

Budget Committee Minutes  
March 30, 2022  
Wescustogo Hall & Community Center  
Merrill Room

A joint meeting of the North Yarmouth Budget Committee and the North Yarmouth Select Board was held this evening at 5:30. All Select Board (Sites, Moulton, Reed, Hodgetts) and all Budget Committee (Walsh, Young, Knight, Falsey, Merrill, Fulton, Palmer) members were present. Also present were town employees Public Works Director Clark Baston, Assistant Town Manager Deborah Grover, WH&CC Director Lisa Thompson, Assistant to the Town Manager Draven Walker, and Public Works staff member Nick Thibeault. The meeting was broadcast and recorded by Walker. Several residents were in attendance.

Select Board Chair Brian Sites called the meeting to order and turned it over to Budget Committee Chair Andy Walsh.

Steve Palmer moved and Jim Knight seconded that the minutes of the March 17<sup>th</sup> and March 24<sup>th</sup> meeting be approved. The vote was unanimous.

Town Manager Diane Barnes provided new worksheets for the 2022-23 budget. She said the estimated mill rate increase is now \$1.02. That is a tax increase of approximately 6.0%. Our current rate is \$7.10. The final number will not be known until the final property valuation numbers are received from the tax assessor and the MSAD#51 budget is complete.

Barnes discussed our TIF district with the town attorney at Jensen Baird and she explained what she learned to the committee members. She said residential units can be in the TIF district, but TIF tax expenditures must support commercial activities. Prorating can be used to pay for the part of projects that serve commercial but not the residential portion.

Barnes explained that a State Statute allows up to 15% of a public safety building to be funded by the TIF but our TIF plan would need to be amended to allow that. She suggested that a meeting be held with the TIF attorney from Jensen Baird to make sure everyone understands the TIF.

Bill Young and Brian Sites engaged in a discussion about using \$20,000 in TIF funds to study the Public Safety building. Their common understanding is that TIF funds cannot pay for the entire study, but the Select Board is not paying for a study. They are only soliciting proposals to do a study, so no money is being spent from the TIF.

Young advocated for putting together a strategic plan. Sites said adjustments need to be made to the TIF. Chair Walsh stated we need an Ad Hoc committee to study the TIF.

Diane Barnes explained each portion of the mill rate change for this coming year. Secretary Merrill said we need to get the untaxed properties in town on the tax rolls.

Barnes reviewed the anticipated revenue sheet. The fees for using Wescustogo Hall & Community Center will increase on July 1<sup>st</sup>. The annual donations to WH&CC by Ben Grover, Robert Anderson, and Linc Merrill have not always gone to paying down the bonds used to build the hall. They will be paying down the bonds from now on.

A discussion took place over the amount contemplated for automobile excise tax collections. Barnes said she does not want to increase the estimate due to limited automobile supply on dealers' lots and the decline in the tax paid as cars get older. She prefers to be conservative. Any excess collected can go to Undesignated Funds.

The State has set the interest rate for unpaid taxes to 4%. It is possible that this could impact tax collections as the rate is low compared to interest on other bills the resident may have.

Barnes adjusted the capital expenditures as there was a lower balance in the account than we thought. This is partly due to the new fuel station under construction at Public Works which has not been paid yet but will be coming from that account.

Barnes also explained that the Budget Committee recommendation can't appear on the warrant if it is higher than the Select Board recommendation per Bernstein Shur, our former law firm. The residents can vote to decrease what the Select Board recommends but not increase it.

#### **Municipal Budget Dept. 110**

Bill Young urged an increase in the pay of each Select Board member. He made a motion to increase each by \$500. That was not seconded. Steve Palmer moved and Sandy Falsey seconded that the proposed budget of \$625,886 be approved. The Budget Committee vote was unanimous.

Brian Sites moved and Davie Reed seconded approving this department budget. The Select Board vote was unanimous.

#### **Community Services Dept. 120**

There was extensive discussion about this department budget. Sec. Merrill moved and Sandra Falsey seconded that the \$100 for Maine Public Radio be removed. The vote was 2 Yes (Merrill, Falsey) and 5 No so the funding remained.

The social service agencies funding was discussed. The new amounts revised from the March 29<sup>th</sup> Summary were to drop Southern Maine Area on Aging to \$1,000, Opportunity Alliance drop to \$2,000, and add Through These Doors for \$2,000. The new total is \$219,337. It was moved by Steve Palmer and seconded by ----- to approve the budget. The vote was 6-1 (Merrill opposed) in favor.

The Select Board discussed the budget. David Reed moved and Paul Hodgetts seconded approving the budget. The vote was 3-1 (Moulton opposed).

**Community Center Dept. 125**

Bill Young commented that he had been contacted by individuals who were upset about the size of the benefit package for the additional position. It was said that government jobs pay less than private sector jobs but have good benefits. It is budgeted for the highest possible benefit package to pay for a family plan but that is not certain as no hire has been made.

Remarks were made in support of the additional position. It was inquired as to whether the overtime costs in other areas might go down with this new person. Diane Barnes said that would need to be determined as who would perform the duties for opening and closing WH&CC and livestreaming were decided.

Steve Palmer moved and Jim Knight seconded that \$121,806 be approved for this department budget. The vote was unanimous.

The Select Board discussed the new rates for use of WH&CC. Lisa Thompson said that the rate for nonresidents was higher than residents but most use is by residents. She said that meant that to increase revenue, the rates for residents had to go up, too, or there would be little revenue change. The Town and MSAD #51 do not pay to use the facilities. Secretary Merrill suggested that the value of Town use by boards and committees be captured to understand the implied income portion as well.

David Reed moved and Jim Moulton seconded to approve the \$121,806 budget. The vote was 3-1 (Hodgetts opposed).

**Public Safety Dept. 130**

Discussion on this budget began but it was decided to wait until Chief Payson returned from a rescue call so he could answer questions.

**Public Works Dept. 140**

The Budget Committee removed spraying for the Brown Tail Moth along the roads. Linc Merrill moved and Steve Palmer seconded approving a revised budget of \$653,784. The vote passed unanimously.

The Select Board took up the budget. David Reed moved and Jim Moulton moved to accept the budget of \$653,784. The vote was unanimous.

**Buildings and Grounds Dept. 145**

Diane Barnes explained that there were numerous changes in this department due to the lower balance in capital reserves than was assumed in the initial versions of the budget. Numerous repairs to the Town Office and the Sharp House were removed. The new budgeted amount to be raised is \$146,651. Steve Palmer moved and Jim Knight seconded that this amount be approved. The vote was unanimous.

David Reed moved and Jim Moulton seconded the motion that the Select Board approve this amount as well. The vote was unanimous.

**Solid Waste/Recycling Dept. 150**

Steve Palmer moved and Jay Fulton seconded a motion to approve a budget of \$245,806. The vote was unanimous.

David Reed moved and Paul Hodgetts seconded that the Select Board approve the same amount. The vote was unanimous.

Chief Greg Payson arrived so the group returned to reviewing Public Safety Department 130. Bill Young asked numerous questions about what kind of Rescue coverage did we need to hire from outside of our town if we had per diem coverage in the fire station 7 days a week. The Chief said he has 2 volunteer medics living in town, but they have other jobs and often aren't available. We hire paramedics to work 7am to 5pm every day. It began as coverage 8am to 4pm but there were a lot of calls on each side of that time with people commuting to work that made it difficult to cover.

The \$15,000 budgeted for services from Cumberland and Yarmouth. The Chief said he has been asked about providing rescue service to Pownal, but we couldn't as we can't guarantee 24-hour EMT availability. He spoke with Cumberland about more support, but they were not willing at this time.

Chief Payson said the reduction in his budget is because fewer personnel are responding to calls.

Young said that keeping our agreements in place seems the most economical.

Steve Palmer moved and Jim Knight seconded approving \$494,746 for this department. The vote was unanimous.

David Reed moved and Jim Moulton seconded a motion that the Select Board support this budget. It was approved unanimously.

**Fixed Expenses Dept. 160**

Diane BARNED asked that this motion to approve the County Tax for \$1,401,234 total.

Jay Fulton moved, and Jim Knight seconded a motion for the Budget Committee to approve this amount. The vote was 5-2 (Merrill, Young opposed).

Paul Hodgetts moved, and Jim Moulton seconded a motion that the Select Board approve the same amount. The vote was unanimous.

**Capital Reserves Dept. 220**

Steve Palmer moved and Jay Fulton seconded an amount of \$197,289 be approved. The vote was unanimous.

David Reed moved and Paul Hodgetts seconded a motion to approve the same amount. The Select Board vote was unanimous.

There was no additional discussion on the TIF. Diane Barnes said the American Rescue Funds will be discussed at a later meeting.

Select Board Chair Sites asked if anyone had any questions. There were none. Several members did comment on the process of how this budget came together and what they think about it. Merrill commented that we need to look at better cash flow management and that may include returning to semiannual tax payments. He also said that he had been an advocate for the April Town Meeting but maybe it should be changed to June when we know the school budget and our property valuation.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 P. M. by order of Chair Sites.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lincoln J. Merrill, Jr.  
Secretary