

TOWN OF DEERING

762 Deering Center Road
Deering, NH 03244

Board of Selectmen Final Special Meeting Minutes Wednesday, February 7, 2024 6:00 P.M.

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

Opening of the Meeting by the Chair at 6:03pm

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Selectman Diers asked about the Board of Selectmen wages and if it should be reduced since members have been opting not to take it?

Chair Smith said we would need to keep at least \$2,500 in case the incoming Selectman wanted to take it.

Board agreed by consensus to reduce that line to \$2,500.

Town Clerk

Chair Smith said the wages have been adjusted according to their previous discussion and the health insurance reflects 12 weeks of coverage for the current Town Clerk as well as the highest plan for 40 weeks for the incoming since it is unknown what they would take.

Discussion ensued regarding the employee/town split for the health insurance.

Chair Smith asked if they want to continue to offer retirement?

Selectman Watson said the reason for offering benefits was mostly because it is a dual role with the Tax Collector. If the roles are ever split, he would be in favor of treating the Town Clerk like every other elected official and not offer benefits and the benefits should be offered to the Tax Collector because they would be considered an employee.

Chair Smith said they could consider offering a retirement plan but no match from the town. She also said she wants to check with NHMA on what they can do with the position.

Chair Smith said the BAC decreased the phone line to \$840 but suggests making it \$850. The Board agreed by consensus.

Chair Smith said they weren't provided details on the increase of software costs and the office supply line has been increased by \$200.

Chair Smith said the Dues and Subscriptions line has barely reached \$100 in past years and feels it could be reduced from \$200 to \$100. The Board agreed by consensus.

Chair Smith said they were considering a wage increase for the Supervisors of the Checklist, Moderator and Assistant Moderator, therefore the amount has been increased from \$2,500 to \$6,500. She wants to ask the Town Clerk for a breakdown of line 42 & 43.

Chair Smith said Line 49 – miscellaneous was partially being used for food for elections and suggested the idea of a potluck.

Selectman Watson said he is not sure we are there yet to do something like that.

After more discussion Chair Smith suggested reducing Line 49 from \$17,000 to \$13,000. The Board agreed by consensus.

Tax Collector

Chair Smith said the wages have been adjusted according to their previous discussion.

Chair Smith said the BAC recommended reducing the postage line from \$4,000 to \$3,000 and telephone can mirror the Town Clerk phone line at \$850. The Board agreed by consensus.

Chair Smith brought up a concern as they got to the mileage line, regarding the Town Clerk/Tax Collector driving to the bank and post office and that there is a liability for the town with her driving her own vehicle there every day.

Audit

Chair Smith said there is an Audit that needs to take place when the new Town Clerk/Tax Collector position changes hands and the cost is \$2,000 which will increase the budget from \$25,000 to \$27,000.

Finance Administration

Chair Smith said the IT line should be \$9,500 but most likely will more than double.

Selectman Watson talked about the importance of all of the different software programs used that need to be maintained, updated and secure.

Selectman Diers asked if we are able to measure people watching town hall streams.

Chair Smith said ARPA funds may need to be used for servers and other needed IT.

Selectman Diers asked how much ARPA is left.

Chair Smith answered \$191,000 and it will be good to look at using some of it when warrant articles and CIP are discussed.

Planning and Zoning

Chair Smith said this budget seems reasonable.

There was a brief discussion how some items go in the budget but are offset with revenue like postage for hearing notices.

Cemetery Budget

Chair Smith said the BAC cut certain lines of this budget with the suggestion they utilize their expendable trust fund.

Line 108 requested \$3,500 for \$2,500 for iron repair work and \$1,000 to Peterborough Marble & Granite. The Board agreed by consensus to reduce this line from \$3,500 to \$500 and ask them to use the funds from the expendable trust fund for those specific items.

The BAC recommended the groundskeeping line be reduced \$17,600 to cover mowing and spring clean-up and any other work to be taken from the expendable trust fund. The Board agreed by consensus with the BAC recommendation.

Chair Smith said she would further like to see the Trustees look at what perpetual care money could be used to reimburse the town for the mowing and spring clean-up.

Insurance

Chair Smith said there is a correction with Primex Worker's Compensation and Unemployment insurances and that they are 2 separate policies and the initial amount requested was \$23,079 and should be \$22,079 for Worker's Compensation and \$500 for Unemployment for a total of \$22,579.

Advertising

Chair Smith said this includes NHMA and Central Regional Planning Commission dues.

Police

Chair Smith said wages and health insurance have been adjusted according to their previous discussion.

The Board discussed the line for Police Details and the fact that it gets reimbursed. They also agreed by consensus to reduce it from \$5,000 to \$4,000.

Discussion ensued regarding how the tax rate is set with the budget items that receive a revenue.

Selectman Diers feels that tax-payers need to understand how it all works.

The Board discussed Line 117 On Call Wages and that it has fluctuated all over with the highest at \$5,988 in 2018. The Board agreed by consensus to reduce the line from \$7,700 to \$4,500.

Chair Smith said for Line 127 Police Prosecution we have received the new contract and the budget should reflect that actual amount of \$17,300.

Chair Smith said Line 128 Animal Control has never had anything spent from it and suggested to reduce the line from \$200 to \$1. The Board agreed by consensus.

The Board agreed by consensus to leave Training and Certification at \$4,500.

Chair Smith said the BAC recommended changing Professional Services from zero to \$1. The Board agreed by consensus.

The Board discussed Line 131 Vehicle Fuel and the BAC recommended \$10,000. After discussion the Board agreed by consensus that line to \$8,000.

Chair Smith said in the past 6 years the Postage Line has not spent over \$88 and suggests reducing that line from \$200 to \$100. The Board agreed by consensus.

Chair Smith said Line 133 Telephone had an adjustment after a correction was made. They were asking \$3,500, the BAC recommended \$3,000, the 2023 spent was \$2,700 and the Board agreed by consensus to put it at \$2,800.

Local Phone line costs look like they would be more than the requested \$1,750 and the Board agreed by consensus to use the BAC recommended amount of \$2,250.

Selectman Diers brought up looking at the Vehicle Maintenance Line and after discussion the Board agreed by consensus to decrease the line to \$4,000.

Line 120 Overtime Wages was discussed with not having a full-time officer anymore that the line be reduced to \$1. The Board agreed by consensus.

Grant Funded Overtime Wages was discussed that it had not been used in 3 years. The Board agreed by consensus to reduce the line to \$1.

Ambulance

Chair Smith said part-time per diem wages are requested at \$91,400 in the budget and she suggests using \$45,000 of the 2023 ambulance revenue to offset this line, therefore reducing it to \$46,400. The Board agreed by consensus.

Line 149 Insurance is not anticipating any increases and the Board agreed by consensus to keep it the same.

The EMS Training Line is \$6,750 which the Board agreed by consensus to keep it the same.

Chair Smith thought Line 152 Ambulance Billing might be too low considering it is a percentage of what is billed. After a brief discussion the Board agreed by consensus to stay with the BAC recommendation of \$4,000.

Line 158 for Nitrous Oxide a reduction to \$1,000 was suggested and the Board had questions about this.

The Board Discussed Vehicle Maintenance and were not sure how clean the data was for 2023 and wanted to get a perspective from the Fire Chief on that line.

The Board agreed to have Chair Smith reach out to the Fire Chief with their questions on lines 158 and 160.

Fire Department

Line 166 Training there was a reduction to \$4,000.

Line 177 Fire Equipment Maintenance was already reduced to \$16,274 by the Fire Chief.

The line for Building Maintenance Repairs was recommended to be \$8,000 by the BAC and after discussion the Board agreed to raise it to \$10,000.

Emergency Management line will continue to be at \$1.

Chair Smith reported that the latest invoice for Hillsborough Dispatch has gone down from \$22,722 to \$21,207 and the reduction has been reflected in the budget.

Chair Smith said there were two lines that were skipped on the last review for the Highway Department, one was heating where the BAC reduced it from \$10,000 to \$7,500. The Board agreed by consensus to this reduction. She also said the Electricity line was reduced to \$4,000 and Street Lighting has gone up to \$4,500.

Library Budget

The BAC recommended the Building Maintenance line to be \$400 and the Board agreed by consensus.

Conservation Commission

Line 253 Water Testing initially had a cost of \$15,600 but since they are no longer going to do the well testing program it can be reduced to \$600.

The Training & Certification line was reduced to \$650.

The BAC recommended increasing the Postage line from \$80 to \$100 but after discussion the Board agreed to keep it at \$80.

Chair Smith said on Line 260 there is an expenditure amount of \$6,200 and it's not always clear when paying which fund it should be coming out of.

Chair Smith said on Line 265 payments on Town Hall, \$684 is the exact amount owed and what should be reflected in the budget. The Board agreed by consensus.

The Board expressed their gratitude for all of the hard work everyone has done on this budget as well as to find savings wherever possible.

Chair Smith asked if anyone had any Warrant Article ideas they want to bring forth?

Chair Smith said she wanted to bring up an idea of a Warrant Article to direct the School to do a feasibility study which could possibly result in exiting the Co-op.

There was a brief discussion regarding the Warrant Article and the School.

Chair Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30pm. Seconded by Selectman Watson. Motion passed 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Wendy Baker

Wendy Baker
Recording Secretary