

**Town of Auburn
Board of Selectmen
Town Hall
Stritch Meeting Room
November 20, 2023
Approved Minutes
7:00 PM**

Selectmen Present: Keith Leclair, Michael Rolfe and Tom Carroll

Others Present: Herb Tardiff, Brenda Beer, Library Director Daniel Szczesny, Library Trustees Nancy Mayland, Marilyn Cavanaugh, Elizabeth Michaud, Mike DiPietro, Joanne Linxweiler, Amy Lachance, Parks & Recreation Coordinator, Tax Collector Susan Jenkins, Mimi Friolet, Finance & Budget Administrator, Town Administrator Chris Sterndale, Recording Secretary Nancy Hoijer and persons unknown to the minute taker

I. Call to Order

Mr. Leclair called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Public Comments

Mr. Leclair asked if there were any comments from the public, outside of agenda items, at 7:00 PM and there were none.

III. Appointments with the Board

A. Herb Tardiff

Herb Tardiff presented a proposal on behalf of the Massabesic Seniors, to request a warrant article that would raise the asset and income levels for senior tax exemptions. He provided a handout showing demographics in Rockingham County, and HUD income limits for low-income programs. Town Administrator Sterndale provided the Board with information from other communities relative to their exemptions under RSA 72:39-a. Mr. Sterndale provided the Board with a print out of the cost to the Town for the exemptions and a comparison with the Town of Chester. Mr. Tardiff noted that inflation has increased ten percent over the last two years.

Mr. Sterndale noted that last year the exemption amount was changed but there was no change to the eligibility requirements. He noted there was no information available on those that don't apply.

Mr. Tardiff requested that the asset level be raised to \$50,000 and the income levels for \$46,850 for one person and \$53,550 for two.

Mr. Leclair noted the Town of Chester spent five times the amount on the elderly exemption last year, approximately \$10 million to the \$2 million spent by the Town of Auburn. However, he

noted the Town's exemption is 50% larger than other towns. He noted the cost would be distributed amongst the rest of the taxpayers at a cost of about .07-.08 cents per thousand. Mr. Leclair offered that the Seniors could also bring a citizen's petition.

The Board indicated they would take the request under advisement.

IV. Manifests

11/13 HWY - \$19,795

Mr. Leclair motioned to approve the Highway Manifest dated November 13, 2023 in the amount of \$19,795. Mr. Rolfe seconded the motion. A vote was taken. Mr. Rolfe abstained, Mr. Leclair voted aye, and Mr. Carroll voted aye. The motion passed 2-0-1.

V. Consent Agenda

Mr. Leclair read out loud, and offered for inspection, the Consent Agenda, which consisted of a Payroll Manifest dated November 20, 2023 in the amount of \$85,436.49, an Accounts Payable Manifest dated November 13, 2023 in the amount of \$113,162.06, a special Accounts Payable Manifest dated November 6, 2023 in the amount of \$1,177.20, appointment of Angela Galasso as an Alternate Library Trustee, approval of the new police detail rate of \$87.21/hr., approval of the letter of consent for issuance of beverage/wine/tobacco license for Auburn Supermarket.

Mr. Rolfe motioned to approve the Consent Agenda dated November 20, 2023. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

VI. New Business

A. 2024 Budget

i. Library

Library Director Daniel Szczesny presented the proposed Library budget for FY 2024 in the amount of \$241,459 which is a 1.68% increase over last year.

Mr. Szczesny noted a 40% increase in patron usage from last year and provided a breakdown of that information. He noted staffing and hours (approximately 109 hrs.) are about the same including step increases and COLA.

Mr. Rolfe motioned to approve lines 268-273 of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

Mrs. Friolet indicated line 274 (at zero) could be deleted.

Mr. Szczesny noted utilities didn't rise as much as predicted in 2022 and decreased the line by 37% to \$13,200. Mr. Leclair asked about the amount expended in 2023 to date. Mrs. Friolet noted the bill for heat hadn't been processed yet. Mr. Szczesny indicated a \$500 bill for heating oil had just been put in. He predicted \$11-12,000 in expense for utilities in FY 2024. He noted a cost per gallon of \$3.54 in 2023, 5.17 in 2022 and 2.79 in 2021. Mr. Carroll recommended lowering the line to \$12,000.

Mr. Leclair reported he learned on Thursday that the school budget is going to increase by 8% and represents 77% of the budget with a \$1.2 million dollar increase proposed so far. Mr. Rolfe recommended a compromise, lowering the line to \$12,250.

Mr. Carroll motioned to approve line 275 of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget in the amount of \$12,250. Mr. Rolfe seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

Mr. Szczsny reviewed the maintenance line and reported on repairs to the children's room door, painting and purchase of new computer terminals. He noted they would be painting the front door, getting an estimate on scraping and finishing the ramp and filling in some holes outside. Mr. Rolfe asked if anything else were coming in and if preventative maintenance were included in the line. Mr. Szczsny noted the line included weekly cleaning and furnace expenses.

Mr. Rolfe motioned to approve line 276 of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget in the amount of \$7,000. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

Mr. Carroll motioned to approve line 277 (Library Computer Systems) of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget in the amount of \$7,000. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

Mr. Rolfe motioned to approve line 278 (Library Equip. & Furnishing) of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget in the amount of \$1. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

Mr. Szczsny reviewed line 279 Library Training, Prof. Journals. He noted there was not much this year because of planning the proposed expansion but expected to get back to it next year.

Mr. Rolfe motioned to approve line 279 of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget in the amount of \$2,000. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

Mr. Szczsny reported that programming had increased for a lot of programs.

Mr. Rolfe motioned to approve line 280 of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget in the amount of \$1,500. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

Mr. Szczsny reviewed the proposed line for lending materials, increases in digital material (3%) and in-house materials (7%) and NH Downloadables (10%), Kanopy & Hoopla (4.5%).

Mr. Leclair asked about the amount of usage. Mr. Szczsny indicated Kanopy charges a yearly fee which is divided by 12 months and is divided by day so that the usage can't be used up at once. He noted a lot of month end notices for Hoopla increase.

Mr. Rolfe motioned to approve lines 281 (Library Lending Materials Print/) in the amount of \$12,200 and line 282 (Library Lending Materials/Electronic) in the amount of \$12,100, of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

Mr. Szczsny reviewed the line for supplies and cleaning equipment which increased due to the cost of printing and paper. Mr. Leclair asked if there were any reimbursement for printing, faxes and copies and Mr. Szczsny indicated yes, and for lamination.

Mr. Rolfe motioned to approve line 283 of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget in the amount of \$3,500. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

Mr. Szczsny reported on the progress of the library assessment and expansion including fundraising efforts. He noted the Library was the smallest library in the state per capita. He reported approximately 20 grant opportunities were available as well as naming opportunities and donations. The Library hosted two home events to line up supporters and donors and has several more planned including a large open house in January. He reported receiving small donations in the amount of \$65,000 over the last six weeks and other offers other than cash such as donation of a 3D printer, memory window and catalogue and curation in the history room and book donations.

Mr. Carroll stated that while he knew the Library was looking for support of the Selectmen it was becoming hard to be realistic in his support because of the climate we are in, timing and a probable increase of 8-10% in taxes next year.

Nancy Mayland asked what would be gained by waiting and when would be the right time. Mr. Carroll responded that if the Library were further alone in its ability to fundraise toward the \$2 million goal. At \$65,000 they are far away. She noted the Library was working with several businesses who were willing to donate if the proposed \$4 million bond passes.

Mr. Rolfe agreed that there were a lot of increases coming next year.

Mary stated that she moved in 1998 and no longer lives in town but is working at the library and has seen increases in town but the library is left behind. A new playground was built, the post office expanded, Town Hall was upgraded. She stated that Sebastian wanted literacy and education for people in this town and wondered when it will be time.

Cindy asked why this timing would be better in the future. She noted the library was incredibly small compared to the growing population.

Nancy Mayland noted the school increases their budget exponentially, indefinitely but when the \$4 million dollar library bond is done it will be done.

Mr. Szczsny stated that the Selectmen's recommendation on the warrant is important to them.

Mr. Leclair indicated he appreciated all the hard work that has been put in and the emotion and time but the time is not right with costs escalating and as Mr. Tardiff stated seniors are struggling. He noted a lot of positives to the community as well but without the financial resources it was difficult to endorse. He noted the state statute doesn't allow them to put the article on without a recommendation, but a citizen's petition could still have time to put on.

Mr. Leclair noted his concerns were even if the fundraising was in hand that the need for the community center to have a building to house what the Parks & Recreation can do programs they are now doing at Severance School, for which they are taking in revenue to offset, has not been addressed. Mr. Szczsny indicated the Library worked with Parks & Recreation on a joint complex but it wasn't something they wanted at the time and Mrs. Mayland noted that Parks & Recreation isn't able to do fundraising. Mr. Leclair suggested they do not have the same ability as the Friends of the Library, Mrs. Lachance is a town employee and the commission changes frequently with goals geared toward outdoor programs and a different focus on soccer and baseball. Mr. Sterndale noted there could be a Friends of Parks & Recreation group established with citizens recruited to help fundraise. Mr. Leclair recommended that the community learn more about the project as the majority of the Town doesn't seem to know about it. If a warrant article were put forward a lot may be asking what this is all about. He also recommended pitching the project to the Budget Committee for their feedback and suggestions, although the Committee does not have the authority toward putting it on the ballot.

Mr. Rolfe noted the town is paying for a lease for the Severance School for a few more years.

Mr. Carroll indicated he was disappointed the community room was changed to add a large storage room. Mr. Szczsny noted the reason for the storage room

was to replace the three crumbling sheds behind the library. Mr. Carroll noted he would like to see the ability of Parks & Recreation to control their scheduling.

May asked if the article could be conditioned upon more fundraising and Mr. Sterndale indicated it could be.

Mr. DiPietro opined that something has to be put forward even if it fails the first year and suggested they should not be afraid of the lack of a recommendation.

Mrs. Mayland asked what the Selectmen had to lose and Mr. Rolfe noted it was their job to look out for the taxpayers.

Faye from the Friends of the Library spoke to the safe place the library provides at no cost to kids after school, seniors and other members of the community to come together.

Susan Jenkins the Tax Collector stated she understood what everyone was saying if money wasn't an object but remembers when the bond for the school was hard for a lot of people. The pulse of the taxpayers is they are not happy to get hit another year, but the library has a choice. The cost may go up somewhat, but a lot are hurting.

Liz Michaud noted the library had no control over what Parks & Recreation want and asked how long it would take them to catch up. Mr. Leclair recommended having a committee with all involved and perhaps the Selectmen.

B. Bond Counsel engagement

Town Administrator Sterndale noted that in the event there is a bond next year the Town would need to retain bond counsel. There would be no cost unless the bond is approved at Town meeting. He recommended bond counsel that the Town has worked with before.

Mr. Leclair motioned to authorize Town Administrator Sterndale to engage Devine, Millimet as bond counsel. Mr. Rolfe seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

VII. Old Business

Mr. DiPietro asked about Griffin Mill Bridge and Mr. Sterndale reported he had a conference call with the DOT and they are working on how to line up the bid specifications to get the wood timber bridge. He noted another concern is use of the Fusco land for a staging area.

VIII. Committee Reports

Mr. Rolfe reported that signs were put up on Hooksett and Old Candia Road.

Mr. Carroll reported that Highway Safety met with Joe Rossino who proposed a crosswalk for the Rockingham trail which is a state road. He got the state engineering to look at the design and the state expects the Town to pay for it. Mr. DiPietro noted the criteria was reviewed with him and accident history should be looked at.

Mr. Rolfe reported the Planning Board met to discuss the Tanglewood development, heard a lot line adjustment for Russell Sullivan and Keach Nordstrom came in for Maine Drilling and Blasting for conditional site approval.

Mr. Leclair reported on the Budget Committee meetings and drivers of the increase with the school budget. He noted the Committee reduced the budget for Police fuel from \$36,000 to \$34,000. The purchase of one of the two police cars proposed for FY 2024 this year looked good and was given a green light.

VIII. Minutes

A. November 6, 2023

Mr. Rolfe motioned to approve the November 6, 2023 meeting minutes. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

B. November 8, 2023 public and non-public

Mr. Rolfe motioned to approve the November 8, 2023 public meeting minutes and non-public meeting minutes. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

C. Consideration of Unsealing Non-Public Meeting Minutes

- i. Feb 22, 2016 (2 sessions)
- ii. Feb 29, 2016
- iii. June 13, 2016
- iv. Aug 16, 2016
- v. Feb 27, 2017 (3 sessions)

Mr. Rolfe motioned to unseal the minutes of the non-public minutes as presented. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

IX. Non-Public Session – 91-A:3(II)(d) consideration of the acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property

By Roll Call, Mr. Leclair motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to 91-A:3(II)(d) consideration of the acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property. Mr. Rolfe

seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, Mr. Leclair voted aye, Mr. Carroll voted aye and Mr. Rolfe voted aye. The motion passed 3-0-0.

The meeting room was closed to the public at 9:31 PM.

Mr. Rolfe motioned to come out of non-public session. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

The meeting room was opened to the public at 9:39 PM.

By Roll Call Vote, Mr. Carroll motioned to seal the minutes of the non-public session. Mr. Leclair seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, Mr. Leclair voted aye, Mr. Carroll voted aye, and Mr. Rolfe voted aye. The motion passed 3-0-0.

X. Adjournment

Mr. Carroll motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 PM. Mr. Rolfe seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Hoijer, Recording Secretary