

TOWN OF DEERING

762 Deering Center Road
Deering, NH 03244

Board of Selectmen
Final Special Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 13, 2024
6:00 P.M. – Non-Public Session
6:30 P.M. – Public Session

Members Present: Chair Jill Smith, Selectman Roy Watson and Selectman Steve Diers
Also Present: Town Administrator Kerris

Opening of the Meeting by the Chair at 6:00pm

Chair Smith made a motion to go into Non-Public Session at 6:00pm per RSA 91 A-3, II, (a) & (b). Seconded by Selectman Watson.

Vote by Roll Call: Chair Smith – yes, Selectman Watson – yes and Selectman Diers – yes.

The Select Board came out of Non-Public Session at 6:52pm

Opening of the Public Meeting by the Chair at 6:53pm

Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Smith made a motion to seal the minutes of the Non-Public Session at 6:54pm. Seconded by Selectman Watson, because it is determined that divulgence of this information likely would affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of this board.

Vote by Roll Call: Chair Smith – yes, Selectman Watson – yes, Selectman Diers - yes

Item 1: 2024 Proposed Operating Budget & Warrant Articles – continued review & work

Administration

Chair Smith asked if TA Kerris knew of any other areas that needed to be increased or reduced?

TA Kerris said there should be a discussion regarding town cell phones not being utilized as much and potentially reducing that budget line.

There was a discussion regarding the use of personal cell phones for town business and how RSA 91:A would play into that.

TA Kerris said she would like to do more research on that with NHMA.

TA Kerris talked about the photo copier and that a new lease might be eminent but for this year to leave it as is.

Town Clerk

Chair Smith said the Board had previous questions regarding Election Ballot Clerk Wages but she did not hear back from the Town Clerk and it can be addressed on Thursday.

Finance Administration

Chair Smith asked if we should budget at the cost of the Current IT company even though we are looking into a new firm?

TA Kerris suggested they work with Back Bay this year and make sure they are getting all of the services they are paying for.

Chair Smith asked if any software prices had changed?

TA Kerris answered no.

Property Assessment

The Board discussed the Assessing Clerk wages and whether it should be budgeted at 20 or 28 hours.

TA Kerris said her employment contract is for 28 hours.

Chair Smith said the amount for 28 hours is \$29,840 and would only receive one 3% increase in 2024. FICA will increase to \$831 and Medicare to \$433.

The Board agreed by consensus.

Legal & Professional Services

Chair Smith said \$18,000 is budgeted but suggested reducing it to \$15,000 since we have a Legal Expendable Trust Fund and there is \$13,500 in the trust fund currently.

Selectman Watson asked if \$28,500 is enough looking at the past year's expenditures.

There was a discussion regarding the Code Enforcement line of \$3,000 that is not being used anymore.

Selectman Watson suggested raising Line 82 from \$18,000 to \$20,999 and reducing Line 83 from \$3,000 to \$1.

Planning & Zoning

Chair Smith brought up the revenue questions that came up at the previous meeting.

TA Kerris said the budget item is offset when the tax rate is set, all projected revenue is uploaded with the budget amounts for the DRA to consider when setting the tax rate.

Government Buildings

Chair Smith said Line 106 Office Supplies for \$3,000 could be reduced by \$2,500 if ARPA funds are used for the security mailboxes and panic buttons.

TA Kerris said that this line is also used for hand soap, lightbulbs paper towels etc. and would like to see \$800 left.

The Board agreed by consensus to reduce Line 106 from \$3,000 to \$800.

Police Department

The Board had a brief discussion regarding reducing Police Detail Wages to \$4,000.

TA Kerris suggested asking the Police Chief on Thursday at the Budget Hearing.

Fire Department

Chair Smith said she received clarification from the Fire Chief regarding Lines 158 & 160. He said Line 158 for Nitros could be reduced from \$5,500 to \$5,000 and he would like Line 160 for Vehicle Maintenance to stay at \$4,500.

Building Inspector

This budget stayed the same.

Road Side Mowing

Chair Smith asked if \$17,500 was enough to mow ½ the town.

TA Kerris answered yes and she will still look for someone to do the whole town for that price.

Solid Waste

Chair Smith said the projected figure was \$98,000 and the actual is \$108,783.

Welfare

Chair Smith asked TA Kerris for any feedback on the Welfare budget.

TA Kerris said it is a State law to pay out public assistance even if the budget line is cut. She said we could look into a Welfare Trust Fund.

Chair Smith asked if it was legal to have a trust fund.

TA Kerris said yes, other towns have one.

Chair Smith ask how the need of the client is determined?

TA Kerris said there is a process with an application as well as guidelines to follow and it is situational. It is all confidential and payment is made directly to vendors. There is an outline/guidelines on the website that are outdated and will need to be updated.

Health Agencies

This budget stayed the same.

Parks & Recreation

This budget stayed the same.

Chair Smith said this brings the Operating Budget to \$2,436,663 which is an increase of \$119,057 or 5.14%. The amount removed from what the departments initially proposed is \$274,842 and an approximate increase to the tax rate is \$.49 per thousand.

Warrant Articles

Chair Smith went over the layout of the Trust Fund spreadsheet and asked how the Board would like to fund them. She reminded the Board that last year they had \$1,579,729 in the Unassigned Fund Balance and it was voted to use \$536,400 of it to fund the warrant articles leaving it at \$1,043,329 and \$132,226 was used to level fund the 2023 tax rate.

Assessing Fund

\$5,300 is scheduled to be put in the fund for the contract with Avatar but it could be reduced to \$3,000 this year and next year to finish the payments for it.

Conservation Commission Fund

\$5,000 is scheduled to be put in the fund for milfoil mitigation which will bring the balance to \$50,000. Board agreed to fund it with 11,745 for the Lake Host Program.

Fire Department Rescue Vehicle Fund

\$150,000 is scheduled to be put in the fund

Steve Chunn asked questions about the Capital Improvement Program.

A resident brought up the All Veterans Tax Credit.

Chair Smith said they would look into it for Thursday's meeting.

The Board had a discussion on leasing versus purchasing.

PPE Fund

Excess funds from 2023 was used to purchase items in this category. Board agreed to skip over adding funds this year.

Fire Department Building Maintenance Fund

The BAC recommended \$75,000 and the Board agreed by consensus to add that amount.

Highway Building Fund

The Board agreed by consensus to fund this at \$5,000.

Highway Vehicle Fund

The Board had a discussion about what Highway vehicles are needed and they decided by consensus to add \$100,000 to fund one vehicle replacement.

The Board also talked about looking into a lease for a seconded needed vehicle to be funded by taxation.

Highway Equipment Fund

Excess funds from 2023 was used to purchase items in this category. Board agreed to skip over adding funds this year.

Master Plan Fund

\$10,000-\$12,000 is needed to fund next Master Plan. The fund currently has \$11,829 in it. Chair Smith said it will have \$12,000 by next year with the interest added and recommended not to add funds this year.

Police Vehicle Fund

This is planned to be a 3 year replacement cycle where the cruisers age out at 6 years. The Board decided not to add additional funds this year and to consider extending the replacement out one year.

Road Reconstruction fund

The BAC recommended zero funding this year and the Board agreed by consensus to fund it with \$155,000.

Article 5 Overall Consideration

Chair Smith said the total amount for Warrant Article Trust Fund additions is \$349,745 and if \$100,000 of Unassigned Fund Balance is used it will keep the leftover percentage of it at 10.39%

The Board agreed by consensus to use \$100,000 of Unassigned Fund Balance towards the Warrant Article.

Chair Smith asked if the Board had had a chance to think about the Warrant Article for a Feasibility Study.

Selectman Watson asked why something like that would come from the Board?

A brief discussion ensued.

Another Warrant Article is coming from the Library to consolidate trust funds.

The Board discussed the funding request from the Church and by consensus agreed not to move forward with their request.;

Selectman Watson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:56pm. Seconded by Selectman Diers. Motion passed 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Wendy Baker

Wendy Baker
Recording Secretary