

**Selectmen's Meeting
Monday, December 19, 2022**

Chairman Les Babb called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. Present were Selectmen Les Babb, Ernie Day, and Melissa Florio, and Ellen White, Town Administrator, who recorded these minutes. This meeting was held at the Town Hall.

Also in attendance was Rob Cunio, Sarah Groleau, Michael Wade, Jake Stephan, Todd Giles, Michael Whalen, and Mark McKinley.

Joint Meeting with Freedom School Board:

The school budget was discussed. Overall projected increase is 8.09% or \$271,240 with \$119,000 of that increase being tuition for middle/high school. The Special Education Fund and Bus Funds were reviewed. Michael Wade explained what transpired with the 2021 Warrant Article raised in the amount of \$95,000 for the bus purchase. This appropriation is being returned from the Trust Funds to their general fund so they can expend it. Les questioned if any of the \$271,240 increase can be offset using Capital Reserve Funds rather than taxation? Undetermined at this time. Sarah stated that surplus is considered to fund projects within their CIP in addition to grant funding. Brief discussion regarding tuition stabilization efforts. The JMA did not pass. Several options have been presented including bringing Eaton students to Freedom Elementary but the travel direction may create challenges for families. Sarah stated they are now also considering Sacopec Valley as an option for middle/high school. Sacopec is reportedly 9.1 miles away but does not have an on-site vocational education program. The Board is evaluation enrollment levels for the next four years. Les discussed the importance of stabilizing the tax rate in regard to escrow payments. With inflation on the rise, efforts need to be made to stabilize swings and to utilize fund balance when it's possible. All were in agreement to combine efforts in the bidding process for heating fuels. The school consumes approximately 9,500 gallons of heating oil annually. The proposed budget will be forwarded to Ellen. Michael Wade reviewed staffing changes including reduction of contracted position by utilizing in-house staff and restructuring. Jake stated that even with the proposed increase, the budget is still lower than it was 2-years ago. Sarah reported that Principal Elaine Sherry obtained a \$99,000 school safety grant. Salary increases are proposed at 5% for non-collective bargaining staff. Negotiations are likely to reopen so they can address the para wages. The substitute fees have gone up from \$75 to \$125/day in the past two years. Melissa questioned the use of school bus drivers to assist with transportation needs in the MWV. There is not enough time between high school and elementary school schedules to allow for this; there is only approximately 3-hours of down time between morning and afternoon transportation. Sarah stated their efforts are being focused on building a better group of cross-trained individuals to assist with staff shortages and increased demand. This discussion concluded at 6:55 PM.

Review of Mail, Sign Manifests, Approval of Minutes:

The accounts payable and payroll manifests, and red folder including correspondence was reviewed. Ernie noted a rate increase is needed for a subcontract invoice. Ellen will get a check issued for the rate adjustment.

Ernie made a motion to approve the minutes of the Selectmen's Meeting held on December 12, 2022. Melissa seconded. All in favor, the motion passed.

Department Head Updates:

Fire Department – Chief Rob Cunio reported call volume including 1 call for medical aid, 1 motor vehicle accident, 2 mutual aid – fires, 1 fire alarm, and 2 trees/wires down. The portable pump purchased through the FFA Grant was not expected to arrive until March but showed up today. Rob has been working with MacMulkin through the State bid process to get the Tahoe spec'd out as he needs it outfitted. Rob reviewed the fire-specific upgrades that are necessary and presented the revised quote in the amount of \$42,660. The units were ordered in May and expected for delivery in the first quarter of 2023. A letter of intent to purchase is all that is required to reserve one, pending funding approval at Town meeting. Discussion on the lighting. The current light bar has been transferred from vehicle to vehicle and should be upgraded and the vehicle will also need to be lettered. Rob will work on obtaining quotes for these items. Les would like to see the total purchase at no more than \$45,000. If that is obtainable, he is in favor of committing to the purchase. All were in agreement. The replacement plan for this vehicle was reviewed as well as life expectancy. Rob will provide contact information to Ellen for a letter of commitment to be sent.

Appointments:

Budget Review: Town Buildings, Parks & Rec – Mark McKinley proposed a few ideas for budgeting consideration. The ballfield has gone to seed as a result of lack of watering. Les stated that they had a conversation with Scott regarding the watering and he was told by the water precinct to not turn on the sprinklers two years ago. He has since been advised by the Selectmen to turn the sprinklers back on in season. He feels it is a good time to stop the treatment from Village Green until a plan is in place for new loam and reseeded. The invoices from Village Green were reviewed. Discussion will have to take place with Scott Brooks on what is needed. Mark would like to see money added to the Public Safety Building maintenance line to assist with repairs to the AC, furnace, pump, etc. as they are needed. He proposed increasing the line item from \$4,000 to \$4,500. Ellen stated that a Capital Reserve Fund was created this year for the Public Safety Building for major repairs and \$10,000 was added into it. Mark presented a quote he received from Lakeside Security to add a fire alarm system at the Masonic Lodge in the amount of \$12,000 and questioned if the Board would like to proceed? Following discussion, Mark suggested he contact Pope Security who handles the Town Office system to see if there is a wireless option that can feed from the office system. Mark will be getting a quote from Bill Barrows to replace the railing on handicap access ramp at the Masonic Lodge. Ernie suggested a metal railing that will be able to better sustain the snow coming off the roof. Mark is still waiting to hear back on the tree pruning/removal to be completed behind the Lodge and Roller Shed. He will attempt to contact other contractors suggested as well. Mark also suggests pavement maintenance and crack sealing at the Public Safety Building. He has spoken with Scott who will be adding it into his schedule for pricing. The total will have to be determined in order to decide whether it will be funded from Capital Reserves or taxation. Rob stated that the front section is original pavement. Scott will be reached out to for assistance with the ballfield needs.

Town Office, and all other budgets not previously reviewed – Ellen removed the Tax Collector salary from the Town Officers budget and added it into the Town Office budget since it will be an appointed position rather than elected after Town Meeting. The Elections budget has been cut in third due to only one election in 2023 versus the three held in 2022. Town Office budget has been adjusted by the Tax Collector's salary, retirement has been adjusted to include the Town Clerk, previously omitted, health insurance based on the increase in rates for current staff, mileage rate has increased

and is used to reimburse primarily for bank deposits, computer support has been adjusted due to increase in software maintenance costs, the audit has been increased to accommodate a recommittal audit as is required when there is a change in hands in the Tax Collector, telephone is reflective of the new phone system installed and now live. The new system is under warranty and requires no additional maintenance contact at this time. Cuts have been made where warranted to offset some of the increases. Town Office is proposed at a 4% increase. Melissa questioned if the health insurance rates will be reviewed. Ellen responded that we are a January 1 renewal and research would require more time and a separate review committee well in advance of the renewal period. Discussion regarding changes to the retirement plan offered. Les is not in favor of moving forward with NH Retirement requiring an 11.77% contribution from the employee and 26+% by the employer. Melissa suggests slowly and incrementally increasing the town's matching contribution of the existing retirement plan from the current 3%. All were in agreement. Suggested increase of 1-1/2% per year to bring it to 7-1/2% in 3-years. Ellen will make the adjustments to all applicable budgets. Assessing budget is per the contract. Brief discussion on the ambulance contract renewal. Ellen is still waiting to hear from Effingham, but she will reach out to make sure they are on board. Ellen questioned when the next Regional Ambulance Meeting should be scheduled now that there is a full consensus from the group? The Board agreed to propose a meeting date of 2/6/2023 with Effingham's consensus. Legal is proposed at level funding. The budget was increased by \$5,000 in 2022 to account for STR's. Worker's Comp and Property-Liability have seen an increase. Premium holiday contributions were received in 2022 to offset the expenses but it is unknown if those will continue in 2023. There are no known increases for the hydrants and the street lighting retrofit has continued to pay for itself in reduced energy costs. The patriotic purposes budget is proposed at level-funding. Replacement flags and flag clips for the village flag setups have been ordered. Long-term debt, the new fire truck estimated to be received in early 2023 has been figured in for the year 1 payment due in April 2023 but that amount was raised in the Warrant Article accepting the purchase. Ellen questioned if it should be changed to reflect the year 2 lease payment? The Board was in agreement. That adjustment will be made. The net difference is approximately \$1,500. The road bond has been calculated correctly and is due to be paid in full in the next few years.

Public Input:

None presented.

Old / New Business / Discussion:

Rob stated that he has money leftover in his operating budget and questioned if he can encumber monies to purchase the lights for the Tahoe? The Board stated that he must have an estimate or quote, or an order placed with a vendor by the end of the year in order to encumber. He will see what he can get for pricing and availability to present to the Board at their next meeting.

Non-Public Session(s):

Les made a motion to enter into a non-public session at 8:03 PM pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a), personnel. Ernie seconded. Roll call vote was taken: Les-yes, Ernie-yes, Melissa-yes. All in favor, the motion passed. Les made a motion to reconvene public session at 9:05 PM. Ernie seconded. All in favor, the motion passed.

Discussion continued:

Melissa questioned the status of the replacement street signs? Ellen will have to check with Scott to find out.

The Board agreed to meet between the holidays to review the total operating budget and any known Warrant Articles. A meeting will be scheduled later in the week, Thursday at 8 AM. Ellen reminded the Board that carry forwards and encumbrances need to be voted on before the close of the year as well. She will compile a list.

Ellen was asked to pull together the past four years’ encumbrances and carry forward amounts.

Adjournment:

Being no further input, Ernie made a motion to adjourn. Les seconded. All in favor, the motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Consent Agenda:

Accounts Payable – Week ending 12/15/2022	Approved
Payroll Manifest – Week ending 12/13/2022	Approved
Minutes – Selectmen’s Meeting– 12/12/2022	Approved
Short-Term Rental Conditional Use Permit Renewals:	
Mark Steadman Rev. Trust, 151 West Bay Road	Approved
Elizabeth Danielson, 30 Milford Avenue	Approved
Joseph Rogers, 95 Burnham Road	Approved
Patricia Sutton-Knight, 131 Pleasant	Approved
Christopher Cunniff, 30 Pauli Point Road	Approved

Correspondence:

Letter – Brock & Scott re: Foreclosure sale postponement, 51 Freedom Point Rd.	Reviewed
Receipt – Tax payment as agreed	Reviewed
Receipt – Camp Calumet Lutheran – Donation	Reviewed
Receipt – State of NH LEMP Grant Funds	Reviewed

Respectfully submitted,
Ellen N. White, Town Administrator

Approved by the Board of Selectmen on _____:

Leslie R. Babb

Ernest F. Day, Jr.

Melissa M. Florio