

**Town of Auburn
Budget Committee
November 5, 2020
Minutes**

7:00 PM

Members Present: Peter Miles, Chairman; Dan Carpenter, David Wesche, Kevin Downing, Janice Baker, and Keith Leclair

Others Present: Town Administrator William Herman and Finance Director Adele Frisella

Chair Miles called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and introduced the Board members.

Election of Committee Chair and Vice Chair

Mr. Leclair nominated Peter Miles as Chairman. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Leclair nominated David Wesche as Vice-Chairman. Mr. Carpenter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Presentation of Overall 2021 Town Budget – Bill Herman and Adele Frisella

Mr. Herman presented the overall FY 2021 proposed Town Budget for the Town of Auburn in the amount of \$5,883,776 which is an increase of 5.67% over last year. Mr. Herman reported the 2020 tax rate has been set at \$18.48/per thousand which is a .33 cent decrease from last year's rate of \$18.81. The two main reasons are due to the Town's valuation increasing \$14.5 million, and revenues were generally up, notably motor vehicle registrations and building permits. Even revenue from the State was slightly higher than the prior year.

Mr. Herman noted on the revenues side for the coming year, he anticipates the State revenue from the Highway Block Grant will be down about \$40,000. He noted that Meals and Rooms Tax revenues have not been based on generated revenue for the past six years or so, but has been a budget appropriation amount which has been level funded for all of those years.

Mr. Leclair noted the 5.67% increase is high and does not include step increases or COLA adjustments for employees. Insurance has had rate increases effective July 1st of 9% for health, 4% for disability and a 20% average increase for the NH Retirement System which Mr. Leclair noted would probably be seen on the school side also. Mr. Herman noted there was a return of surplus from Health Trust of about \$18,000, but that is shared proportionally with the employees who pay a portion of their monthly health insurance premium costs.

Mr. Leclair reported the Board of Selectmen have begun buying ahead with funds that are left in this year's budget. The Police Department body cameras will be removed from next year and

purchased with funds this year. The Fire Department vehicle radios will also be removed from next year and purchased with funds this year.

Mr. Leclair noted the vehicle maintenance fund established last year has been used twice this year and will be looking to replenish that. Mr. Leclair would like to tweak the building restoration fund to include creating buildings. Chief Williams requested to create an account for dry hydrant maintenance with \$5,000 put into that annually. The Board is looking toward putting away funds for that in the Town Property's Repair fund for that rather than establishing another reserve fund. Mr. Carpenter recommended setting aside funds every year for four to six years in the building fund for the future library project so that when the time comes, there is a base amount to work from. Mr. Leclair agreed he would like to see that get bigger every year.

Mr. Leclair noted a lot of the work proposed last year for the Pingree Hill Fire Station was covered by the GOFERR fund as Station #2 is the Town's quarantine facility.

Mr. Leclair reported the insulation project for the Safety Complex continues to be put out to bid and there may be a grant available from Eversource. The Town Hall roof is expected to need work within a few years, as well as the siding at Pingree Hill Fire Station. Mr. Carpenter remarked that with the tree removed out front, the Town Hall could use a cupola or something to dress up the roofline.

Mr. Leclair reported the Library/Community Center project is under budget. Stantec had recommended budgeting \$28,500. When put out to bid, The Turner Group was awarded the work for \$8,000 which left a \$20,500 surplus. The Library Needs Assessment was planned for 2021 and estimated at \$15,000, but we have found it will cost \$10,000 and have just awarded the contract from current year funds.

Mr. Leclair reported the storage building approved at Town Meeting was underfunded, as only a portion of the cost was received by the State. The project is currently on hold to enable the Selectmen to determine the best way forward for this project.

Mr. Miles asked about the rumors involving the School property on Hooksett Road and its potential sale. Ms. Baker reported the Auburn School District has a purchase and sales agreement with a buyer who has done test pits and is working on site work and permit funding. The builder presented to the Planning Board a couple of months ago for a 55 and over development with 81 units with an entry on Dollard Drive. The sale proceeds would go to the school construction repair fund with \$750,000 to the school and the balance of \$150,000 to the Town.

Mr. Leclair noted that MWW has proposed the Town use the Severance School building. Amy Lachance, the Parks & Recreation Coordinator is putting together a business plan to see if it would be beneficial for some of the uses that previously took place in the Safety Complex training room such as Scouts and other community-based uses. There is nowhere for them to meet during the day with existing COVID protocols in place at the school. This would be for a short-term rental, estimated to be five years until the Library/Community Center project is complete and would demonstrate what the needs would be going forward. The Severance

School has a large meeting room 1.5 times the size of the Town Hall meeting room, a small kitchen and three other smaller meeting sized rooms.

Presentation of Updated 2021-2026 Capital Improvement Plan

Mr. Herman reported there are several capital appropriations in the budget document included in the Town's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for 2021-2026. The Road Agent has recommended \$650,000 and the CIP has a recommended appropriation of \$600,000 for Road Reconstruction. Mr. Herman explained how Stantec measured the Town's roads and came up with a \$3.6 million dollar value which was divided by six years. A per linear foot value is used to calculate road projects.

Mr. Herman added that a few of the items in the CIP include:

- Electronic Records Storage for Town Hall records - \$25,000
- Ice skating rink improvement - \$5,500
- Replenishment of funds to the Town Property Improvement and Town Fleet Maintenance funds - \$20,000 and
- \$5,000 for the Cistern & Dry Hydrant maintenance

Next Meetings: **Thursday, November 12, 2020 at 7 PM**
 Thursday, November 19, 2020 at 7 PM
 Tuesday, November 24, 2020 at 7 PM – School District
 Thursday, December 3, 2020 at 7 PM
 Thursday, December 10, 2020 at 7 PM
 Thursday, December 17, 2020 at 7 PM

Mr. Miles reviewed the proposed schedule with the Committee. Ms. Baker will see if the meetings could take place in the school cafeteria to allow for more social distancing.

Adjourn

Mr. Miles moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 PM, seconded by Mr. Carpenter. A vote was taken; all were in agreement, the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy J. Hoijer,
Recording Secretary