

Auburn Budget Committee Meeting
October 26, 2023
Stritch Meeting Room
Approved Minutes
7:00 PM

Members Present: Chairman Peter Miles, Dan Carpenter, Vice-Chair David Wesche, Kevin Downing, Paula Marzloff, School Board Representative Alan Villeneuve and Selectman Representative Keith Leclair

Others Present: Conservation Chair Jeffrey Porter, Building Inspector Carrie Rouleau-Cote, Cemetery Trustee Jim Thompson, Finance Assistant Mimi Friolet, and Town Administrator Chris Sterndale.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Miles called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II. Introductions

Chairman Miles introduced the members who were present.

III. Election of Officers

Mr. Villeneuve motioned to appoint David Wesche as Vice-Chairman. Ms. Marzloff seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

IV. Approval of Minutes

- October 5, 2023

Mrs. Marzloff motioned to approve the October 5, 2023 meeting minutes. Mr. Carpenter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, Mr. Villeneuve abstained. The motion passed 7-0-0.

V. Town Budget Proposals

A. Conservation

Mr. Porter presented the proposed budget for Conservation in the amount of \$4,639 which is a 1.10% increase over last year.

Mrs. Friolet indicated the salary line is for the full-time employee who does the minutes for the Conservation meetings, the remaining lines are level funded.

Mrs. Marzloff asked the Conservation Commission account balance and Mr. Porter indicated it is approximately \$1.2 Million with the Manchester Water Works parcel purchase coming out soon.

Mr. Villeneuve asked when maps were last done and Mr. Porter indicated three copies will be done later this quarter or the first quarter of 2024.

Mr. Wesche motioned to approve the proposed FY 2024 budget for Conservation in the amount of \$4,639. Mrs. Marzloff seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Villeneuve noted he would like to see the bottom line level funded.

B. Cemeteries

Mr. Thompson presented the proposed budget for Cemeteries in the amount of \$38,577 which is a 5.67% increase from last year.

Mr. Villeneuve asked about the expected increase to dues and memberships and Mr. Thompson noted he expected three Trustees to participate.

Mr. Wesche motioned to approve the proposed FY 2024 budget for Cemeteries in the amount of \$38,577. Mrs. Marzloff seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Thompson explained three projects that the Trustees have planned for 2023-2024:

- Replacement of portion of chain link fence on the school side of the Village Cemetery which is circa 1955. He obtained one quote so far for \$20,000.
- Replacement of sign at Village Cemetery donated in 2005 at a cost of \$3,000.
- Resurfacing of gravel lanes at both cemeteries. He has obtained one bid so far for \$8,500. Mr. Leclair indicated there may be materials and/or equipment available to contribute.

Mr. Thompson indicated the balance of the Maintenance Fund is approximately \$24,000 and Perpetual Care Funds for Village and Longmeadow Cemeteries which can only expend interest as perpetual care principal can no longer be expended per RSA. He noted there was \$3,000 in interest available in the Village Fund and \$11,000 available in the Longmeadow Fund.

Mr. Leclair noted that the Selectmen approved of presenting a 2024 Warrant Article to add \$10,000 to the Trust Fund from the fund balance with no dollars from new taxation.

C. Building Inspection/Health Officer

i. Building Inspection

Building Inspector Carrie Rouleau-Cote presented the proposed budget for Building Inspection in the amount of \$83,612 which is a 1.67% increase from last year.

Mr. Villeneuve asked the number of new building permits issued this year. Mrs. Rouleau-Cote reported there were 739 total permits issued this year versus 570 last year. There were 19 permits issued for new homes in 2022 and two ADUs. There were 14 permits issued for new homes in 2023 so far.

Mrs. Rouleau Cote reported that the new online permitting software is making it easier for residents to apply for permits online.

Mr. Villeneuve asked about revenues from permits. Mrs. Rouleau Cote indicated the average permit for a new home, based on ICC data, square feet, etc. is approximately \$2,200 for a 2,000 SF home. She indicated \$86,287 in revenue this year so far, versus \$76,000 last year and noted there is a lot of commercial activity.

Mr. Wesche motioned to approve the proposed FY 2024 budget for Building Inspection in the amount of \$83,612. Mrs. Marzloff seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

ii. Health Administration

Mrs. Rouleau-Cote presented the proposed budget for Health Officer Administration in the amount of \$2,989 which is a 2.89% increase from last year.

Mrs. Marzloff motioned to approve the proposed FY 2024 budget for Health Administration in the amount of \$2,989. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

D. Executive, Personnel Admin, Welfare

i. Legal Expenditures

Town Administrator Sterndale presented the proposed budget for Legal Expenditures in the amount of \$23,000 which is a 17.86% decrease from last year. Mr. Sterndale indicated the number of open cases is shrinking and there are minor police union negotiations and personnel policy updates.

Mr. Downing motioned to approve the proposed FY 2024 budget for Legal Expenditures in the amount of \$23,000. Mr. Carpenter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

ii. Employee Health Insurance Benefits

Town Administrator Sterndale explained the changes to the health insurance plan deductible and addition of flexible spending accounts which went into effect on July 1st. The renewal increase is 14% and there are new full-time positions, with the Fire Department, the Library, Parks & Recreation which the budget will reflect for a full-year in 2024. There will be two new positions created for the Highway Department which the budget will reflect for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the year. Mrs. Friolet explained that employees now pay 10% across the board.

Mr. Sterndale indicated the impact to dental will be primarily the personnel changes. The rest are pegged to gross wages. He noted retirement is going down. The employer contribution rate dropped and the Town will see the benefit in this coming budget year.

Mrs. Marzloff motioned to approve the proposed FY 2024 budget for Personnel Administration in the amount of \$681,107. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

iii. Government Buildings & Maintenance

Town Administrator Sterndale indicated there were no great change to utilities other than the request for an Aircard by the Police Department for a cruiser.

Mr. Sterndale noted heat and electric were budgeted high last year but the anticipated increase didn't pass. The budget was projected based on the amount used this year with a 5% increase which comes across as a decrease from what was budgeted last year. He noted the Committee could look at it again in November or December if necessary.

Mr. Villeneuve asked about line 62 and Mr. Sterndale explained that dispatch requires the older "copper" phone line.

Mr. Sterndale explained the increase for the cleaning service vendor who does the Town Hall building, Severance School, the Library and has not asked for an increase since 2019. Mrs. Friolet noted that the vendor provides the equipment and supplies.

Mr. Wesche motioned to approve the proposed FY 2024 budget for Government Buildings & Maintenance in the amount of \$151,216. Mr. Downing seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

iv. Insurance

Mr. Villeneuve motioned to approve the proposed FY 2024 budget for Insurance in the amount of \$172,032. Mrs. Marzloff seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

v. Advertising & Regional Association

Mrs. Marzloff motioned to approve the proposed FY 2024 budget for Advertising & Regional Association in the amount of \$10,605. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

vi. General Government

Town Administrator Sterndale indicated line 97 consulting services is where the expenses for the MS4 work required by federal stormwater permit regulation, general engineering such as the engineering work at the Depot Road Intersection and gravel pit work is reflected.

Mr. Sterndale provided the Committee with a breakdown of contract software, line 98. He noted there were a bunch of vendors catching up on inflation. These vendors provide software for the general network, office security, Microsoft Suite, IT vendor, Avitar Assessing Contract, CivicPlus website, Harris general ledger, bookkeeping software, Interware and Town Clerk, Highway Dept. weather, the postage machine, tax map updates which are required annually.

Mrs. Marzloff asked if the vendor rates were competitive with the marketplace and Mr. Sterndale indicated they were and it is difficult to transition to a new vendor. Mrs. Marzloff noted it was up to the Selectmen but did not seem practical to update the tax maps for minor changes such as internal lines within a condominium. Mr. Villeneuve asked how many sets are printed and Mr. Sterndale noted two or three sets.

Mr. Wesche motioned to approve the proposed FY 2024 budget for General Government in the amount of \$140,325. Mrs. Marzloff seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Leclair indicated that the Selectmen discussed paying for some items like the WIFI router for Town Hall from the unused budget at the end of the year and that Mr. Sterndale will be tracking a list of items the Board hopes to pay for out of this year's budget.

vii. Other Public Safety

Mr. Villeneuve motioned to approve the proposed FY 2024 budget for Other Public Safety in the amount of \$5,000. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

viii. Street Lighting

Mr. Leclair noted the Town replaced the street lights with LEDs a couple of years ago and are already seeing a savings in this line.

Mr. Villeneuve motioned to approve the proposed FY 2024 budget for Street Lighting in the amount of \$7,500. Mrs. Marzloff seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

ix. Solid Waste Disposal

Mr. Carpenter motioned to approve the proposed FY 2024 budget for Solid Waste Disposal in the amount of \$21,100. Mr. Downing seconded the motion. A vote was taken, Mr. Villeneuve was opposed. The motion passed 6-1-0.

x. Health Agencies & Hospitals - **Tabled**

Mrs. Friolet indicated she has received letters from each of the agencies requesting contributions. Meals on Wheels asked for \$2,000.

Mrs. Marzloff asked how many Auburn residents are served by the agencies requesting funds. Mrs. Friolet indicated she would bring that information to the next meeting.

Mr. Leclair motioned to table approval of Health Agencies & Hospitals. Mrs. Marzloff seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

xi. Rockingham Community Action

Mrs. Marzloff motioned to approve the proposed FY 2024 budget for Rockingham Community Action in the amount of \$4,471. Mr. Downing seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

xii. Patriotic Purposes

Mr. Wesche motioned to approve the proposed FY 2024 budget for Patriotic Purposes. Mr. Downing seconded the motion. Mr. Carpenter abstained. The motion passed 6-0-1.

xiii. Long Term Debt

Mrs. Marzloff motioned to approve the proposed FY 2023 budget for Long Term Debt. Mr. Villeneuve seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Leclair discussed the recent town-wide revaluation and the anticipated impact on the average tax bill which he noted was 10% on average.

VI. School Update

Mr. Villeneuve reported Pinkerton proposes to add a new building in 2025. He noted the impact on Auburn's contribution to the SAU will be higher while communities such as Hooksett will pay less next year.

VII. Adjourn

Mr. Villeneuve moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:13 PM, seconded by Mrs. Marzloff. A vote was taken; all were in agreement, the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy J. Hoijer,
Recording Secretary

Note: Any person with a disability who wishes to attend this public meeting and needs to be provided a reasonable accommodation in order to participate, please call the Town Hall (603) 483-5052, or contact the Committee Secretary so that arrangements can be made.