

Town of Sullivan, NH
Budget Committee
Approved Meeting Minutes, Tuesday, January 9, 2024
Sullivan Town Hall

Board members present: Al Merrifield, Chairman; Mike Blanchard, Gary Patnode, Bradford Smith, BJ Wahl;

Board Representatives: Dave Jakway, Selectmen; Paul Bolduc, Selectmen alt.; William Thorndike, School Board

Others: Chris Pratt, Library, Planning Board; Wendy Pelletier, Conservation; Todd Smith, Highway, Cemeteries

Staff: Kathleen Rowe, Secretary

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Merrifield called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

On nomination by B.J. Wahl, seconded by Gary Patnode, Al Merrifield was unanimously elected Chairman of the 2024 Budget Committee.

2. BUDGET REVIEW

A. Planning: \$14,968 (+12,622 over 2023)

Chris Pratt, Planning Board Chairman presented the 2024 budget for the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment noting that the increase is due primarily to the inclusion of the Planning Board Clerk's salary in this budget, rather than in the Selectmen's Executive Wages budget. Additionally, Planning Board office utilities (telephone) and office supplies are also now included in this budget as is a request for a new printer for this office (\$250). All other operating expenses have no increase over 2023.

Capital Reserve: Pratt also noted that the Planning Board has submitted a warrant article asking the Town to appropriate funds from the Master Plan Capital Reserve to be used for land use law compliance review.

Chairman Merrifield asked if the current hours for the Clerk (12/week) are necessary; Pratt noted that these are necessary for materials intake and review, timely postings and general clerical responsibilities.

Library : \$24,163 (+1040 over 2023)

Chris Pratt, Library Treasurer, presented the 2024 budget for the Sullivan Public Library noting a decrease in propane cost and an increase in electricity rates (predicted by Eversource in November 2023); wages include a 3% COL increase recommended by Selectmen. Chairman Merrifield asked if the wages were competitive; Chris confirmed the wages were in line with state classifications for the positions.

B. Conservation: \$2545 (+\$25 over 2023)

Wendy Pelletier presented the 2024 budget for the Conservation Commission, noting the increase in the charge for dues and membership. She also explained that there will again be Youth Education programs provided by the Harris Center at the Nelson School in 2023.

D. Cemetery : \$9580 (\$1980 over 2024)

Todd Smith presented the 2024 Cemetery budget. Contracted Services (mowing) has increased \$80, to include one additional cemetery mowing prior to Memorial Day; Patriotic supplies have increased \$400 to include purchase of flag medallions for firefighters and veterans. Supplies include an additional \$1500 for

the purchase of cemetery mapping software; Smith indicated that members are looking at a number of software choices including ARC-gis and Cemify; no decision has been made at this time.

Gary Patnode asked who current does excavation for gravesites; Todd noted that the Town does not have a contracted person to do this at this time, but it is also not the responsibility of the Trustees to have this work done. Funeral homes often arrange for this service.

Capital Reserve: The Cemetery Trustees are asking for \$2000 to be added to the Cemetery Expansion Capital Reserve. It is anticipated that the current cemetery availability will be sufficient for the next 10 years, but land planning must be addressed prior to the need.

E. Recreation: \$1000 (no change)

Dave Jakeway presented the 2024 Recreation budget. No town-wide events occurred 2023.

F. Highway: Todd Smith, Road Agent, presented the 2023 Highway budget.

Personnel: \$173,415 (+\$8,530 over 2023)

Personnel costs include an increase in medical insurance, workmen's compensation, and 3% COL increase recommended by the Selectmen.

Operating Budget: (\$182,270 (+21,982 over 2023))

Building Maintenance: On a question from Brad Smith, Todd noted that the current level of \$3000 should be sufficient for this line item; 2023 was unusual in that the wood boiler required substantial maintenance; a paved pad was installed at the Church Street entrance to the Highway garage as well.

Chairman Merrifield asked if there is any intention of converting the wood boiler to oil; Todd explained there are no plans to do so at this time. This equipment takes 18 cords of wood annually.

The 2023 operating budget recommended by the Selectmen includes a \$45,000 request for vehicle repair, an increase of \$15,000 over 2023. Considering the age, hours and condition of the majority of the department vehicles, it is anticipated that these funds will be necessary; the \$30,000 2023 vehicle repair budget was overspent by \$9,215 in 2023, absorbed by other highway operating budget lines.

Equipment Repair (+2000 over 2023) is necessary for spreader and shipper parts, plow blade edges as necessary, etc. These items have all increased in pricing.

New Equipment: Funds for a portable generator for off-site work.

There are no or minimal changes in remaining line items.

Brad Smith asked if the Town contracts for plowing; Todd explained that the Highway Department does all of the plowing (currently three employees, one of them gaining experience with the equipment, routes, etc.)

Special Projects: \$85,000 (-\$5,000 from 2023) Although the original request was for \$170,000 to do the complete job, the Selectmen are recommending \$85,000 for a base layer of asphalt to be put down on Valley Road in 2024 with the final surface to be put down in 2025. Todd, using current estimate of

\$100/ton, projects \$100,000 for the base coat and \$15,000 for gravel for this job. Pricing this past summer was \$89/ton; this can't be anticipated for 2024. He has had conversations with All-State Paving regarding doing the project in two phases; there does not appear to be concern with splitting this into two years, as was done on both Hubbard and South Roads.

Todd explained that asphalt has an estimated 15-year lifespan; to keep the town's roads in good repair, a schedule to pace reconstruction at $\frac{3}{4}$ mile per year is necessary.

Capital Reserves:

Highway Major Equipment: \$40,000 (+5,000 over 2023) per the Highway Major Equipment Committee in order to have funds to replace vehicles on a recommended schedule.

Reconstruction/resurfacing: \$10,000; Todd noted that this could be used on Valley Road, only if necessary. He feels building this reserve for unanticipated events is important.

Highway Major Repairs: \$5000 (Selectmen do not recommend) :Proposed new capital reserve fund. Todd would like at least \$1000 in this account to establish it for unanticipated repairs.

3. OTHER BUSINESS:

- The next meeting will be Tuesday, January 16th at 6:00 PM to discuss Fire & Rescue Department/Emergency Management, Selectmen and Capital Reserves

4. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 7:20PM made by BJ Wahl, seconded by Dave Jakway, all aye.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathleen N. Rowe
Secretary