health Officer: The Health Officer line item has a 4% increase for the FY22 budget, for the COLA increase for the Building Inspector position, and 15% of the Building Inspector's salary is funded through this line item. Test pit inspections increased by \$1,000 based upon the level of activity, and this year there were \$5,500 of test pit inspections.

Animal Control: The Animal Control line item has been discussed by the Selectmen previously during other budget sessions. There is an increase from \$3,300 to \$8,400 which includes three-quarters of the year contracting with the Town of Seabrook. The Police Chief has identified someone to learn under the current Animal Control Officer as a Deputy Animal Control Officer, so it is unlikely that the town will need to contract with Seabrook in the future with the transition plan of the Deputy position. E. Beattie commented that the Police Department must have been doing the work of the Animal Control officer, as there is only \$24 spent on the line item this year, and K. Anderson confirmed that, explaining that the current Animal Control Officer has been unable to perform his duties for 18 months due to medical reasons, however has expressed a willingness to train a Deputy position.

Health Agencies: The Health Agencies line item has been level-funded, although there may be some flexibility in that account, as the town has not received all of the requests for funding from all of the health agencies funded last year, and there are three or four agencies outstanding. Rockingham Nutrition Meals On Wheels has requested an increase to \$1,475 from \$775 last year, which is based on the number of Hampton Falls residents served, so their annual requested amount is need-based, and fluctuates year to year. K. Anderson recommended that the Board level-fund the Health Agencies, and then if the town does not receive requests for funding from those three or four agencies, then use those monies to fund the requested increase from Rockingham Nutrition.

Welfare: The Welfare line item has a small decrease based on usage. There was only one welfare case this year that needed to have rental assistance. The town has a contract with Pam Mattingly at Portsmouth Welfare, who receives a monthly fee to be the Town's Welfare Agent.

Parks and Recreation: The Parks and Recreation line item request for FY 22 is increased to \$36,842 from \$22,815 last year, with the increase predominantly for the increase in mowing services. The mowing increased to \$27,480 from \$14,825 last year with the Governor Weare Park comprising the largest portion of that amount at \$14,750 with an increase in rate and an increase in service/frequency, so that during soccer season it will be mowed twice a week.

M. Lane questioned the line item of \$2,800 for fertilization and liming, as it was his recollection that those were never done at Governor Weare Park, and that the comments he receives are that "the grass is too good at Governor Weare Park", so there has never been a need for fertilization. Beverly Mutrie commented that the town still may want to consider liming, even if the town decides not to fertilize. M. Lane said to leave the \$630 for fertilizing the Town Common, and to not amend that line item.

The Depot Advisory Committee (DAC) recommendations line item was \$500, and Beth Forgione commented that \$500 was not going to be enough to implement the signage recommendations of the DAC, and asked if Parks and Recreation could utilize the unspent lime and fertilizer money toward signage.

L. Gargiulo asked about the sealing of the Band Stand roof, that needs to be done every two years. M. Lane said that it was a recurring expense, but he was not certain of the recommended frequency.

E. Beattie said that he was concerned with the number of zero expenditure line items this year, with departments requesting the same amounts for next year, after spending nothing this year. K. Anderson responded that some of the costs were offset by funding from the Frying Pan Lane account. E. Beattie identified twelve (12) line items with zero expenditures to date, that were budgeted for \$4,000.

There was discussion about the sign at Governor Weare Park needing replacement, however the failed warrant article in March 2021 means that the Town cannot spend money on that project within the same calendar year. Beth Forgione said that the sign at Governor Weare Park needs replacement (not repair). M. Lane said that he thought it would be good to fix or replace the sign before the Tricentennial next summer with money from the Revolving Account.

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MOTION: To reduce the budget by \$2,800 from Parks and Recreation that was for the fertilization and liming of Governor Weare Park.

MOTION: M. LANE

SECOND: E. BEATTIE

UNANIMOUS

Beverly Mutrie inquired about the Frying Pan Lane monies and whether those funds would be available again next year. K. Anderson explained that yes, the monies will come in, but the Board of Selectmen do not know what the amount will be and the appropriation decisions are made annually by the Board of Selectmen. The funds are not allocated in advance. Last year it was allocated predominantly for the Tricentennial, the Library, Recreation, and Records Retention. K. Anderson said that she would look at how the warrant article established that Recreation Revolving fund to see if there are clarifying details about maintenance and repair, or if it was established strictly just for programs. M. Lane thought that the account was established for general purposes, but it could be further defined as programming, and he encouraged K. Anderson to examine the details of the wording.

Library: The Library submitted a revised budget last week with an increase of \$120,000 for HVAC updates and replacement. The Selectmen encouraged the Library to trust them in their stated commitment to improve the HVAC system at the Library, and that their project will be eligible for the ARPA funds available in the August 2022 tranche, in addition to the additional grant applied for in the amount of \$50,000. M. Lane inquired if there were additional quotes and estimates received for the HVAC project, as recommended by the CIP Capital Improvements Committee. B. Forgione responded that two additional vendors have viewed the project, and that the Library is expecting two more quotes as a result of an RFP. E. Beattie stated that the town is committed to investing in their public buildings, with examples of: the Town Common Gazebo/Band Stand, the Museum, and the Town Hall floor refinishing. Further, he stated that there is time between now and August to identify the best vendor and price to get the project done before August. Both L. Gargiulo and M. Lane stated their support for the Library HVAC project to be funded with ARPA monies in 2022.

The Selectmen were in consensus that the requested amount of \$120,000 to add to the budget would put the entire budget at risk. B. Forgione requested the Selectmen revise the Library's recently submitted budget to revert back to the Library's original submittal, thereby removing their request of \$120,000 from the FY22 budget.

MOTION: To revert the Library's budget amount to \$171,681 removing the \$120,000 request for the Library HVAC project.

MOTION: M. LANE

SECOND: E. BEATTIE

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M. Lane asked about the Library's proposed walkway project at \$15,000 to be offset with donation funds, and that was confirmed by B. Forgione to be paid for with donations.

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Patriotic: The Patriotic line item is flat budgeted. This is the account that provides the flags for flying at the Town Common, the Public Safety Building, and at Town Hall, and provides new flags for Memorial Day and for Veteran's Day ceremonies.

Conservation Commission: The Conservation Commission line item increased to \$12,510 from \$8,200 last year. The increase is to fund a second Summer Intern, as they had one Intern during summer 2021 and want to continue the work started with twice the effort for summer 2022 tackling Invasive Species. Additionally, the Conservation Commission has just hired a Conservation Coordinator to work part-time with the Commission, who is being paid higher than the clerical rate listed in their budget.

E. Beattie raised similar concerns with the Conservation Commission budget, as he did with the Parks and Recreation budget, with the ten-to-eleven number of line items with zeros, yet continuing to request monies for next year, with unspent line items this year. K. Anderson explained that this was another account, similar to Heritage Commission, where unspent monies at year end do not revert to the General Fund, but a check is cut to the Commission for deposit into their account for the Purchase of Land or Conservation purposes.

M. Lane identified the line item of Swallow Houses at \$1,500, and also Conferences, where monies are unspent. E. Beattie said he totaled the unspent monies at \$3,725 and it was his position that it was disingenuous to propose money for a use, not use it, and then add those funds to their accounts.

L. Gargiulo said that he knew that the Conservation Commission was planning to install some fencing to delineate the property line of the Marsh Lane Conservation area at a cost of \$1,500.

Another line item of Training may not have happened due to COVID. The Selectmen inquired about the definition of Other Professional Services at \$1,000.

Bond: The line item for the Bond is flat budgeted at \$120,000.

Interest: The line item for Interest decreased, as specified in the amortization schedule.

3) 2022 Default Budget

K. Anderson will have the 2022 budget number for the Selectmen's meeting December 1, 2021. The final number needs to be established in order to schedule the Public Hearing on the Budget.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 9:40 AM.

MOTION: E. BEATTIE

SECOND: M. LANE

UNANIMOUS

Next Selectmen's Meeting – Wednesday December 1st, 2021, 6:00 PM, Town Hall

Lou Gargiulo, Chairman – Mark R. Lane, Vice Chairman – Edward B. Beattie, Selectman