Town of Epping

Budget Committee

November 9, 2022

Call to Order:

The budget committee meeting was called to order at 6:00pm. Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence for the troops.

Attendance:

Budget Committee members: Michael Charkowski-Chairman, Steve Ozols-Vice Chairman, Ben Leavitt-School Board Rep., Marty Dyer, Mark Vallone, Joe Trombley-Town Selectman Rep., Brian Reed, Jordenne Sargent-zoom, Cody Belanger-zoom, Jen Chapman, Greg Dodge, Lisa Fogg and Cynthia Hounam. Sean Morrison was not present.

Town Selectman and others: Tom Gauthier, John Cody and Erica Robinson

Roll call: Brian Reed, Jen Chapman, Marty Dyer, Ben Leavitt, Joe Trombley, Sean Morrison-absent, Mark Vallone, Cody Belanger-zoom, Jordenne Sargent-zoom.

Opening Comments:

There was no meeting last week, we will review a partial draft of the town budget tonight.

Steve motioned to accept the minutes from September 14th, seconded by Mark. All in favor, Jen abstain. Motion passes 8-0-1.

Steve motioned to accept the minutes from October 12th, seconded by Mike. All in favor, Jen abstain. Motion passes 8-0-1.

Mike said that Christine did get the school budget over so it will give us more time to review, any questions about the quarterly’s that Christine sent out.

Mike asked Ben if there was anything to update.

* In a pretty good spot as far as budget
* Asked if anyone had any questions between now and November 16 to reach out to Christine or himself so they can get the answers
* Negotiating is continuing to make progress
* The departments kept the costs pretty low and only came in with what they needed to stay ahead of costs.

Mike asked if there were going to be any printed binders or is it all digital. Ben it is digital, but Christine will make binders if needed.

Town Draft Budget Review:

* Joe said the objective is to get the smaller budgets out of the way so when the full review comes up we only hope to get feedback and minor changes.
* They are working on the default and revenues, they will not have everything until the first week of December.

Page 1: General Fund - Town Administration:

* Board of Selectman Salaries: Increase 4%, which will be consistent throughout. This is for every person paid for services rendered.
	+ If the board does not agree Joe will make a motion to remove it. Tom Gauthier does not agree with the increase, John Cody is in favor.
	+ Mike asked if we have made any adjustments if previous years, Joe said two years ago but it was removed at the deliberation session
	+ Mike would like to see the total cost of the all the 4% increases
* Professional Services: Reduced
* Recording Fees: Reduced
	+ Lisa said this is used for the Registry of Deeds to print deeds and Joyce has not need them
* NHMA Dues: Increased. This covers the legal fees and training

Page 2: Town Administration:

* TA Salaries: Increased. Due to Greg retirement and the $10,000 for the one month over lap for the new administrator.
	+ Mark asked how they came up with the salary, Joe say they took what Gregs salary was and compared it to other towns
	+ Steve asked if they were contract positions, Greg said yes
	+ Tom said they were looking to have someone by the first of March
* Joe asked for any questions on the non-discretionary.
	+ Lisa said there was a 11.7% increase in health, 1.5% increase in dental, 3.2% increase in short term disability and overall 4.1% decrease in workers comp and unemployment
* Mark asked who the vendor was, Lisa said Health trust which is tied in with the contracts.
	+ Mark asked if you could put it on the table to look around. Joe said no this year
	+ Tom said that even if they wanted to change companies they would have to go through the union
	+ John said that the increase was due to covid, no one was going to the doctors during that time and now they are catching up
	+ Ben asked if they budgeted for the max, Lisa said no
	+ Mike asked if they could combine with the school, Joe said that PrimeEx does not do health insurance. Ben thinks they may be grandfathered in, but he will double check.
	+ Joe said that 98% of the state uses PrimeEx but they are not specialized in municipalities, so the rates are high.
* Postage: Increased
* Office Supplies: Increased. Lisa said it was due to the toner/ink and they moved a lot of the departments into one line
* Mileage: Increased.

Steve stated in the past we have always seen the selectman proposed and this year is different, has the board of selectman seen all the department heads before present the budget to the committee. Joe sent everyone the video clip of their meetings with the departments. Joe said they have not gone through their final budget yet.

Page 3: Town Meeting:

* Moderator Salary: $24.00 increase for the 4% increase mentioned previously
* Town Report Printing: Increased. Greg said he has put this out to bid, 2 bids are pending.
	+ Mark asked how many reports are printed, Greg said 800. He is trying to see if there is a way to post it online and less printing.

Page 3: Boards and Commissions:

* Office Supplies: Got rid of this line, everything was consolidated to one line
* Professional Services: Increased $50.00

Page 4: Town Clerk:

* Salaries FT: Increased. Split 70/30 with tax collector. 3 full timers with 2 raises last year
* Salaries PT: Put to zero, no more line
* Non-discretionary: Mark asked why the town administration was up and the town clerk was down, Lisa said because of change of plans
* Alarm: Decreased, the original price given was change, they went to 5G and it was over budgeted
* Copier: Increased, everything was moved to town clerk
* Training & Seminars: Slight increase, now starting to be used again
* Postage: Increase due to certified letters sent out to owners that have not registered their dogs
* Equipment: Flat
* Records Preservation: Required. 2 books a year, the last year will be 2028. This was a number they provided and is based on the conditions of the book and what needs to be done to preserve them
* Software: Stayed the same
* Dog Fees: Money that is collected for neutering, a portion goes to the state and a portion goes to the town.

Page 5: Elections and Registration:

* Supervisors: Increase $136 due to the 4% previously mentioned
* Ballot Clerks: Decreased, only one election next year.
* Machine Maintenance: Increased, company does the maintenance raised their prices and it is out of their control.
	+ Mike asked if there were any plans on replacing the machine, Erica said no the machines are in excellent shape and very accurate
* Printing and Supplies: Increased, based on the number of warrant articles brought forward, the more articles the more printing that is needed

Page 7: Tax Collection:

* Salaries: 11% full time, 7% increase at the beginning of the year and 4% previously mentioned
* Training: Increased due to cost of hotel and lodging, one Erica will have to stay overnight
* Professional Services: Increased due to printing manual bills, also with the new developments it increases the amount bills going out.
* New Software: Increased. The old software is not capable of what the town needs
	+ The new software will interface with everything needed for the town (motor vehicle registrations, dogs, dumps, accounting, etc)
	+ Mike asked if the cost was to purchase the new software, Erica said yes and water/sewer will be contributing $5000 as it will interface with them
	+ Paying $7000 a year right so that will be taken away, once purchased it will cost $3000-$4000 year.
	+ Steve asked if the cost includes the purchase, training and installation. Erica said yes
* Equipment: There just in case the printer or anything goes she would need to replace immediately

Page 6: Finance:

* Salaries: Increased 4% as previously mentioned
* Audit: No change
* Office Supplies: Increased due to cost of everything going up. Last year did not cover the costs
* Equipment & Mileage: Will be gone next year

Page 8: Treasury:

* Salaries: Increased 4% as previously mentioned

Page 8: IT Department:

* Computer Maintenance: Increased, adding in the Rec budget so you will see a reduction in the Rec department. Greg said then went to a total package with the contractor so it was due to that and the rec.
* Computer Support: BMSI tax program, they have to carry it this but there will be a reduction in 2024. It also includes vision assessing software and updates that are required.

Page 9: Property Valuation:

* Utility Appeals: Reduced
* Utility Revaluation: Do it every year and is fixed cost.

Page 9: Legal Expense:

* Town Attorney: Increased due to other things in town that have had ramifications

Page 9: Personnel Administration:

* Performance Wage: This was previously merit pool, renamed
* Advertising: Increased, for open positions

Page 9: Cemeteries:

* Prospect CM Maintenance: Biggest increase, head stone maintenance
* Repurchase Lots: Required to budget for, if someone does not want the plot anymore the town has to buy it back

Page 9: Property Insurance:

* Property & Liability: Increased due to contract

Page 9: Health: Always had a health inspection but it was carried under fire, created a new account to code correctly

Page 10: General Assistance

* Tom said there were 3 major increases: Food, heating and electricity
* Greg you will start to see these cost going back up because the covid money is gone and the monetary evections have been lifted.
* Rents: Mike asked what this is used for. Tom said that Phylis usually takes care of this through community action, but this may be used for a hotel room or something along those lines
* Since 2015 the most that was paid out of this account was $5800

Page 10: Patriotic Purposes:

* $1500 for the parade and $1000 for the flags

Page 10: Conservation Commission:

* Stayed at $600, there were talks of purchasing another picnic table

Page 10: Long Term Debt:

* Land Purchase Bond: The land where the wells are behind Lowes. 2o year bond – goes to 2033
* Library Addition Bond: 2o year bond – goes to 2029
* Water Treatment Plant Bond: 20 year bond – goes to 2041
	+ The first payment in 2022 was budgeted for worse case scenario, when the grant came through the town qualified for the whole loan forgiveness, so the payment will be lower next year

Page 10: Interest on Long Term Debt:

* Will decrease each year as the loans are paid down

Page 11: Planning and Zoning:

* Salaries: 2 employees, new town planner
* Cell phone: Got rid of them, the new town planner does not need one
* RPC Dues: Moved to membership dues
* Office Supplies: Will be going away
* Postage: Has to stay in
	+ The developers actually pay for it, so it is offsetting with revenues
* Mileage: Just in case the town car is not available

Page 11: Zoning Board:

* 20% increase because of office supplies
* Advertising: Pretty much on point

Page 12: General Government Buildings, Town Hall:

* Telephone: Increase due to Comcast
	+ Talked about getting a voip systems for the town to tie in the entire town, internet based phone systems with one primary number
* Internet Service: Increased due to Comcast. Greg is meeting with Consolidated Communications next week for better rates
* Telephone Maintenance and Alarm: Moved to a different line
* Cleaning Services: Price increased for a lot of the town buildings
* Electricity: Rates increased
* Heating oil: Stayed flat, propane is more stable than fuel oil, price is locked in
* Supplies: Decreased
* Tax Deed: Will be going away this year
* Trash Hauling: Lisa created an account for the town and reduced repair and maintenance
* Repairs & Maintenance: Moved to trash hauling
* Furniture: Stayed the same

Steve asked how the Capital Reserve Fund is used, Tom said for major projects that were not expected

Page 13: Watson Academy:

* Telephone: 2 lines are required, one for security and one for the elevator.
	+ The bill was split between Watson and Rec but added it all into Watson
* Cleaning: Increased
* Electricity: Has been flat, may be increased
* Water/Sewer: Increased, only estimates

Page 14: Recreation:

* Salaries: Adjustment from the beginning of the year plus the 4% previously mentioned
* IT Services:
	+ Should be software support
	+ Comes from the membership dues line
	+ Joe will follow up and rename the lines appropriately
* Copier Lease: Contract is up, they are trying to integrate with other departments
* Membership Dues: Moved to IT Services
* Park Maintenance: No change this year but maybe next year
* Mileage: Just in case

Page 24: Library:

* Salaries: Biggest change which impacts the non discretionary
	+ Labor study of this area shows that we were the lowest for the library director and part timers, so the pay was adjusted to make it the same as surround areas. Asked for 11% pay increase
* Professional Services: If they need any legal services
* Water/Sewer: Has been flat

Joe asked for any questions on the budget.

Meeting Schedule:

* November 16, 2022: School library, 6:00

Motion to adjourn by Brian, seconded by Jen. Meeting adjourned at 9:40.

Respectfully submitted:

Cynthia Hounam