

Auburn Budget Committee Meeting
December 21, 2017
Auburn Town Hall

Members Present: Peter Miles, Chairman; Kevin Downing, David Wesche, Paula Marzloff, Dan Carpenter, Keith Leclair and James Headd

Others Present: Welfare Officer Kate Lafond, Building Inspector Carrie Rouleau-Cote, Firefighters Pat Glennon, Mike Sullivan and Jim Thompson, Finance Director Adele Frisella and Town Administrator Bill Herman

Chairman Miles called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Paula Marzloff moved to accept the minutes of the December 2, 2017 meeting as printed. Seconded by David Wesche. A vote was taken; all were in favor, the motion carried unanimously.

David Wesche moved to accept the minutes of the December 7, 2017 meeting as printed. Seconded by Dan Carpenter. A vote was taken; all were in favor, the motion carried unanimously.

Public Assistance

Public Assistance

Requesting \$17,500, an increase of \$2,500 from 2017. Year to date expended \$14,809.83

Ms. Lafond noted she anticipated being over budget by approximately \$500, but that \$1,000 had been used earlier in the year by the Board of Selectmen towards an unanticipated large expense for repair of a fire truck. She indicated she has seen a doubling of qualifying applicants during the past year and the type of assistance requested has changed to mainly rental assistance. She noted she has been able to utilize other assistance programs such as Fuel Assistance to assist with some applications for assistance.

Jim Headd moved to approve Public Assistance at \$17,500, seconded by Dan Carpenter. A vote was taken; all were in favor, the motion carried unanimously.

Building Inspector

Building Inspector

Requesting \$12,300, an increase of \$1,700 from 2017 (exclusive of wages and personnel costs). Year to date expended \$8,374.18

Chairman Miles indicated the Committee would consider the Building Inspector's budget in total, and asked Mrs. Rouleau-Cote to highlight any areas of concern in the budget. Mrs. Rouleau-Cote noted the main item of change was in the legal expenditure account where she is requesting an increase of \$2,000. She noted there are several cases pending in the Superior Court for code enforcement actions that requires assistance from Town Counsel. She reported the Town has been successful in defending several actions this year, including requests for reimbursement of legal expenses. It is anticipated some of this expense will be returned to the Town.

Paula Marzloff moved to approve Building Inspector at \$12,300, seconded by Jim Headd. A vote was taken; all were in favor, the motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Rouleau-Cote noted for the Budget Committee there were two citizen petitions received for zoning ordinance changes that will go to the voters in March. One is to re-zone two properties on Hooksett Road near Exit 2 of Route 101 from residential to commercial lots, while the second would allow accessory dwelling units in Auburn to be detached from the main residence as is currently required.

She indicated there have been unsuccessful efforts in the NH Legislature in recent years to move up from the 2009 Building Code which is the recognized State Building Code. She indicated if the Legislature does not come more into compliance with current standards, municipalities may have to look at adopting other recognized standards as their own for health and safety reasons, which would defeat the reasons for the State having a uniform standard everywhere.

During the past year, there have been 35 permits issued for new homes and 715 building permits total. She indicated a new ambulatory center has opened in the Wellington Business Park off Rockingham Road, while several subdivisions like Wethersfield and Saddle Hill (the first phase of Lovers Lane) are wrapping up toward completion.

Road Reconstruction

Road Reconstruction

Requesting \$800,000, level funded from 2017. Year to date expended \$743,363.23. The Budget Committee had approved \$700,000 contingent upon the Board of Selectmen encumbering the balance of 2017 road reconstruction funds for 2018.

Jim Headd reported the Board of Selectmen had considered the Budget Committee's request to budget \$700,000 for road reconstruction in 2018, but to also encumber the balance of the 2017 appropriation for use in 2018. He indicated the Board was willing to do that, but the Road Agent and Finance Director reported the regular Highway Department budget was slightly over budget and the approximately \$56,000 remaining in the road reconstruction account is going to be used for December winter road operations.

Paula Marzloff noted she had made her position clear at the last meeting that her support of \$700,000 was based on the encumbering of the additional funds, otherwise she supported the \$800,000 appropriation in 2018. Mr. Herman noted it was his understanding

that both the Board of Selectmen and the Road Agent would be comfortable with the \$700,000 appropriation with or without the additional encumbered funds.

Paula Marzloff moved to approve Road Reconstruction at \$800,000, seconded by Jim Headd. A vote was taken: Yes – Paula and Jim. No – Dan, Kevin, Peter, Keith and David. The motion failed.

Peter Miles noted he was concerned with public perception about the total level of all expenditures and felt the \$700,000 was a reasonable appropriation. Paula Marzloff indicated she felt the Town has made diligent efforts to improve roads throughout the Town and that it was pre-mature to implement a reduction now. Dan Carpenter said he was persuaded the Selectmen and Road Agent could live with \$700,00 for 2018 to accomplish the major work including completion of Rockwood Terrace, Dartmouth Drive and reconstruction approximately 1,800-feet of Lovers Lane.

David Wesche moved to approve Road Reconstruction at \$700,000 with no contingent encumbrance from FY 2017, seconded by Dan Carpenter. A vote was taken: Yes – Dan, Kevin, Peter, Keith and David. No – Paula and Jim. The motion carried.

Wages for 2018

Total Town Wages for 2018

Requesting \$1,943,290, which is an increase of \$22,806 over approved wage rates from 2017. Year to date expended through November - \$1,647,014.45

Mr. Herman reported the Joint Personnel Board comprised of the Board of Selectmen, Police Commission and Library Trustees, had met to review potential options for FY 2018 including no wage increases, a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) of 1.95%, a step increase of 2%, or both a COLA and Step increase. The Joint Personnel Board met on November 28th and unanimously agreed to budget for a combined COLA and Step increase in 2018.

He noted the Town's Personnel Policy establishes a formula for calculating a potential COLA, which is to average the Social Security COLA (2%) and the Consumer Price Index for the Northeast (1.9%). So Auburn's COLA would be 1.95% if provided, and it is applied across the board to all employees as of April 1st. For budgeting purposes, for the year of issuance a COLA is budgeted for nine months instead of 12. If a Step increase is budgeted, step increases are issued at an employee's anniversary date and so is scattered throughout the year. He also noted the Collective Bargaining Agreement for the Auburn Police Union requires the Town to budget for a Step increase for the positions covered by the agreement. If a COLA is given to all other Town employees, then the Town should budget it for the union positions as well.

Finance Director Adele Frisella outlined the spreadsheet of budget and payroll numbers provided to the Budget Committee that detailed what the budget amount for no increase would be; a 2% step increase only; a 1.95% COLA only and a combined Step & COLA.

Mr. Herman and Ms. Frisella answered various questions from Committee members. Jim Headd reiterated the Joint Personnel Board had unanimously recommended the provision of a combined Step and COLA.

David Wesche said as a manager he felt the most important thing you can do is pay your people.

David Wesche moved to approve a combined Step increase and COLA for wages in 2018 totaling \$1,943,290 inclusive of \$13,865 to fund the third year of the collective bargaining agreement with the Auburn Police Union, seconded by Dan Carpenter. A vote was taken; all were in favor, the motion carried unanimously.

Personnel Administration

Health Insurance

Requesting \$318,046, an increase of \$35,980 from 2017. Year to date expended \$278,080.51

Dental Insurance

Requesting \$14,335.74, a reduction of \$59 from 2017. Year to date expended \$15,869.49

Disability Insurance

Requesting \$7,938, an increase of \$352 from 2017. Year to date expended \$6,831.99

Life Insurance

Requesting \$2,772, a decrease of \$228 from 2017. Year to date expended \$3,275.87

Committee members observed the health insurance line had increased by 13%. Mr. Herman noted the Town had realized an approximate 2% rate increase for the coming year which, for health insurance, is July through June. He also reported the largest portion of the increase in the budget account is the additional six months of coverage for the new full-time police officer position established in July 2017; six months of coverage for an additional new full-time police officer position included in the 2018 budget, and a change from single person coverage to family coverage by a third employee. Responding to a question, Mr. Herman noted the Town pays for 90% of a single person policy, 85% of a two-person policy and 80% of a family plan. Mr. Leclair indicated that is a generous level of benefits which many employers no longer provide. He indicated the school district negotiated a 75 / 25 split across the board in the school contract, and that they had gone to a higher deductible plan but provided a higher wage increase the first year of the change to manage the impact on employees.

Mr. Herman noted the Town has some flexibility in both the Personnel Policy and the Collective Bargaining Agreement to change plans offered with advance notice of change to be provided to the employees. There was general agreement this could be an area to be looked at moving forward.

David Wesche moved to approve Personnel Administration for Health Insurance, Dental Insurance. Disability Insurance and Life Insurance at a total of \$343,091.74,

seconded by Keith Leclair. A vote was taken; all were in favor, the motion carried unanimously.

Longevity Pay

Requesting \$10,600, an increase of \$250 from 2017. Year to date expended \$9,600

David Wesche moved to approve Longevity Pay at \$10,600, seconded by Paula Marzloff. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion carried unanimously.

Warrant Articles

Rescue Vehicle

To see if the town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to enter into a five year lease agreement in the amount of Two hundred-fifteen thousand dollars (\$215,000.00) for the purpose of leasing a new Rosenbauer Smartcab FX Medium Rescue Vehicle for the Auburn Fire Department, and to raise and appropriate the sum of One hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00) for the down payment for the cab and chassis for that purpose, with this amount to come from the unexpended fund balance as of December 31, 2017; This lease agreement contains an escape clause. (Majority vote required)

(Recommended by the Board of Selectmen)

Pat Glennon outlined the history of the current rescue vehicle which was first put into service in more than 30 years ago. He noted the vehicle is rated for 17,500 GVW and currently weighs out at 17,000. They have to determine gear and equipment necessary on almost a per call basis in order to ensure the vehicle is not running overweight. They have experienced electrical problems as the wiring is old and brittle; the transmission was replaced in 2015, and the rig had to be completely overhauled this year. During the past year, the department developed a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a replacement vehicle that would meet the needs of the department for at least the next 30 years. They provided the RFP to six vendors and received six proposals. Rosenbauer was selected because they provided the lowest cost and was the only vendor to meet every specification in the RFP. The proposed rescue vehicle would have a 34,000 GVW. These vehicles are custom built and will take approximately one year from placement of order to the delivery of the vehicle.

Dan Carpenter reported he had the chance to ride in the rescue vehicle with Jim Thompson and he was very surprised to see how lightweight the current vehicle is, describing it as just a glorified pick-up truck. He indicated the heavier bodied vehicle is much better to support the weight demanded of it, and that an overweight vehicles takes a beating by just sitting there, let alone by operating on the road.

Keith Leclair asked what an "escape clause" was noted in the warrant article. Mr. Herman explained it obligated the Town to the terms of the lease/purchase agreement as long as funds for the required payment were appropriated. If they were not, the Town is not

obligated further under the agreement, but the vendor would come and take the vehicle away. Without an escape clause, the funding mechanism is considered more in line with a bond issue and would require a 60% voter approval up front. He indicated all past fire trucks and police cruisers have been financed in this manner for perhaps the last 20 years.

Keith Leclair moved for the Budget Committee to recommend the approval of the proposed warrant article for a new rescue vehicle for the Fire Department to be financed through a lease purchase agreement, seconded by David Wesche. A vote was taken; all were in favor, the motion carried unanimously.

Land Acquisition / Hooksett Road

Dan Carpenter recused himself from the Committee for consideration of the land acquisition.

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two-hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) to purchase the 1.9-acre parcel of land (Tax Map #26, Lot #10) on Hooksett Road adjacent to existing Town property with the Griffin Free Public Library. This sum to come from the unreserved fund balance (surplus) as of December 31, 2017 with no additional amount to be raised by taxation in 2018.
(Recommended by the Board of Selectmen)

Paula Marzloff indicated she could not support this article. She believed it is premature as there is no plan for how the library would develop or expand onto this property, while she also felt the lot would be limited to its use due to the restrictions of the Shoreline Protection Act. Mr. Herman reported the Board of Selectmen and the Library Trustees were both supportive of this article and had regular communications with the Friends of Auburn who stepped in to be of assistance in a quicker manner than the Town was able to do on its own. He indicated there was no specific plan for how the property would be utilized because it was a case of which came first the chicken or the egg. There was no point in any planning being done when there was no property owned by the Town or even the knowledge that property might be owned by the Town. The Selectmen and the Trustees felt the logically steps were first to acquire the property and then develop the long-term plans which would not happen overnight. He noted the Shoreline Protection Act in itself would not impact the bulk of the property as it is behind the current library property, which is in full compliance with the Shoreline Protection Act including improvements made last year when the parking lot was expanded. The limits of the Shoreline Protection Act fall within the depth of the current library property, so compliance with the additional property would not be a concern.

Dan Carpenter outlined efforts the Library Trustees and staff have made over time to accommodate growing needs and demands within their current space restrictions, but they have no more room to grow. He felt it would be a shame if the Town loses this spot in the village as if we don't capture it now, it will be lost to another purpose and use. He noted townhouses and an automobile storage garage were among the uses being considered for this property.

Jim Headd noted the Selectmen were concerned about the potential sale of the property and were anxious to preserve the historic nature of the village district and focus as the town center. He also noted the Friends of Auburn have, in essence, provided the Town with an interest free loan in acquiring the property and holding it for the Town to consider in March.

Jim Headd moved for the Budget Committee to recommend the approval of the proposed warrant article for the purchase of 1.9-acres of land on Hooksett Road adjacent to existing Town property with the Griffin Free Public Library, seconded by Kevin Downing. A vote was taken: Yes – Kevin, Jim, Peter, Keith and David. No – Paula. The motion carried.

Dan Carpenter returned to the Committee table.

Garage / Storage Building

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Three-hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) to construct a single story 36' x 72' garage / storage building on the site of the Auburn Safety Complex at 55 Eaton Hill Road for use by multiple Town departments. This sum to come from the unreserved fund balance (surplus) as of December 31, 2017 with no additional amount to be raised by taxation in 2018.
(Recommended by the Board of Selectmen)

Jim Headd reported on the effort to develop a garage / storage building to meet the needs of several departments, mainly the police department and parks & recreation. He noted the Board of Selectmen had appointed a committee to go through needs and develop a plan to address those needs, with the proposed single story 36 'x72' building being the end result. He generally noted the police department were looking for vehicle and equipment storage (inclusive of motorcycle, radar trailer and ATV); storage for larger pieces of evidence that could not fit in the evidence room within the police department; storage for tires and other vehicle components currently kept in a storage trailer at the Safety Complex, etc. And for the Parks and Recreation, he indicated they were looking to provide storage space and a small workshop space. Mr. Herman noted as proposed, the Town would serve as the general contractor and would not be paying a contractor to serve in this role. The individual sub-contractors would individually provide proposals to the Town and, most likely, Mr. Eaton would serve as the project coordinator for the Board of Selectmen. It was estimated that would save approximately \$50,000 on this project.

Paula Marzloff asked where the garage would be located and Mr. Herman indicated in the Safety Complex parking lot that is closest to the lacrosse field. She asked who will be in charge of the building overall once it is constructed. Mr. Headd reported that has not been discussed.

Keith Leclair asked if a direction for the Parks & Recreation Commission has been decided or discussed. Mr. Herman said it has not formally, although he was aware of various informal discussions that range from the establishment of a full department to having a non-profit organization established for this purpose. Mr. Leclair felt that discussion and

decision needs to take place before a building is proposed and build. He also expressed the concern that as proposed, the building is not meeting all of the needs identified by the departments, including records storage for the police department and election booths and equipment storage for the Town.

Kevin Downing indicated the Committee has heard the frustration of the parks & recreation volunteers, but understood the idea that an overall discussion and decision needs to be made on the direction of parks & recreation for the Town before such a large step is taken.

Several committee members noted if the school renovation project is approved by voters, then it is possible a portable or modular classroom could be made available to establish a storage building at the Eddows Recreational Fields, where it would make better sense for the Parks & Recreation use. Several questions were raised about the Parks & Recreation workshop and the current practice of painting picnic tables. It was noted this was not a safe practice without appropriate ventilation systems and a different type of picnic table not requiring painting was thought to be the better investment for the community.

David Wesche questioned the need for bathrooms in a garage or storage building. Mr. Leclair asked about the expense of the bathrooms, and Mr. Herman noted the costs were included in the estimated costs for plumbing and site work including septic pump station, connection to leach field, water line and some ancillary areas. It was suggested the space allocated for the bathrooms could more than accommodate the storage needs for the voting booths and election equipment.

Committee members asked if their decision was simply to recommend or not recommend the proposed article. Mr. Herman noted formally, as a committee that was their role to recommend or not warrant articles that are proposed. However, they could express their concerns or offer suggestions for other approaches to the Board of Selectmen in a separate vote, and he was certain the Board would consider them. Mr. Headd agreed the Board would consider any recommendation coming from the Budget Committee. Several Committee members noted amendments could be made at the Deliberative Session of Town Meeting.

Mrs. Marzloff felt the proposal as presented is not ready for prime time. Mr. Leclair felt it needed more vetting before moving forward to the voters.

Keith Leclair moved for the Budget Committee to recommend the approval of the proposed warrant article for the building of a 36' x 72' garage / storage building on the site of the Safety Complex at 55 Eaton Hill Road, seconded by Paula Marzloff. A vote was taken: Yes – Jim. No - Dan, Kevin, Peter, Keith, David and Paula. The motion failed.

Mr. Herman asked if the Committee had suggestions or recommendation overall he could report back to the Board of Selectmen. In general, the Committee members indicated:

- A need to meet all identified needs which this structure doesn't.
- A need to determine the long-term direction for Parks & Recreation.

- Elimination of bathrooms in a storage building.
- How will the building be managed and who is responsible for it.
- Concerns for the interior painting / staining of picnic tables in a non-ventilated structure.
- Timing for this request in 2018 was not optimum.

Next Meeting

Chairman Miles scheduled the next meeting of the Budget Committee for Thursday, January 11, 2018 at 6:30 PM, to be followed by the public hearing on the proposed budgets for the Auburn School District and the Town of Auburn.

Adjourn

David Wesche moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 PM. Seconded by Paula Marzloff. A vote was taken; all were in agreement, the motion carried unanimously.