

TOWN OF DEERING

762 Deering Center Road
Deering, NH 03244

Board of Selectmen Final Meeting Minutes Thursday, February 15, 2024 7:00 P.M.

Members Present: Chair Jill Smith, Selectman Roy Watson and Selectman Steve Diers
Also Present: Town Administrator Meagen Kerris and Recording Secretary Wendy Baker

Opening of the Meeting by the Chair at 7:00pm

Pledge of Allegiance

Item 1: Consent Agenda

- Payroll – 2/7/2024, 2/14/2024
- Accounts Payable – 02/07/2024 (\$464,824.23)

Chair Smith made a motion to approve the items in the Consent Agenda. Seconded by Selectman Watson. Motion Passed 3-0.

Chair Smith read the format of the Public Budget Hearing.

NEW BUSINESS

Item 2: PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING - Per RSA32:5, I,V

Chair Smith made a motion to open the Public Budget Hearing at 7:03pm. Seconded by Selectman Watson. Motion Passed 3-0.

TA Kerris presented the Executive Budget

Department request: \$259,469

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$259,469

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$232,797

Health Insurance rates increased.

TA Kerris presented the Town Clerk Budget

Department request: \$77,350

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$77,111

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$73,436

TA Kerris said that Line 37 Dues and Subscriptions was decreased but should be increased back due to the new Town Clerk coming in needing specific certifications.

TA Kerris presented the Financial Administration/Tax Collector Budget

Department request: \$114,636

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$113,396

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$112,222

TA Kerris presented the Property Assessment Budget

Department request: \$40,166

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$40,166

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$49,002

TA Kerris said the increase reflects the change in hours for the Assessing Clerk as well as all memberships have increased.

Michelle Johnson asked what changed exactly for the Assessing Clerk.

Chair Smith answered that she had mistakenly put in 20 hours for the position when they had been increased to 28 hours.

TA Kerris presented the Legal Budget

Department request: \$21,000

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$21,000

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$21,000

TA Kerris presented the Planning & Zoning Budget

Department request: \$11,305

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$11,305

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$11,305

TA Kerris presented the General Government Buildings Budget

Department request: \$34,220

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$34,220

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$32,020

TA Kerris presented the Cemetery Budget

Department request: \$26,100

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$18,700

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$18,700

Tom Copadis asked if the Cemetery Trustees have reimbursed the Town yet?

Chair Smith said not yet but they will be talking about it at their next meeting.

TA Kerris presented the Insurance Budget

Department request: \$72,549

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$72,549

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$72,049

TA Kerris presented the Advertising and Regional Association Budget

Department request: \$4,325

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$4,325

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$4,325

Chief Philibert presented the Police Budget

Department request: \$382,595
Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$381,854
Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$349,177

Chief Philibert gave the following details about the Police Budget:

The part-time wages line has increased because the full-time wages line has decreased by one officer. Overtime wages line has decreased because there shouldn't be a need for this with the Chief being a salaried position and only having part-time officers.

Detail wages line was \$5,000 and had been reduced to \$4,000 and he felt it could go lower to \$3,000.

The prosecution line is down with a new contract and the animal control line is good to leave \$1 in it.

Postage and telephone lines are down and for mobile phones he will be going from 3 phones to only 1 therefore that line can be reduced.

Vehicle maintenance was decreased and he feels it is not a good idea to do so since prices of parts are only increasing.

Steve Fogelson suggested to take the amount not needed for the mobile phone line and put it into the vehicle maintenance line.

Trisha Haropulos asked how many officer the department has?

Chief Philibert answered himself and 3 part-time officers.

Trisha Haropulos asked if we have a part-time department for coverage?

Chief Philibert answered that we have on-call hours and we have the State Police to cover 3 hours between some shifts.

Trisha Haropulos asked about the Detail Line.

Chief Philibert explained how the detail shifts are paid out.

Chief Richards presented the Ambulance Budget

Department request: \$152,400
Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$152,400
Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$106,398

Chief Richards gave the following details about the Ambulance Budget:

The Ambulance Data Line was increased due to needed software updates.

The Medical Supplies Line was increased due to Nitros Oxide needed for the new ambulance as well as replacing expired supplies.

Chief Richards presented the Fire Department Budget

Department request: \$152,206
Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$148,206
Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$143,230

Chief Richards gave the following details about the Fire Department Budget:

The Training and Certifications Line was increased due to new training planned.

The Dues and Subscriptions Line was increased due to subscriptions to new professional organizations.

The Building Maintenance Line was increased due to needs at McAllister Station.

Chair Smith explained that under the Per-Diem Wages line, it is planned to use \$45,000 from the Ambulance Trust Fund in addition to the \$46,400 that is budgeted.

Steve Fogelson asked if there are any other competing uses to come from the Ambulance Trust Fund?

Chair Smith answered that the funds being used were raised last year.

TA Kerris said the new ambulance isn't expected to arrive until 2025 and we still have the funds that will be raised in 2024.

TA Kerris presented the Building Inspector Budget

Department request: \$13,469
Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$13,469
Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$13,469

TA Kerris said the Emergency Management Budget would be kept at \$1.

TA Kerris presented the Other Public Safety Budget

Department request: \$46,776
Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$46,776
Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$45,261

The reduction was from receiving an actual number for dispatch.

Interim Road Agent Martin presented the Highway and Streets Admin Budget

Department request: \$675,061
Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$624,651
Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$604,039

Interim Road Agent Martin gave the following details about the Highway and Streets Admin Budget:

The Overtime Wages Line was increased due to the Road Agent position becoming hourly.

The Uniforms Line was increased due to the Department being fully staffed.

Interim Road Agent Martin presented the Highway and Streets Budget

Department request: \$367,000

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$303,230

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$290,532

Interim Road Agent Martin gave the following details about the Highway and Streets Budget:

The Crack and Chip Sealing Line was zeroed out because this should fall under a road project.

The Aggregate and Culvert Lines were decreased due to purchases made at the end of 2023.

A Tire Line, Steel Line and Equipment Maintenance Line was added so these items would be better tracked.

Michelle Johnson asked what would the Department do since a lot was taken out of the budget.

Chair Smith answered that Chip and Crack Sealing was moved to the Hot and Cold Patch Line.

Michelle Johnson asked why there was a decrease in the Part-time Wages Line?

Chair Smith answered they removed the seasonal part-time position.

Michelle Johnson asked why the Overtime Line increased if the Department has a full crew?

Chair Smith said there is a buffer because there is no way to tell how many hours the Road Agent would have put in.

Selectman Diers asked about the Salt Line reduction.

Interim road Agent Martin answered they are actively trying to use less salt.

Elizabeth Kirby pointed out that in the last 20 years, the average was \$18,000 and feels the \$25,000 that the BAC suggested is sufficient.

Michelle Johnson agreed with Betsy Kirby.

Conservation Commission Gary Samuels suggested that the Road Agent become a member of the NH Association of Road Agents.

Interim Road Agent Martin reminded the Board that the Dust Control Line should be increased to \$23,000 to cover the contract they entered into with Innovative Solutions.

TA Kerris presented the Street Lighting Budget

Department request: \$4,000

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$4,000

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$4,500

TA Kerris presented the Solid Waste Disposal Budget

Department request: \$144,000

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$144,000

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$154,783

The Transfer Station contract increased from \$98,000 to \$108,783.

TA Kerris presented the Direct Assistance Budget

Department request: \$9,600

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$9,600

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$9,600

TA Kerris presented the Parks and Recreation Budget

Department request: \$25,000

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$25,000

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$25,000

Chair Smith said this is a contract with a flat fee.

The Library Trustees presented the Library Budget

Department request: \$3,050

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$3,450

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$3,450

The Building Maintenance Line increased by \$400.

Gary Samuels presented the Conservation Commission Budget

Department request: \$21,845

Budget Advisory Committee recommendation: \$7,515

Board of Selectmen recommendation: \$6,995

Gary Samuels introduced a new Water Quality project the Conservation Commission is working on. They want to promote well water testing. Stay tuned.

Chair Smith said the under Long Term Bonds and Notes this will be the last payment of the Town Hall Bond and the Fire Truck.

Chair Smith said 2 of the current Board of Selectmen have chosen not to take the annual stipend, and the amount for the third was left in not knowing what the incoming Selectperson would want, the Treasurer has waived their stipend and the Town Administrator has waived an increase in 2024.

Interim Road Agent Martin introduced a plow truck that needs to be replaced and is suggesting a 6-year lease for \$55,000-\$60,000 per year lease payment.

Annette Poland asked about the Vehicle Trust Fund.

Discussion ensued regarding putting the amount for the vehicle in the Trust Fund request or if it is going to be presented as a lease, Michelle Johnson pointed out that a Warrant Article must be presented for the lease and if it is not ready tonight, then a special public hearing will need to be held if it is going to go on the ballot.

Chair Smith went over the Warrant Article for the Trust Fund additions and said the Capital Improvements Plan is laid out for a full purchase and since vehicles are now costing more there has been discussion about leasing instead of purchasing.

The Board of Selectmen suggested the funding of the following additions to the Trust Funds:

Assessing Fund: \$3,000

Exotic Weed Control Fund: \$11,745

Fire Department Building Maintenance Fund: \$75,000

Highway Buildings Fund: \$5,000

Highway Department Vehicles Fund: \$100,000

Road Reconstruction: \$155,000

Fire & Rescue Vehicle Fund is usually \$150,000 per year but with a substantial amount of needs we are going to look into other options such as leasing, purchasing used and looking for grants.

Fire & Rescue Equipment Fund will not be funded this year because funds were used for items needed in 2023.

PPE Fund will not be funded this year because funds were used for items needed in 2023.

Government Building Maintenance Fund will not be funded this year because after review it was found that a 5th side of the building was put in.

Highway Equipment Fund will not be funding this year because funds were used for items needed in 2023.

Master Plan Fund is close to what is needed to fund it and the interest from 2024 will bring it to that amount.

Police Vehicles Fund was agreed that it could extend one year out and not fund it this year.

The Road Reconstruction Line should be funded at \$250,000 according to the Capital Improvement Plan each year with a formula that takes into account what is received from the Highway Block Grant which is \$155,000. The BAC recommended not funding the Warrant Article and the Board of Selectmen felt it should be put back in.

Town Solar Energy Fund will not be funded this year because more research needs to be done whether the Town wants to move forward with the purchase.

Chair Smith said if the Board decided to fund the Trust Funds with the full Capital Improvements Plan it would be \$902,450, the BAC recommended \$625,195 and the Board is recommending \$349,745.

Steve Fogelson asked if the Board was ignoring the Capital Improvements Plan.

Chair Smith said they are looking into other sources of funding.

Michelle Johnson said the original Department Budget ask was a 17% increase, the BAC got it down to a 10% increase and the BOS landed on a 5% increase, she is impressed.

TA Kerris read the proposed Library Warrant Article as follows:

“To see if the Town will vote to transfer the total trust fund sum from the Deering Library Expendable Trust Fund into the Library Building Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund. The Deering Library Expendable Trust Fund was established by a warrant article at Town Meeting on

March 15, 2008, to put \$5000.00 in trust “for the purpose of providing funds for the operation and future expansion of the Deering Town Library”. This trust fund has not been used since it was created in 2008. The Library Building Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund was established by a warrant article at Town Meeting on March 17, 2012 “for the purpose of providing funds for the maintenance and renovations of the library building”. This trust fund has been used and replenished by warrant article at Town Meeting over the last three years, making the schoolhouse library building safe and usable as a Town library. The balance remaining in the Library Building Maintenance Trust is less than \$700. The Library Trustees are the agents to expend on both trusts.”

Selectman Diers said that the BAC also went against the Capital Improvement Plan by reducing the amount suggested as well.

Steve Fogelson said the reductions should be justified with solutions of how to fund what is needed.

Chair Smith said the intention is to try to keep things level and to know what the costs are but it is not set in stone.

Chair Smith made a motion to close the Public Hearing at 9:02pm. Seconded by Selectman Watson. Motion Passed 3-0.

The Board took a break.

The Board reconvened at 9:23pm.

OLD BUSINESS

Item 3: Finalization of 2024 Budget

Selectman Watson proposed the following changes to the Budget:

Line 37 increased by \$100

Line 143 increased by \$1,000

Line 133 decreased by \$1,000

Line 192 increased to \$305,000

Line 218 increased to \$23,000

Selectman Diers suggested decreasing Line 192 to \$30,000

The Board agreed by consensus to the suggested changes above.

Chair Smith said this brings the Operating Budget to \$2,434,720 which is an increase of 5.1% and approximately \$.48 per thousand on the tax rate.

TA Kerris said she did not feel it was the right time to put forth a Warrant Article for a lease of a highway vehicle and waiting for the new Road Agent would be best.

Selectman Diers agreed.

The Board discussed the additions to the Trust Funds that were suggested earlier and agreed by consensus to keep them as suggested.

Selectman Watson made a motion to approve the proposed 2024 Operating Budget of \$2,434,720. Seconded by Selectman Diers. Motion Passed 3-0.

Selectman Watson made a motion to approve the proposed additions to the Trust Funds of \$349,745 while using \$100,000 of the Unassigned Fund Balance and the balance through taxation. Seconded by Selectman Diers. Motion Passed 3-0.

Item 4: Minutes Approval – 1/18/2024, 1/25/2024, 2/1/2024, 2/7/2024 (Public); 1/25/2024 (Nonpublic)

Chair Smith made a motion to approve the public minutes of 1/18/24, 1/25/24, 2/1/24, 2/7/24 and Non-Public Minutes of 1/25/24 as presented. Seconded by Selectman Watson. Motion Passed 3-0.

Item 5: Town Administrator Updates

TA Kerris said the interviews for the Finance Administrator position have concluded and her recommendation has been passed along to the Board for an interview on Tuesday.

Item 6: Selectmen's Reports

Selectman Watson had nothing to report.

Selectman Diers said he has been trying to obtain more information about the Solar Contract and finally got in contact Revision Solar and was told the array is now owned by Blue Haven. He is now trying to connect with them.

Chair Smith said she wanted to discuss the Non-Monetary Warrant Article for the School Feasibility Study.

She read the proposed article as follows:

Article #TBD: To Direct the School Board to Conduct a Feasibility Study

“To see if the Town will vote to direct the School Board of Hillsboro-Deering Cooperative School District to conduct a study of the feasibility and suitability of the withdrawal of the Town of Deering from the School District as set forth in RSA 195:25.”

Selectman Watson asked if the School Cooperative Apportionment Study Committee has been disbanded?

The Board discussed the proposed Warrant Article.

Chair Smith made a motion to add the Warrant Article to request a Feasibility Study to the 2024 Warrant. Seconded by Selectman Diers. Motion Passed 2-1 (Watson - Nay)

The Board discussed the All Veterans Tax Credit requested by Mike Collins.

Selectman Watson asked if we know how many will qualify?

Chair Smith suggested they plan for next year and research more on the All Veterans Tax Credit as well as updating the Elderly Tax Credit.

The Board agreed by consensus.

Chair Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:18pm. Seconded by Selectman Watson. Motion passed 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Wendy Baker

Wendy Baker
Recording Secretary

Job Title: Finance Administrator
Reports to: Town Administrator
Department: Administration
Salary: DOE
Description: Full-time Exempt, 40 hours per week

Job Summary:

The Finance Administrator oversees payroll, accounts payable and receivable, account reconciliation, and benefits paperwork. This position will also provide administrative support to the Town Administrator and will serve as the initial point of contact for the Town Office, responsible for answering phones and general inquiries.

Duties/Responsibilities:

- Process invoices and prepare voucher for Board Selectmen signature weekly. Once approved, cut and mail checks.
- Process weekly and monthly payroll. Ensuring that hours are correctly categorized, including vacation, sick, comp, and overtime pay. Print payroll reports for funding retirement accounts and creating General Ledger entries. Print and file appropriate documentation.
- Enter deposits from the Town Clerk/Tax Collector, ambulance, and building department. Print and file appropriate documentation.
- Approve bank transfers initiated by the Town Clerk/Tax Collector.
- Reconcile bank statements on a monthly basis.
- Set up new employees in the payroll system.
- Update employee pay increases as applied in the payroll system.
- Oversee benefits administration including medical, dental, and retirement participation.
- Answer the main phone line for the Town Offices, routing calls as appropriate to the Town Administrator, Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Assessing, Highway Department, Police, and Fire.
- Set up and maintain employees in the 457 retirement portal.
- Fund 457 retirement accounts using the online portal.
- Process New Hampshire Retirement contributions for police.
- Create monthly expenditure reports for department heads, committees, and the Board of Selectmen.
- Assist the Town Administrator with the annual report, budget preparation, and other administrative tasks.
- Work with the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen to implement policies.
- Conduct year-end closeout which includes rotating and boxing up prior year records for storage.
- Setup new year in the financial software.
- Manage vendors, ensuring that they have W-9s on file.
- Complete and submit 1099 forms.
- Complete annual Primex employee profile reporting.
- Complete the DRA reporting by required deadlines.
- Collect new vendor information from Department Heads to enter in for payment.
- Coordinate with the Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer to sign checks and payroll.

- Assist with Bank Transfers.
- Assist in the successful implementation of new accounting software.
- Work with Financial Auditors to ensure successful completion of yearly audit.
- Accurately prepare bank deposits.
- Flexibility for additional hours/tasks, depending on the needs of the Finance Administration office.
- Order supplies as requested for departments.
- Monitor Expense reports.
- Strong attention to detail.
- Strong organizational skills.
- Ability to handle multiple projects due at the same time.
- Participate in trainings associated with the Finance Administrator office.
- Strong professional communication skills is a must.
- Working knowledge of General Accounting Practices.
- Bring updated Finance policies forward to the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen.
- Other tasks as assigned by the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen.