

Town of Deering Budget Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

19 October 2021

Fire and Rescue

Present:

Bob Carter, Bill DeMotta, Stephen Fogelson, Gale Lalmond, Sharon Simpson, Jill Smith

Meeting was called to order at 1800.

Gale Lalmond was unanimously elected chairperson of the BAC for 2021.

Jeffrey LeBlanc, Fire Chief, presented the proposed 2022 Ambulance budget and Fire budget.

The proposed Ambulance budget for 2022 is \$126,778.90. The 2021 Ambulance budget was \$122,780.90.

The proposed 2022 Ambulance Per Diem Wages remains unchanged from 2021, at \$70,400. The budget accommodates wage increases that were previously approved. No additional wage increases were requested. Chief LeBlanc indicated that the per diem staff work Monday through Friday, however there have been many evening and weekend calls that could not be responded to because the per diem staff were not working. It was discussed that missed calls might possibly result in longer response times, require response from neighboring communities, which incurs a cost in some cases, and results in lost potential revenue. The BAC encouraged Chief LeBlanc to communicate with BOS to optimize per diem coverage in order to avoid these negative consequences.

Proposed 2022 Ambulance On-Call wages remains unchanged from 2021, at \$15,000.

Chief LeBlanc noted that Per Diem wages and On-Call wages are not currently competitive. This causes a risk of under-staffing, which lowers the level of service for the town and results in lost revenue opportunities and increased cost for mutual aid requests. The BAC encouraged Chief LeBlanc to prepare a plan for incrementally increasing wages to a competitive level over the next five years. Such a plan would involve discussions with the BOS.

Proposed 2022 Paramedic Intercepts budget will increase from \$1,750 to \$3,000 to account for four calls at \$750 per call.

Chief LeBlanc indicated that the current ambulance requires significant maintenance to remain operational. The department is investigating purchase of a new ambulance. The proposed Ambulance Vehicle Maintenance budget was increased from \$5,000 to \$6,000. BAC understood the strategy to investigate a new ambulance to avoid significant maintenance costs and more importantly, extended down-time.

The 2022 proposed Fire budget is \$121,948.75. The 2021 Fire budget was \$108,726.75. The majority of the 2022 increase (\$11,600) restores budget that was cut in 2021.

There is no change in Fire Chief wages or in On Call wages.

Chief LeBlanc indicated that some budget items will be offset by grants, including Training and Forestry.

BAC recommended increasing the budget for Heating Fuel from \$6,000 to \$7,500 to account for a foreseeable significant increase in fuel oil costs. Chief LeBlanc said that he had proposed to BOS to insulate the fire stations, which would decrease fuel oil requirements. BAC recommended that the Chief continue his efforts to get the stations insulated in order to reduce heating fuel expenses.

The 2022 New Equipment budget is increasing from \$4,500 in 2021 to \$9,000 to restore prior cuts.

Vehicle Maintenance budget is increasing from \$5,000 to \$8,000, reflecting an aging fleet.

Building Maintenance and Repairs budget is increasing from \$5,000 to \$8,000 to restore prior cuts. It was noted that this budget will not be sufficient to bring the buildings to compliance, but will keep them operational for the next year. BAC expressed support for a concept of a new construction safety complex in order to reduce maintenance and upkeep, to facilitate necessary environmental compliance, to consolidate equipment requirements, and to increase the level of service to the Town.

Meeting was adjourned at 2000.