

**TOWN OF GROTON
PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING
February 2, 2016**

**In Attendance: John Rescigno, Robert Ferriere, Christina Goodwin and Sara Smith
(Administrative Assistant)**

Audience Members Present

Christina called the public hearing to order at 6:00pm.

Budget

Christina explained that the Board goes through the budget by sections reviewing and answering questions and then through the warrant articles. The operating budget only had an increase of \$8,000.00. The entire budget went down \$69,255.00 from last year. Miles inquired on the amount that was intended for Kimball Hill Property Acquisition (KHPAC) as he felt that the number was actually higher than indicated. Christina did agree and corrected that the proposed budget increased approximately \$58,000, but there was still a decrease in the overall budget including warrant articles.

The Board went through the budget section by section. The following questions were received:

Executive

Miles Sinclair inquired about the wage study to see what the impact it is for the budget based on the increases. Christina explained that she has a spreadsheet that has all of these wages broken down but forgot to bring it. She will make it available before Town Meeting.

Pam Hamel said that she wants to start by saying that she believes that the Administrative Assistant is underpaid but she thinks the increase was too much for one year. She said that she took Hebron out of the study since she doesn't think that Hebron is the same as Groton. It is a totally different dynamic. Taking them out of the picture, changes the average to \$18.25-\$19.49. The increase is an 18.4% increase. On another sheet there is proposed pay plan for Groton which says \$17.53 is the low and \$25.24 is the high and she didn't know where this was coming from. Bob said it came from the wage study and we used the information from the research that Municipal Resources Inc (MRI) did. Pam has a proposal to increase to \$17.53 and that is retroactive to January. Then at the Admin Assistant's review give her another increase of \$.50 or \$.75.

Joe Koslow stated that her position is the same as other Administrative Assistants. Christina explained that the job Sara does leans more to a Town Administrator. Christina explained Sara is the Welfare Director, Human Resources, Supervisor to Department Heads in some instances, Assessing Assistant, and Administrative, etc. John said Sara does all of leg work for the Select Board and then some.

Glen asked if the study shows what increases these Town's give each year. Bob explained they provided a range so we know where they start, where they should be mid-range and the end amount. Bob said as far as Sara goes we took the minimum, added her raises that she received

and then added on an amount for a welfare stipend.

Pamela Ferriere stated that not everyone was included in the study. Christina explained that it cost per position so any stipend/elected position were not included at the Board's choice. Christina explained that they did look at the Board's stipend and there haven't been any increases since 2004 but the Select Board didn't want to include themselves at this time. Bob said that the Board would be looking at these for next year's budget.

John said one thing he said when we did this is are we going to be able to give these increases and explain this to the Town and they agreed that they needed to do this and needed to take care of the people to keep them.

Sharon Nelson said that both Sara and Pam were both underpaid and thought this is a lot of playing catch up. Miles did say that this is nothing new; they have used a book that New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA) supplied to make sure the salaries were comparable. Miles stated that the study also said that they recommended that the AA be a salary position and Miles asked if the Board thought about this. They said that at this time we are not changing to a salary position and this position still does not get overtime pay.

Joe Koslow asked if it was recommended how often to do this study. It was stated every three years.

Sharon Nelson pointed out that at the Town Meeting they can recommend an increase. She also pointed out that Pam was underpaid when she worked here and now Sara is underpaid. She said yes it seems like a lot of money but it is long overdue.

Election/Registration/Vital Stat

Christina explained it appears that the salary looks less but the new Town Clerk/Tax Collector wasn't actually here so didn't get paid for a few weeks. Also she will be getting an increase from \$16.64 hourly to the minimum \$17.53/hr as directed by the wage study. Pam inquired on the figure and the Board explained it was the minimum range as Ruth Millett is new with little to no experience.

Christina explained that the Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector was increased due to acting as Interim Town Clerk/Tax Collector, an increase in hours and also for an adjustment from the wage study.

Legal expenses

Sharon stated that we don't need to contact the Town's attorney, but we can contact NHMA. Bob explained that we do contact NHMA first and only contact the attorney if absolutely needed.

Planning and Zoning legal expenses

Miles asked why the legal expenses have not gone down. It was explained that we never know what the future will bring and we have a case right now with a possible purchase of the Kimball Hill property and putting in a mine. Miles stated that the history shows in 2011 there was gravel pit issue and that is why there was such an increase in legal. Christina explained that the Board level funded the budget as we never know what could come before the Town.

Cemeteries

Elizabeth asked what the salaries section is for. It was explained that it is for the mowing, maintenance, etc when the Highway Department does this.

Advertising and Dues

Slim said that he doesn't think we should be paying the fees to North Country Council. We haven't used them in years. Christina said we will take this into consideration. Slim asked what will happen. It was explained that the Board will talk about it and determine whether to adjust the budget.

Pam said that before we throw them out we need to take into consideration that maybe we are not using them the way we should be. Slim said that the Lakes Region Planning Commission is another option and Christina explained that we have checked into this before and they weren't able to just sign us up because of the way the state is split for each resource.

Police

Christina explained major changes here are the full-time Chief and doing away with fulltime Officer.

Sharon Nelson asked if we even have a part-time Officer. It was explained that we are hiring for two part-time Officers.

Slim asked if the \$3,000.00 for NH Special Operations Unit (SOU) is what they charge us. It is. Slim asked what the SOU stipend is and EJ explained it is the stipend for attending call outs by the SOU and training. EJ is currently to approved SOU officer.

Fire and Ambulance

Pam asked if Hebron is now a set rate. It was explained that it is.

Christina also explained that the Lakes Region Mutual Aid (LRMA) number should go down again in 2017. LRMA uses the information that they have and they don't have the updated value. It should drop a few thousand next year. Miles stated this doesn't seem right and doesn't think that we should pay this. Christina explained that we have gone back forth with Lakes Region Mutual Aid. Christina explained that the adjustment is based on the usage. Miles doesn't think they should be allowed to use the outdated information. Joe Koslow asked if we can reach out to DRA to see why the information is not correct. Christina said we can look into it.

Highways and Streets

Miles references budget line 4312.2 that was increased to 10,000 from last year. He wants to know what the \$9,200.00 was spent on as he feels that most items should be warrantied. Glen explained that backhoe had some electrical and some hydraulic issues that were not covered under the warranty along with the purchase of some cutting edges and parts for the plows. Repair work was done to the sander and hydraulic system on the truck which is not covered by warranty. There was a small amount of money used on the Ford but not much. Miles asked if the Ford is being used. Glen said very minimally, plowing if we have to, but mainly for transportation of mowers and maintenance of Town property. Last year it was used for plowing.

Miles thinks this is a hunk of junk and we should sell it. He will be contacting Sara to get the line information from quick books.

Sanitation

Elizabeth asked why there is a line for the tire disposal. It was explained that we have to budget for the charge even if it is being offset. Bubba also stated that this doesn't cover the tires that are thrown out at the garage or on side of road.

Pamela asked if we were going to increase the recycle line since we went over. It was explained that we are going to be meeting on the changes and will discuss this.

Sharon Nelson asked if the Town transports the solid waste. It was explained we have contracts for transportation.

Welfare

Joe Koslow asked what vendor payments are. Sara explained that when the Town provides assistance it is whoever we pay such as New Hampshire Electric Cooperative (NHEC), Hannaford, Ryezaks, etc.

Parks and Rec

Miles asked why maintenance was so high last year. It was explained that more sand was delivered, and stumps were removed

Miles asked why this didn't go down. Christina explained that the Board is looking to have NHEC provide a quote on the possibility of installing electric at the Park and we have to pay for them to come out. The Board is also looking to establish a tree line between the playground and the pavilion area and may purchase benches. Miles said that when it was looked at before it was decided that the cost was more than the worth since it isn't used as much for electric. Dave Leone asked what NHEC charges, Christina stated \$200.00 to come out to provide a quote. The Board explained that we have been asked more by others to use the park for soccer, baseball, etc. Also for OHD the bands have issues with generator use and it would aid the ease of this. Miles doesn't think that the electricity will make people use the park. Miles says we have a nice park and it isn't used now. Dave Leone said that if it is only around \$30 a month it will only be \$400 a year.

Patriotic

It was asked if patriotic is for flags and buntings and the Select Board confirmed that it was.

Conservation

It was asked if they have the money given back to them. The Select Board stated that they used to but they have not requested in a few years.

Warrant Articles

The individual warrant articles were looked at and discussed.

Article 4

It was explained the plan for the Groton Paved Roads Warrant Article is for Sculptured Rocks Road and crack filling for other roads such as North Groton Road.

Article 5

It was explained that the Board encumbered money to use a grinder to grind up the stock pile behind the garage to be placed on Province Road. Miles asked what the cost difference was between how much it would have cost to just buy the ledge pak. Glen said that ledge pak is \$14 yard. Miles doesn't think there is a lot stock piled down there. He thinks there are other ways we can get rid of this. Christina said that that may be true, but we have to take care of what is down there now. Dave asked if we would be storing the material after it is grinded. It was explained it would be grinded and then loaded and put right out on Province Road.

Article 6

Miles wanted to know what this entails and who would be taking care of it. It was explained that this is for the two Town signs and the monument. Christina mentioned that whoever takes care of the Town property, mowing etc, would take care of it. Sara explained that she asked for the plants and flowers that needed little to no maintenance.

Article 7

This needs to be changed to Dodge instead of the backhoe. Dave asked if there would be any more costs or if this covers it all. This does cover it all.

Sharon Nelson asked what a York rake is and it was explained that it is a larger, heavier steel rake that is used for gravel roads.

Article 8

Dave stated that this is about the 6th time the fence has been replaced. Christina said it hasn't been replaced in the last 6 years and Miles said when he was there it was only repaired.

Article 9

Pam asked if we used this for the Police Cruiser and if so there shouldn't be that amount of funds in there. Sara will contact John Lyford to see how we can fix this. In reality \$20,000.00 should have been used towards the new vehicle, which would be moved from the Capital Reserve Fund to the General Fund.

Article 10

Christina explained that we did purchase the property in 2015. This year the Board will be looking at developing a plan and chose not to make any changes to the property yet, as we do not have a plan. The Board felt that additional funds could be placed into the fund for the future project.

Miles asked what the first step will be that the Town takes. Christina explained that after the Town Meeting the Board will meet on the project and start prioritizing.

Article 11

Pam asked if this was our revaluation year. Christina explained that it is and the quoted cost is \$26,900.00 but could go up to \$28,000.00. Christina stated that it is her recommendation to put the next five year cycle out for bid, but the Town should continue to put money away to lessen the overall costs of a revaluation.

Article 13

Christina explained that we did use \$7,711.00 in January 2015 from this fund to repair storm damage from 2014 on Edgar Albert Rd.

Article 14

Christina explained the latest report we received from the Department of Transportation (DOT) isn't very good. They are not closing the bridge but it is in need of repairs. It is still classified as an E2 bridge with has an 80,000 pound weight limit. Miles said he remembers that if the numerical value drops it would have been red-listed by the State but it was not on the last red-list reporting. Miles thinks the inspection he is referring too was done was in 2009. Miles said that there was a company that we were going to work with on the bridge at that time. This will be added to our priority list.

Article 15

Christina explained that Alexandria is finished but not finalized but the payment will be coming out of this fund. Alan Barnard was scheduled to be here but there was a printing issue. Sara will follow up to see where this stands. Hebron is planned to be completed next and to begin in 2016.

Article 18

Sharon Nelson wanted to say that the Groton Historical Society (GHS) has given things to the Town of Groton and she sees that some people are reluctant to support. Pam asked what Select Board member is not in favor. Bob states that it is him. He doesn't think money should be taken from the Town to research things or to supplement non-profits.

Article 19

Pam asked Bob what the difference is for him between this and GHS since it is non-profit organization. Bob explains that each year the quality of Newfound Lake is deteriorating and that hurts everyone. Miles said Newfound Lake Region Association (NLRA) will keep taking money so why did it increase. Christina explained that they have asked for more every year and the Boards have only submitted the \$500. This year the Board is leaving it up to the Town. *Article 20*
Christina explained that we received a petitioned warrant article that will now become article 20. This was to add \$6,000.00 to the material line in the Highway budget.

Article 1

Christina went over who was running for the different positions.
Selectman for 3 years: Christina Goodwin
Moderator for 2 years: no candidates; looking for a write-in candidate
Town Clerk/Tax Collector for 2 years: Ruth Millett
Trustee of Trust Fund for three years: no candidates; looking for a write-in candidate
Planning Board for 3 years: Elizabeth Jespersen and Glen Hansen
Town Auditor for 1 year: no candidates; looking for a write-in candidate
Cemetery Trustee for 3 years: Otto Jespersen
Library Trustee for 1 year: Otto Jespersen
Library Trustee for 2 years: Elizabeth Jespersen
Library Trustee for 3 years: Sharon Nelson
Zoning Board for 3 year: Otto Jespersen, Glen Hansen and Frank Grelle
Supervisor of the Checklist for 6 years: Pamela Hamel
Supervisor of the Checklist for 2 years: no one; looking for a write-in candidate

Article 21

The article 20 will be changed to 21.

Dry Hydrants

Slim is upset that there was no warrant article for dry hydrants or cisterns. We did receive the grant but we didn't have enough information to move forward. The Board chose not to have as a Warrant Article until a more definitive plan is developed and this will be a priority for 2016.

Audrey- Hebron Fire Department

Audrey explained that the Hebron Fire Department has started the 911 signs installation as they are having trouble finding some people. The \$15.00 covers the sign only and Hebron is covering the installation charges. Elizabeth Jespersen asked how the signs on private roads would be installed. Audrey mentioned that is why they are installing them so they can see where there is a good place to put them.

Christina motioned to close the budget hearing at 8:30pm, John 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant