

BUDGET HEARING– February 5, 2024

Present: Margo Connors, Richard Bielefield, Chris Ellms
Jennifer Gaudette

Guests: Lissa Boissonneault, James Snyder, Rose Ellms, Claire & Fred Von Karls,
Alice Poole, John Colony, Ned & Teresa Wilson, Larry & Judy Sawyer,
Chief Mike Ho-Sing-Loy, Road Agent Doug Glover, Fire Chief Allan Clark, Jordan
Applewhite, Steve Monsein, Greg Connors, Brenda Aldrich, Hugh Hawkins, Irene &
Steve Dawson, Nick De Mayo, Kathy Jablonski, Tim Egan, Sam Mealey, Alice &
Mike Claflin, Peter Carbonneau, Judy Weisenberger, Jim Keefe, Marcia Roosevelt,
Brian Beaulieu, Paul Reid, Alan Laubenstein, Deb Aldrich, Emily & Scott Carmichael
Edwin Ebinger, Martha Evelyn, Carl & Nancy Martland, Jennifer Roshack, Betsy
Holcombe, Irene Amsbary, Dennis McFadden, Judith Hull,

MR. BIELEFIELD opened the hearing and noted that the board would review the line items and take questions as they go.

CHRIS ELLMS advised that the increase in **Executive** was raising Jennifer's salary and title so that they are closer to what will be needed in the future. In addition, the town will be spending \$3,000 to have the tax maps online. The Select Board Salary is budgeted in executive but the current board does not take a stipend. **Elections** is also increased due to having four elections in 2024 so that ballot clerk and supervisor of the checklist costs increase. The town has looked at and would like to purchase Poll Pads which will save time and work during the voting process. That cost is an additional \$9,000 this year to buy the equipment and the initial set up.

MS. CONNORS detailed the HOP Grant and Master Plan funding that shows in the **Planning Line**. The HOP grant reimburses the cost and will include payment on 2024 that was expended in 2023. There will be a **Revaluation** in 2024. The Insurance line includes an increase in health and general liability and workers compensation. Currently the health insurance is a 90/10 split with the employees. The town has two insurance buyouts that save the town money.

CHIEF HO-SING-LOY noted that the **Police** budget increases included keeping pay current with what area departments are paying. Shortage of available officers currently. The new cruiser was bought with a \$40,000 AARPA grant with the balance from the PD CRF. The old cruiser was subsequently sold to another PD for \$10,000 and will request those funds go back to the CRF.

CHIEF ALLAN CLARK spoke to both **Ambulance** and **Fire** Department budgets. The ambulance is a contracted 5% increase as written in the three- year contract we have. Forty transports were responded to by the ambulance and the SHFD first responders. The Fire Department came in under budget. No forest fires in 2023 but added a medical squad. The Chief is asking for \$50,000 in an equipment CRF to pay for new air packs. The existing packs cannot be repaired and he is hoping for a grant to pay the second \$50,000. The Chief was asked if he anticipated any other costs in the future and he responded not at this time.

Building Inspections are currently being funded by permit fees. **Emergency Management** shows the cost for the Hazardous Mitigation Plan that is required every 5 years. Partial was paid in 2023 and balance in 2024 and then State of NH will reimburse.

ROAD AGENT DOUG GLOVER discussed **Highway** costs involved with keeping equipment in good shape. Change is benefits to include a buyout as employees not being able to take time off. Doug also spoke to the purchase of a new truck for the **Building & Grounds** Department. He has gotten prices from two different dealers and the office has gotten financing options from Ford Motor Credit and KS Bank who handles municipal financing. KS Bank came in with a lower interest rate and the warrant article is written for four years. There was concern that this might not be the right time for a loan with high interest rates. Doug again explained that the truck will not pass inspection, is a 2010 and has been rebuilt at least twice.

ALICE CLAFLIN, **Library** Trustee noted that the budget was under due to salary increase being budgeted for 12 months and expended over 9 months.

KATHY JABLONSKI, **Cemetery** Trustee thanked the Highway Department for the work this past year on the Streeter/Hannah Cemeteries. Kathy encouraged those present if they have a lot to file the Right to Inter paperwork. Several members of the Trustees are working to make a complete list of all Veterans in the Cemeteries.

EMILY COTE spoke to the request from the Franconia Notch **Chamber of Commerce** to increase the Sugar Hill donation from \$6,000 to \$8,000. This year the town received \$62,299.00 in Rooms & Meals Revenue. The chamber has a new welcome center in Franconia and some new costs.

Home Health Agencies is reduced **as** no request from Above the Notch Humane Society and the selectboard has chosen to place the Boys & Girls Club request into an individual warrant article this year.

Capital Expense is the third year of a five year note for the solar system at the highway garage.

The board was thanked for their work on the budget and work throughout the year.

The board reviewed the list of warrant article Capital Reserve Funds projected for 2024. CHIEF CLARK noted that in establishing the new Fire Equipment Capital Reserve Fund any future equipment needs will be taken care of. The board explained that there will be two warrant articles regarding Tri Town Expenses. A new baler and container for the **Transfer** Station. They will be able to have less personnel with the new baler. A question was raised as to the life expectancy of the baler and the annual maintenance costs. The **Recreation** department is going to purchase a used 14-person small bus for transport. The old van is no longer able to be uses. The Town of Sugar Hill pays 29% of costs for Transfer Expenses and 35% for recreation expenses.

With no more business before the Board, RICHARD BIELEFIELD made a motion to adjourn, seconded by CHRIS ELLMS the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 PM. The next regular scheduled Select Board meeting is Monday February 12, 2024, at 5:00pm. at the Crapo Building.

Respectfully submitted:

Jennifer Gaudette
Administrative Assistant