

Town of Sullivan, NH
Budget Committee
Approved Meeting Minutes, Tuesday, January 7, 2025
Sullivan Town Hall

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

Board Representatives: Dave Jakway, Selectmen; Virginia DeAngelis, Selectmen alternate, Paul Bolduc, School Board

Others: Chris Pratt, Library, Planning Board; Chip Woodbury, Conservation; Todd Smith, Highway, Cemeteries

Staff: Kathleen Rowe, Secretary; Bonnie Blanchard, Office Assistant;

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

On nomination by Gary Patnode, seconded by Mike Blanchard, Al Merrifield was unanimously elected Chairman of the 2025 Budget Committee.

2. BUDGET REVIEW

A. Conservation: \$2,645 (+\$100 over 2024)

Chip Woodbury presented the 2025 budget for the Conservation Commission. The increase in Town-Clean-up and Recycling reflects an increase in costs from the City of Keene for the hazardous waste disposal program.

Chip noted that the Town Clean-Up program was again well-attended in 2024; he noted that individual residents are cleaning up the roadsides year-round as they walk in different areas of town.

B. Recreation: \$1,000 (no change from 2024) Wendy Pelletier spearheaded a group of residents in December 2024 who arranged a well-received tree-lighting event for the Town; there are plans to do the same again in 2025. Thanks to Mike Blanchard and Dan Corindia for seeing that the lights were put up on the tree, The Sullivan Country Store, the Fire Department and many residents who provided refreshments.

C. Planning: \$11, 885 (\$3,084 decrease from 2024); Chris Pratt presented, explaining that the majority of the decrease is in wages as the office clerk is now working an average of 10 hours/week rather than 12. Additionally, office supplies have increase \$200 (to a total of \$300) driven by continued increases in cost of goods.

Capital Reserve: Planning Board has not asked for funding this year as the cost of rewriting the Master Plan housing section in 2024 was fully covered by the grant received from NHHOP. There is a balance in the CR account to which additions can be made to accommodate the next Master Plan revision. Chris suggests that for a town the size of Sullivan, a rewrite every ten years would be sufficient.

D. Library: \$7,180 (\$350 less than 2024) Chris Pratt present. Wages have increased (\$415) reflecting the proposed 2.5% COL increase for 2025. Telephone costs have increased 67% due to unanticipated new fee structuring by Consolidated Communications in August 2024. Propane has decreased (\$1.89/gal)

C. Cemeteries: \$9,300 (\$280 less than 2024). Todd presented the Cemetery budget, noting that Contracted Services includes \$2,000 for tree work at the old cemetery. Supplies include loam and topsoil; "patriotic" includes veterans' markers and flags.

Brad Smith noted that the \$2,500 for a cemetery database program was not spent; Todd explained that after he spoke with a number of vendors, the average price for a complete database setup was \$6000. He has purchased a small database program that he feels will be appropriate for work on our cemeteries.

In 2025, the charges for cemetery plots will be \$500, \$200 for a burial plot and \$300 for corner markers to alleviate problems encountered in prior years regarding plot locations. \$300 will be sent to Keene Monument who will make and place the markers soon after the plot purchase.

Gary Patnode asked what is being done for excavation; Todd responded that the funeral homes contract with a vendor (typically Keene Monument) to do this with an attending Trustee.

Todd noted that the Trustees are reviewing layouts for cremation lots as interest in these is growing.

Capital Reserve: The Cemetery Trustees are asking for \$2000 to be added to the Cemetery Expansion Capital Reserve. Selectmen are recommending no funding for 2025 as there is sufficient land (approximately 100 plots) at this time to address the needs for foreseeable future.

F. Highway: Todd Smith, Road Agent, presented the 2025 Highway budget.

4311: Admin: \$184,153 (+\$10,738 over 2024)

Personnel costs include an increase in medical insurance, workmen's compensation, 2.5% COL increase recommended by the Selectmen as well as an adjustment in overtime costs (+4000) to reflect actual costs in 2024.

4312: Operating Budget: (\$188,840 (\$2621 decrease over 2024)

341: Telephone: (\$1,260 v. \$780 2024 budget): Consolidated Communications added substantial unanticipated fees in August 2024, driving telephone costs up by 67%.

390: Contract Services: Todd noted that ledge on South Road that will require the use of rented equipment to break up; this line also includes surveying costs for Martin Court.

430: Building Maintenance: (\$10,000 v \$3,000 in '24 budget) Includes the purchase of a commercial propane heater capable of heating the full shop.

636: Diesel (\$8,410 v \$20,000 in '24) reflects new contract price (\$2.90/gal)

694: Gravel, 696 Salt, 698 Sand: Consistent with 2024 budget (\$18,000, \$35,360, \$18,150 respectively); sand expenses in 2024 were less than anticipated due to the lack of snow cover on the gravel roads; any plowing brought up sufficient sand/gravel to keep the surfaces safe.

4999: Special Projects: (\$130,000 v. \$115,000 in 2024) Selectmen recommend \$65,000 to be used in conjunction with Capital Reserve (reconstruction and resurfacing). Department request for \$130,000 will

provide finish layer on the Valley Road reconstruction project and an additional overlay from the end of the Valley Road project to a point approximately 5800' from the Centre Street junction (between Frasier and Pratt). Selectmen propose the funding of the completion of the Valley Road project only as there are no additional highway revenue sources currently available as there were in 2023 and 2024. The Board will wait for the final budget recommendations before considering the use of Fund Balance monies for additional funding.

Todd's concern is that the longer a number of the roads in Sullivan do not receive an overlay layer, the sooner they will need to be totally reconstructed (areas on Apple Hill, for example); on the current schedule (4.09 miles of the 10.9 miles in town since 2018). He is proposing to the Valley Road overlay in 2025; in following years do overlays from Cross Road to the overlay on Valley, Old Concord Rd., and South Road as necessary.

Gary Patnode asked if any consideration had been give to reverting paved roads to gravel; Todd noted that there is as much maintenance, if not more, on the gravel roads than on paved surfaces.

Capital Reserves:

Highway Major Equipment: \$35,000 same as 2024; Department request \$50,000, Selectmen recommend \$35,000) Funding per the Highway Major Equipment Committee recommendations in order to have funds to replace vehicles on a recommended schedule.

Reconstruction/resurfacing: \$10,000;

Town Bridges: \$0 – Town currently has approximately \$70,000 available in deferred NHDOT funding and available Capital reserve fund. There are no redlined bridges in Sullivan at this time.

3. OTHER BUSINESS:

- Al requests that the School Board provide their budget right away as both the Selectmen and the Budget Committee need to review before the 1/21 meeting.
- Next meeting of the Budget Committee will be 1/14/2025 at 6:00 PM, Sullivan Town Hall to discuss Fire & Rescue and the Selectmen's budgets.

4. ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,



Kathleen N. Rowe
Secretary