

MINUTES  
BUDGET COMMITTEE  
ALEXANDRIA  
JANUARY 7, 2025  
6:00 P.M.

IN ATTENDANCE: Doug Benton, Don Paiva, Fred Platts, Mike Provost, Danielle Reed, Cindy Williams

Don called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Mike made a motion, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Doug Benton to approve minutes of December 10, 2024 as written, so voted.

Don shared the following percentages of the town's portion paid towards employee's benefits:

Social Security/medicare 7.65%

Town employee pension other than police 13.53 until July then 12.75

Police pension 31.82 until July then 30.95

Insurance premiums through June 2025 single \$1,277/month or \$294/week

2 person \$2,543/month \$586/week

Family \$3,408 month \$786.46/week

If an employee opts out of insurance they can receive a stipend of \$2,000. There was a question as to what percent the employee contributes. Cindy thought it might be 10%.

There are concerns of the committee that the Selectmen haven't provided their recommendations to the committee with regards to the requested department budgets. Don advised that he has spoken to a couple of the Selectmen to ask their opinions. The Selectmen have proposed a 4% increase to salaries for 2025. The current cola is 2.5. It was felt that we have fallen behind and this includes catching up with cost of living. Cindy voiced her concerns that the employees continue to be offered a medical insurance plan that no other town offers (other towns have much higher deductibles and if they choose to have lower deductibles, they are required to pay the premium) and with the percentage of premium increase this year seems like a substantial increase in their benefit package. Cindy mentioned that our plan is through a different carrier than many of the other towns.

The budget was reviewed in its entirety and the following were areas of discussion.

The amounts being paid to election personnel to be reviewed. Cindy explained the last time she researched this with other towns, election officials are not paid hourly but receive stipends. She will review for next year with other towns. Danielle is going to check with Fran about increasing the ballot clerk line from \$1100 to \$1500.

Danielle shared that \$2500 has been included in the budget for required election software. We can get through the March election with the current tablet. After that time, we will be required to purchase a tablet at a cost of \$7,000. It was agreed we would consider that for the 2026 budget.

There was a question regarding the \$60,000 in Town Legal Fees – is this the actual cost for legal fees or does it include any amount for abatements. Should we be carrying an amount for a possible required abatement.

In reviewing the police dept. budget, there was confusion regarding the PD Salary line and PD overtime line. Last year's budget was approved as a salary of \$52,000 for the 2<sup>nd</sup> officer with \$4,000 in overtime pay. The proposed budget shows a salary paid of \$56,000 and nothing showing in overtime. The proposed budget for 2025 shows a

salary of \$56,000 and \$4,000 in overtime?? The police dept budget was reduced by \$5,000 bringing budget request to \$377,959.

After discussion of the requested salary increase for the police chief, there were two proposals – one the 4% increase bringing salary to \$74,000 and a 2<sup>nd</sup> that passed on a vote 4 to 2 for an increase of 6% bringing the salary to \$75,000.

There was discussion regarding how social security is handled with pensioned employees. Recently there was a new bill signed by the president that addresses this.

There were a couple of questions regarding the fire dept. budget. It appears the secretary has reduced her hour substantially the last couple of years. Should this line item be reduced. The heat expense was \$6241 last year and only \$3,000 budgeted for this year. Fred questioned the new propane tank that has been placed at the fire department. Is this for a different heating system or placement of the proposed generator. There was discussion as to whether the fire dept has pursued a grant for the generator and where that stands. It was understood in the past that this was one of the major purposes of the secretary – to research and apply for possible grants. Don will email George to ask the status of a grant for the generator.

There is confusion regarding the Road Agent pay. The requested salary increase is over 10%. It is unclear whether this salary includes the time he oversees the transfer station and why this isn't the 4%. It was felt by all committee members that Paul's salary should be separated by what department he work as a separate work classification to have a clear picture of the cost for each department. Maybe there should be consideration of \changing his title to include both departments. Is there a job description of Paul's position? Don will ask for clarification of this.

Danielle recommended the following amounts for the Health Agencies:

Nana \$4000, Voices Against Violence \$2200, Grafton Seniors \$1500, Tri County \$3552. Cady \$500, Genesis LR Mental Health \$1500,, Midstate \$1000, Transport \$1000, Casa \$500, Pemi Baker \$1500. After discussion it was agreed to increase Nana to \$5000 and LR Mental Heath to \$2,000 bringing the total to \$18752.00.

Haynes Library – The budget seems excessive for being the first year. Doug took a look at the building. The windows need work and the bricks need work. There were concerns regarding the total cost to make it a usable building and what the actual plan is for the building. It was agreed that this year the request should be placed as a warrant article to allow the voters input.

Warrant Articles - there are concerns that warrant articles are not being provided prior to the public hearing for our review.

Under Warrant Articles there is an amount of \$26,000 for Street Lights – we would like an explanation for this.

A motion was made and 2<sup>nd</sup> to adjourn at 8:00.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Williams

Action Items:

% employees pay towards insurance premiums

Selectmen's Recommendations for budget numbers for us to consider

Warrant articles to be provided to us prior to the public hearing.

Explanation of legal line item of \$60,000

Road Agent/Transfer Station Supervisor pay split between departments

Social Security situation for pension employees

Street lighting warrant article

Haynes Library to be presented as warrant article

Status of Generator grant