BUDGET COMMITTEE **January 9, 2024**

MEMORIAL BUILDING **7:00 P.M.**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Ken Jacques, B. Manning, Tim Cook, Darrin Patten, Whit Smith, Justin Hastings and Jeff Milne.

Ex-Officio Poul Heilmann

Also present Select Board Don Hill, Police Chief Pat Zullo and Steve Dzubak

Chairman Jacques requested a roll call, all members present.

Minutes of December 12, 2023 Darrin Patten moved to accept as amended, Jeff Milne seconded the motion Board unanimously approved.

Chairman Jacques questioned if the check to the County was made on time and if the late fee was determined. Poul Heilmann responded that the check was received by the County on time and that the fee would have been figured at a 8% per year which would be .15% per week.

Chairman Jacques shared with the Board that due to the weather Dallas Patten, Fire Chief and Tim Hayes, Road Agent would not be at the meeting to discuss their budgets though they both will be at the meeting next week. Pat Zullo, Police Chief would be sharing his budget with the Board.

Poul Heilmann began the discussion of the Police Department budget with an update to the Police Chief salary line to be $105,000 instead of the $100,470. He and Pat found that the new number is midway between what surrounding towns are paying separately, Whit Smith questioned the budget vs actual number for several salary lines to which Tamara Butcher responded that the payroll lines have the first check of 2024 showing as 2023 and adjustments have not been done to remove partial pay periods for 2022 and 2024. The Board questioned the new line entitled Prosecution and the amount of $10,000. Chief Zullo responded that the County has been offering an attorney to support departments in the prosecution of cases. Currently two towns pay for the service, but moving forward the County wants to try and offer the service without fees to the towns, though at this time this has not been confirmed so the $10,000 is if there is a fee involved. Having an attorney support the department when cases go to court is vital. The Board questioned the amount put in the line if the service is going to be free. Chief Zullo responded that at this time no one knows if it will be free, even though that is the direction the County wants to go, so having an amount in the line will ensure the Department will be able to utilize the service if there is a fee. Question of the $500 in the Polaris line; what is that for since nothing was spent out of it last year. Chief Zullo explained that the Polaris is shared with the Fire Department though it was purchased through a Dept of Justice grant, so the PD put in a line for maintenance and the Fire Department performs any maintenance that is needed. No expenses have been charged to the line. Questions of the Dispatch line of $16,150 on the PD budget and the FD budget, should they not be the same as the departments share that service. Chief Zullo stated that the dispatch amount is shared evenly though the records portion is greater for the PD than the FD so that increases the amount paid by the PD. A member of the Board had additional questions about the Police Chief salary line, stating “are we Nashua” to which Chief Zullo responded that Nashua is probably close to $200,000. Board questioned what surrounding towns are paying, Cornish, Sunapee, Sutton, Canaan, Hanover, Lebanon, New London. Chief Zullo responded that Cornish has a part-time chief, Sunapee was paying $130,000 2 years ago, Sutton pays $103,000, Canaan pays $105,000, Hanover pays $140,000 with Lebanon very close to that. New London pays $130,000. Discussion of the new cruiser and the cost. Chief Zullo stated the new cruiser would be right around $59K, $42K for the cruiser, $16K for Ossipee Mountain Electronics to outfit it and $1K for the decals. It would be a white Dodge Durango and would match the current cruiser.

The Board thanked Chief Zullo for his time and he left the meeting.

The Board then moved through the proposed budget department by department.

Questioning the Executive Computer Support/Prog/Supply line. Budgeted amount was $28K and amount spent was $49,677. Tamara will have a breakdown of the line for the next meeting. Poul Heilmann shared with the Committee that the Select Board is going to be looking at how the Town is being supported and the amount we are paying for computer support and services because he feels the amount we are paying is very high, though through research is the only way to find out for sure. Discussion of the $27,000 shown in the Engineering line, $1,000 has been carried in that line. Tamara stated that the additional $26,000 is the amount Mike Hansen quoted for engineering/fees for the repair of the large culvert located at the outlet of McDaniels Marsh. Mike Hansen looked at the culvert in the late fall and returned an estimate of $96,000 to repair and $26,000 for engineering fees, wetlands permit, survey, delineation, and others.

Questions about the amount of Health Insurance, Whit Smith remembers that the Town was only paying for a single person and if the employee needed additional coverage, they would need to pay the balance. He had searched through the minutes, called Leigh Callaway and Dick Hendl to find out when this changed. Poul Heilmann informed the Committee that the Select Board is working on updating the Personnel Policy to include the Health Coverage portion and at this time the thought is that the Town will pay for a single person coverage, if additional coverage is needed the Town will pay 85% and the employee will pay the 15% balance.

Circuit Rider line increased due to an hourly rate increase and an hour per month increase as well. Agriculture line will be $500 for any programs they wish to do during the year.
Government Buildings Heating line will be reduced to $30,000 from 35,000.
Non-recuring projects line will be increased to $16,000 from $14,000. Projects to be completed during the year include replacing the Town Office and Library front doors and insulating the Police Department exterior wall.
Government Electricity line will be reduced to $10,000 from $12,000.
Ambulance line will be $37,397 an increase from $35,959.
Recreation Committee requested $3,650.

Questions were raised in the Highway Dept budget which will wait until next week when Tim Hayes, Road Agent is present.

Chairman Jacques shared information about the Power Plant that Tamara had supplied him with following the last meeting. The current assessment is $3,357,700 up from the 2022 assessment of $919,500. Their tax bill was $50,277 in December, he questioned if they had paid their taxes. Tamara would find out on Thursday from the Tax Collector. Discussion of how the assessment is made. Sansoucy Associates performs the utility assessments for the Town.

Chairman Jacques asked if there were any additional warrant articles the Select Board were considering other than the cruiser and the culvert repair. Poul Heilmann did not think so at this time. Though there needed to be work done to determine what would be best to do about the grader, he would like to see a committee of 3-4 individuals to do research on possible options, buying new, used, or refurbishing the current grader. Darrin Patten asked what is actually wrong with the grader because the previous Road Agent didn't voice concern about it. B. Manning shared that if it is a matter of finding parts off the shelf, which due to age can be difficult but there are other options. There are individuals who have 3-D printers that can produce parts that are no longer mass produced. All questions to ask Tim Hayes when he is at the meeting next week.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm

Submitted by,
Tamara Butcher