

TOWN OF GROTON
PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED BUDGET
February 5, 2019

In Attendance: John Rescigno, Ron Madan and Sara Smith (Administrative Assistant)

Audience Members Present

John called the Public Hearing on the Budget and Warrant Articles to order at 6:00pm.

John reported that the Operating Budget increased by approximately \$38,268.

Budget

The proposed budget was discussed by the following sections:

Executive

The proposed budget is \$60,933, an increase of \$989.00. John explained that there was a proposed merit increase as part of the evaluation process. Merit increases ranged from 0% to 3% for staff. The Moderator decreased due to less elections.

Election, Registration, Vital Statistics

The proposed budget is \$55,304, a decrease of \$803. There was an increase here were for merit increases as well.

The supplies/advertising election increased by \$1,150 because Tony got a quote for voting booths since we need new ones.

The ballot clerks and checklist supervisors decreased because there were more elections last year than there is this year.

Financial Administration

The proposed budget is \$24,160, an increase of \$4,600. The assessing increased because when we did the budget last year, we hadn't done the new contract with Avitar yet. This was done later in the year which is why we were over in this line. The increase should eliminate us from going over next year.

Legal Expenses

The proposed budget is \$11,000, which stayed the same.

Personnel Administration

The proposed budget is \$87,750, which is an increase of \$9,200. The Health Insurance costs went up for 2019 and we added in a family plan for the Police Department which we didn't have before in case we replace the Chief. This could change depending on what is decided for the Police Department since the Police Department is included right now.

Planning/Zoning

The proposed budget is \$5,777, a decrease of \$17,775. It was explained this decrease is on the line for Planning Board Master Plan & Zoning due to the zoning ordinance being done.

A resident asked where the money would be shown if the zoning passes and this needs to be regulated. He said he asked at the meeting on it and was told the Selectmen would regulate this. It was explained that this is true and would most likely be under legal if needed.

General Government Buildings

The proposed budget is \$24,105, an increase of \$400 for the Transfer Station to continue the painting and other projects.

Cemeteries

The proposed budget is \$6,151, a decrease of \$975 which is the mileage and the site work for River Road cemetery. There is only \$1 for the fuel line because the Cemetery Trustees will be contracting the lawn services out this year so the fuel will be included in that.

Ruth asked if the site work is done on River Road Cemetery. This has not been completed. Ruth asked why this was decreased then. It was explained that there was \$2000 budgeted last year and this wasn't used and they didn't put in the request to encumber the funds so the Selectmen didn't feel it was responsible to put \$2000 on this line again when it wasn't used the previous year. There will be \$1000 that they can use.

General Insurance

The proposed budget is \$15,294, an increase of \$1,254 which was an increase in costs for 2019 for both the Property & Liability Insurance and the Workmen's Compensation line.

Advertising and Regional Associations

The proposed budget is \$2,425, a decrease of \$350.

Other General Government

The proposed budget is \$9,651, an increase of \$4,580 and this is due the grant line increasing by \$4,500. We received a grant for the update to the Hazard Mitigation Plan but we need to pay for it upfront and then will be reimbursed which is why there is a note that says offset by revenues.

Police

The proposed budget is \$107,748, a decrease of \$8,067 which was in the salary. It was explained that this could be amended at the Town meeting depending on what people decide they want to do with the Police Department.

Fire and Ambulance

The proposed budget is \$101,350, an increase of \$27,554 which is \$23,000 increase for contracted services with Hebron, a \$4,000 increase for Rumney and a \$554 increase for Lakes Region Mutual Aid.

Pam asked about the Hebron contract and if it is three years and it is.

Miles asked about the charges increasing for Hebron. John explained that the Select Board met with Hebron Select Board and Fire Chief and there are more calls for Groton and all costs were gone over. 51% of the calls are for Groton so our cost has gone up to cover equipment, hours worked, etc. John made sure to confirm that since we are paying for more that we will be more involved in the process and decisions of purchases, etc. We will not be able to vote but we can be there for the discussions.

Pam also asked about Rumney and if they are going to respond to more calls as their track record is pretty bad. Pam wanted to know how many calls are they to respond to for us to have to pay this. She does not feel comfortable paying the money if they are not responding. John mentioned that the Select Board did meet with Rumney and went over all of the Town's concerns. They were very short staffed and had a new person in charge that was working on staffing. They assured us that it will be better. Sara also explained that the increases were for breathing apparatus, building repairs, vehicle repairs, etc.

Emergency Management

The proposed budget is \$903, which stayed the same as last year.

Highway Administration

The proposed budget is \$79,217, an increase of \$8,442 which is in the Road Agent Wages and the assistant wages due to merit increases.

Highways and Streets

The proposed budget is \$80,301, an increase of \$5,400 which is in the material line, salt, sand, deicer and the tree maintenance. The gas line increased due to the new truck but this also allowed the diesel line to decrease to even it out.

Streets and Lighting

The proposed budget is \$1,100, which stayed the same as last year.

Sanitation – Monitoring

The proposed budget is \$6,375, which is a decrease of \$500.

Miles asked why this is on the budget every year still as he thought the amount of testing was supposed to decrease. It was explained that there is a new PFAS testing that has to be done.

Solid Waste Disposal

The proposed budget is \$65,261, an increase of \$3,876 attributed to the increase in transportation costs/solid waste.

Health Administration

The proposed budget is \$1,588, which stayed the same as last year.

Health Agencies and Hospitals

The proposed budget is \$4,655, an increase of \$444 which was because we added CADY this year which is \$500.

Welfare

The proposed budget is \$7,044, which stayed the same as last year. It was explained that even though we didn't use the entire budget last year for the vendor payments that we still didn't decrease the vendor payments. If someone qualifies for assistance we are required to provide it and are not able to predict what each year will bring.

Culture and Recreation

The proposed budget is \$8,560, a decrease of \$1.

Parks and Recreation

The proposed budget is \$5,989, which stayed the same as last year.

Miles mentioned that the maintenance of parks was under this year and asked if this meant that it was mowed less. Bubba explained that it was mowed just as much if not more than usual but he didn't realize this should be entered differently on the timesheets. When Sara mentioned this to him it was too much to remember exactly how much time was spent mowing to correct this so it will be accurately reflected this year.

Library

The proposed budget is \$501, which stayed the same as last year.

Patriotic Purposes

The proposed budget is \$100, which stayed the same as last year.

Conservation

The proposed budget is \$1,970, a decrease of \$1.

Warrant Articles

The proposed Warrant Articles were reviewed:

Article 1: The Town Officials

The open positions are:

SELECT PERSON

1 position for 1 year- Tony Albert

1 position for 3 years- Ron Madan

PLANNING BOARD MEMBERS

2 positions for 3 years- Kristina Brodie, Glen Hansen and Dave Madden

CEMETERY TRUSTEE

1 position for 3 years- open

LOCAL AUDITOR

1 position for 1 year- Ann Joyce

MODERATOR

1 position for 2 years- Tony Albert

LIBRARY TRUSTEE

1 position for 1 year- open

1 position for 3 years- open

ZONING BOARD

1 position for 1 year- Ann Joyce

2 positions for 2 years- open

2 positions for 3 years- Glen Hansen

Candidate night will be March 5, 2019 at the beginning of the Select Board Meeting.

Article 2: Zoning Ordinance.

Are you in favor of the adoption of the Zoning Ordinance as proposed by the Planning Board and the repeal of the 2007 (ratified in 2009) Zoning Ordinance, the 2015 Ordinance for Large Wind Energy Systems - LWES and the Flood Plain Development Regulations of 2007?

The effect of a yes vote can be summarized as follows:

1. Replace the current zoning with the proposed Zoning Ordinance, known hereafter as The Town of Groton Zoning Ordinance that will:
 - a) Establish zoning districts and uses within each district (Rural Residential, Forestry and Conservation, Renewable Energy and Forestry and a Floodplain & Aquifer Overlay),
 - b) set lot size and lot dimensional requirements and
 - c) create performance standards
 2. Integrate and revise the Flood Plain Development Regulations of 2007 in Article 8.
 3. Integrate and revise the 2015 Ordinance for Large Wind Energy Systems in Article 9
- Should the proposed Zoning Ordinance fail to receive an affirmative vote, the 2007 Zoning Ordinance, the LWES and Floodplain Zoning, will continue in their present forms as Groton's zoning.

John mentioned that this has been gone over during the Planning Board meetings and Public Hearings.

Article 3: \$184,000 for Hazard Mitigation Grant match

This is for the purpose of ensuring the availability of matching funds for a Hazard Mitigation Grant the Town applied for regarding the Sculptured Rocks Road culverts project. The project total cost is estimated to be \$735,282.00 with the 75% federal share being \$551,461.50 and the Town's 25% share being \$183,820.50.

John said that there are three culverts that need to be replaced with box culverts. Sara explained the only reason this grant is open is because of the October storm and when there are FEMA funds it opens an opportunity for Hazard Mitigation Grants. If we do not apply for this now, we may not have an opportunity again. These are the culverts that are causing damage to Sculptured Rocks Road. The FEMA funding covers the damage that was done back to the condition it was before but doesn't allow money for funding for extra work to avoid the problem from happening again. That is what this grant is for. These culverts are too small.

Peter Smith asked if the price could go higher. Sara explained that an engineer came out and volunteered his time and he gave the estimate. Bubba said there is no way to know if this would change as it always can but it is a fairly accurate.

Miles asked which culverts these are. Bubba explained that they are the one by Kenny Martell's, the one that has been replaced a few times past Sculptured Rocks and one by Seven Kids Lane.

Article 4: \$130,000 for repair/reconstruction of North Groton Road

This would be to continue work on the section that was reclaimed and paved in 2018. This requires a top coat and completing this section.

Article 5: \$86,000 FEMA funding match

This is for the Town's 25% portion of the cost to repair damages to Town Roads from the October 2017 storm which we are working with FEMA. It is anticipated that the remaining costs will be absorbed by FEMA.

Ann mentioned that we have already spent money on this so she was asking if this was taken into consideration. Sara explained that it was. The entire cost of the project was \$494,119.52 so FEMA's 75% would be \$370,589.64 and the Town's 25% would be \$123,529.88. We have paid some costs already which is why we are not asking for the entire \$123,529.88. We looked at what we have spent already and what was left and the \$86,000 is what is left to pay.

Slim asked if there are certain roads that this can be used for. Sara explained that it can only be used on the roads that were damaged in the October storm.

Article 6: \$54,000 for previously established Capital Reserve Funds

Truck/Sander CR Fund (Dec. 31, 2018 balance: \$13,588.55): \$5,000

Town House CR Fund (Dec. 31, 2018 balance: \$41,252.02): \$5,000

Disaster Relief CR Fund (Dec. 31, 2018 balance: \$29,197.88): \$5,000

Heavy Equipment CR Fund (Dec. 31, 2018 balance: \$55,828.43): \$5,000

Atwell/Orange Brook CR Fund (Dec. 31, 2018 balance: \$4,113.03): \$2,000

Assessing Reval CR Fund (Dec. 31, 2018 balance: \$20,123.54): \$7,000

Public Works CR Fund (Dec. 31, 2018 balance: \$25,837.37): \$25,000

Total Capital Reserve Funds \$54,000

Miles asked why the Select Board left out the new one for Electronic Equipment that was voted on last year. It was explained that there was \$5000 put in there last year and with all of the other items on the warrant this year they thought it would be best to not put anything in it this year and see if we need to use the \$5000.

Article 7: \$25,000 repair of Groton roads

This is for the repair of Groton roads. It was previously for Groton paved roads but the paved was removed so it can be used on all of Groton town-maintained roads including gravel roads, ditching, etc.

Article 8: \$2,500 Old Home Day Fireworks display

Due to liability reasons, the Town was informed last year that town employees should not be letting off fireworks, that it should be a company that is trained to do so.

Ruth asked if there were donations last year for Old Home Day. It was explained that there were donations but the donations collected go towards all of Groton Old Home Day. Each year the Old Home Day Committee and Sara apply for community support from Groton Wind but we don't want to count on this in case they don't do it.

Miles wanted to confirm that we do still get support from Groton Wind so he was happy to hear this. Miles also asked who voted against this. It was explained that it was Kyle.

Slim asked why Kyle's votes are shown when he isn't a Selectmen anymore. It was explained that we reached out to the attorney who said that since he was here when the voting took place that they should be left in there.

Sherry asked if the Old Home Day Committee has someone in mind. It was explained that they have reached out to companies and that is how they got this amount.

Article 9: \$1,350 Town Pound signs and posts

This is to purchase signs and posts for them to put out at the Town Pound which explains the history of the pound.

Slim said that Groton Historical Society wants to make this more accessible. These signs will explain the history of the pound. Slim also mentioned that they may be amending this amount at Town Meeting as he may be donating some money.

Ruth asked if this is premature not knowing when the construction of the Town Garage is going to happen. It was explained that the Town pound will still be there even if the Town Garage and since we don't have a date that the town garage will go in and it could be awhile, the Select Board thought it would be important to move forward with the improvements to the Pound.

Peter Smith asked how many signs. Slim explained that there will be five signs. They also already put in a walkway and there will be tree work done that will be done at now cost.

Ann asked who voted against this. It was explained that it was Kyle.

Sherry asked if we can remove that this was submitted by the Groton Historical Society since the Select Board asked them to look into this. It was agreed to remove that it was submitted by the GHS

Miles asked what the signs are made of. It was explained they are metal signs on pressure treated wood.

Article 10: \$1,000 – Groton Historical Society (GHS)

This is the same as last year.

Article 11: \$1,000 – Newfound Lake Region Association (NLRA)

This is the same as last year. Sara and Bubba mentioned that they did a lot of work with NLRA and they have been very helpful.

Article 12: Abolish the Police Department

There was a meeting to discuss the future of the Police Department on January 15, 2019 during a Select Board meeting where the Town came out and talked about this.

John mentioned that the Select Board does not support this 1-2. It was asked who supports it and John said he did but it ties in with 13, so they can discuss the two together.

Article 13: Contract Police Services with the State Police and/or Sheriff's Department for Police Coverage.

To see if the Town would like to contract police services with the State Police and/or Sheriff's Department for coverage if the Town decides they do not want to hire our own Police Chief or if they vote to abolish the Police Department.

John said that he thinks that with the Police budget being over \$100,000 and it being a small town, that money could be used to maintain the roads, the town garage that needs to be built etc. John does understand that if it is gone forever it would be hard to get it back so it would be best to keep it for another year and contract services.

A resident asked if we contract services if there will be traffic control. John mentioned State Police responds to emergencies and right now the Sheriff covers weekend blocks and does do patrol. The resident lives on Sculptured Rocks Road and was concerned because of the speed on that road in the summer time. It was explained that if there are contracted services this would be patrolled. John mentioned that we are only doing one block now but we would have more blocks in the summer and let them know of areas to watch.

Miles said that this is going to be his 22nd town meeting and this is the third time there has been a warrant article to abolish the Police Department so this is not new territory. Miles made his career in law enforcement. He would like to know how productive these four hours have been and if it is enforcing the

law or just working. Sara will ask the Sheriff's Department for the numbers since they have been covering such as how many tickets, arrests, etc.

Sherry mentioned that at the last meeting a resident mentioned that the weekend before that meeting the Sheriff covering was straight out, very busy and even responded to a snowmobile accident.

John mentioned the other issue is that we have always had a hard time filling the positions in the Police Department.

Pam asked if we could not abolish the Police Department and let it sit for a year and use the Sheriff Department for a year and see how that goes. She said they are also waiting for answers from last meeting on prosecution, dispatch, etc. Sara explained that she reached out to find these out and is waiting for answers. There is a meeting in the works with the Sheriff's Department which should help answer these. Sara has also reached out to Towns that do not have a department to see how they handle things and is waiting to hear back.

Article 14: Stop recycling at the Transfer Station

There has been an increase in the cost of recycling in China. Sara had been working with Cyndie at Waste Management regarding the costs and increases for 2019. They can extend the lower price through August but even with this it almost triples what we paid in 2018, and it will go up even more in August. In 2018 we paid Waste Management \$4,748.45 for all services. With the costs that she gave us it will go up to at least \$11,199.60, this does not include the increase after August. Knowing this information that Select Board needs to decide if they support the warrant article to stop recycling or not.

Norm mentioned that the we have a current contract through March and we don't know the costs after that.

Sherry asked where it all goes right now. Norm said that it goes to Bethlehem.

Miles asked if we would still separate cardboard and it was explained that it is not worth it.

Peter Smith asked if we stop recycling, would we still collect cans. Norm said yes, we should.

Norm said we are paying for recycling and 75% in the recycling goes to the landfill anyway.

Miles said China stopped accepting worlds recycling and now shipping to other countries and we don't know what is happening to it there.

John said it was hard to vote for this because it seems unnatural but with it costing so much and not knowing what is happening with it doesn't seem worth it for the Town.

Article 15: Contract with Hebron for Library Services pursuant to RSA 202-A:4-b for one year

This was submitted by the Library Trustees which is for the same contract as last year. There will be no funds from the Town's budget for this; the funds will come from the Library Trustees account.

Article 16: The budget.

Miles asked why this was moved to the end; it was explained to go after the Police in case it is abolished and this will change the budget.

Article 17: Transact any other business that may legally come before the Town

Peter Smith asked why there wasn't money put for town garage. It was explained that it is in Article 6 for \$25,000 towards Public Works. This can be amended especially if something else has turned down.

School items

John mentioned that the school deliberative session was Saturday and the budget is \$23 million and there was only 5 people from the Town there besides the 6 that had to be here. We need people from Town to go there and vote. There is \$800,000 still stuck in the budget that shouldn't be there.

Slim warned the Town not to automatically vote for the default budget because it is higher this year.

Deliberation

The Selectmen deliberated on the following items.

- The only change is to remove the recommendation by the Groton Historical Society.
- It was agreed that Sara will make the change and let the Select Board know when it is ready to be signed. Also, the MS-636 will need to be signed. **John motioned to come in and sign the warrant and the MS-636 once it is ready, Ron 2nd, so voted.**

Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to close the public hearing at 7:25pm, Ron 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant