

Town of Sullivan, NH
Minutes of the Sullivan Budget Committee
January 14, 2020

Present: Mike Blanchard, John Bolles, Dave Jakway, Gary Patnode, BJ Wahl and Alfred Merrifield

Representatives: Marsha Cook, Board of Selectmen and Paul Bolduc, School Board

Others: Fire Chief Al Henry, Joe Lewandowski and Laura Merrifield

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Chairman Alfred Merrifield. A motion was made by BJ Wahl and seconded by Dave Jakway to approve the minutes as submitted. All in favor.
2. Fire Chief Al Henry reviewed the Fire/Emergency Management budget. He said the first three expense lines (phone, electric and heat) are completed by the Selectmen. It was noted heating oil was projected at \$2.499/gallon versus \$2.799/gallon last year and was based on usage at the time the budget was put together (early November). Laura Merrifield reported there is one outstanding fuel bill that will be reflected in the next expense report.

Building Maintenance – the same as last year and is expected to cover door or sill replacement at the fire house that was not completed in 2019.

Dues/Membership - covers technology support services and Spotted Dog (emergency response paging system) and is the same as last year.

Rescue Supplies - while the budget request is the same as last year, there was an increased need during 2019 that caused the line item to be significantly overspent. This line item is used for medical and regular supplies like expandable backboards, bandages, batteries for the defibrillator, oxygen, etc.

Fire Supplies - same as last year and is used for nozzles, gloves, foam, hoods, etc.

Office Supplies - same as last year and is used for typical office supplies though it was noted many times volunteers provide these items at their own expense.

Gasoline - same as last year and is used for small equipment.

Diesel - this is a shared expense with the Highway Department and is based on last year's total use of 3,700 gallons at an estimated cost of \$2.27 (or 15 cents over the supplier's cost).

Mileage –this is a new line item for 2020 and is intended to reimburse mileage to those individuals who use their own vehicles to go to training. The federal mileage reimbursement rate would be used.

Vehicle Repair - down \$1,000 from last year, is used for unexpected fixes during the year. There are no anticipated repairs to the newly acquired rescue vehicle and what repairs there would be are likely to cost less. The overage in this line item was due to a need to replace batteries in addition to regular repair work.

Equipment Repair – same as last year and is for annual service work for the cascade system, hydraulics, flow testing, etc.

Radio Repair & Equipment - is for radios and pagers. It is now more cost efficient to replace, versus repair, pagers.

Training - down from \$2,500 last year to \$2,000. Anticipating one EMT class in addition to annual training.

Supplies - for any miscellaneous supplies necessary.

New/Major Equipment – it is intended to upgrade the Jaws of Life tool from gas to electric. A new one cost around \$12,000 but there is a source offering one at \$7,500. \$4,000 would come from the town and \$3,500 would come from the fire company.

Rescue/New Equipment - for the purchase of flares, flashlights, ropes and other small tools. The request is the same as last year.

Emergency Management – request is same as last year and funds are used to purchase fire prevention materials.

Capital Reserves:

- Forest Fire Fighting Liabilities & Equipment – request of \$2,000 and is intended to build up the balance.
- Breathing Apparatus – request of \$2,500 and is intended to build up the balance.
- Fire Department Vehicle – request is for \$25,000 and would be used, in part, to acquire needed fire vehicles. This fund expended \$30,000 recently to acquire the rescue vehicle.

General discussion ensued relative to the need to upgrade the internet and have a new interface for the phone systems. Costs are unknown but based on recent expenses incurred by the highly department the monthly charge could be an additional \$35-40 a month on top of whatever upfront costs there are. Possible increase to phone line may be needed.

Selectmen's Budget – Laura Merrifield explained the Selectmen's Budget and Capital Reserves as follows:

Executive - covers wages or stipends for administrative and elected officials. This year's budget anticipates a 1.5% wage adjustment to employees and some elected officials. Laura explained this line item was underspent during 2019 but the contract services line item was overspent. This is due to the Town contracting temporarily with Masiello Employment Services to fill the vacant Administrative Assistant job. She noted the job is presently advertised. Projected wage spreadsheet was distributed.

Election and Registration – with four elections this year, the cost is up from \$1,538 to \$3,250.

Financial – up very slightly over last year. It was noted that following the catastrophic website failure the Town contracted with GovOffice for website hosting which results in a greater dues/subscription expense. Laura also explained that it may be appropriate, during the budget committee deliberations, to increase printing/publishing because of additional publishing costs and/or contingency to account for unanticipated expenses that might occur in updating the Treasurer's computer.

Revaluation/Annual Services – up significantly as compared to last year, which was unique. The 2019 update meant no data verification costs were incurred but now that the update is complete the Town will be incurring those costs again. There is a one year contract with Avitar and the Selectmen are in process of sending out proposals for annual assessing work as well as cyclical work for a 2024 update.

Legal and Audit – Audit fee of \$11,350 is a contracted price. Legal was slightly overspent due to abatement settlement costs. PSNH/Eversource is resolved up to 2017 but they filed with the Superior Court for 2018.

Personnel – these costs represent worker's compensation insurance and social security contributions based on wages. There is no unemployment expense this year because Primex issued the Town a credit.

Building Maintenance – includes phone, electric and propane expenses. Propane is a contracted price at \$2.299 per gallon. Building maintenance expenses include mowing (contracted), interior cleaning (contracted), waste disposal, furnace cleaning, etc. It also anticipates miscellaneous exterior painting which is being done in small increments. Based on a recommendation from John Bolles, the selectmen will research the cost of waste disposal.

Insurance – up slightly over last year.

Ambulance Standby – This line item includes ambulance fees paid to Diluzio and standby fees to the City of Keene.

Fire Mutual Aid – Expecting between a 3 and 5% increase over last year according to the Mutual Aid Chief. This is due to rising benefit costs incurred by Mutual Aid.

Health Agencies – Last year the Town funded several agencies in the amount of \$6,060, this year the request total \$5,918. Funding is based on direct benefits to residents.

Welfare Direct and Vendor Payments are basically placeholders in the event the Town needs to assist eligible residents. There is a decrease in the requested amount for direct assistance with an offsetting increase to vendor payments. This is to better align the types of expenses.

Capital Reserves:

- Revaluation - \$4,065 represents a compressed schedule for the next update (2024).
- Town Building Major Repairs - \$9,000 and is intended for long lasting improvements like roofs, furnaces, structure repair, etc. Nothing anticipated in 2020.
- Town-wide Emergencies - \$2,500 is the standard request intended to build up that fund to offset expenses incurred due to a flood or other unexpected disaster.

Police Services – Laura Merrifield reviewed the Police Services Budget, which has increased from \$39,825 to \$42,433. There has been little change in this line item since the initial agreement. The latest hourly rate recognizes various increased costs over the years. The contract with the Sheriff's Department provides, on average, 17.5 hours of patrol and other services per week.

3. Other business: The budget information from the School Board was distributed. Next scheduled meeting is January 21st at 6:30. Budget recommendations will be made that evening as well.
4. Dave Jakway made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mike Blanchard, the meeting at 7:55 PM. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,


Laura J. Merrifield