

Town of Groton
Select Board Work Session Minutes
November 10, 2020

In attendance: John Rescigno, Tony Albert, Ron Madan and Sara Smith (Administrative Assistant - AA)

John called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

John motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (c) at 5:45pm, Tony 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to return to public session at 6:05pm, Tony 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to seal the non-public minutes, Tony 2nd, so voted.

Meeting with Norm

Norm went over the following with the Select Board:

- He presented the flyer with his suggested changes for costs. The Select Board agreed with the costs and thinks they should go into effect January 1, 2021. Sara will update the flyer, put it online and make copies so that Richard can start handing them out and letting people know of the increases.
- Norm asked if Sara can create a handout with Ruth's contact information that they can give to people that need dump stickers. Sara will create this and give this to Richard.
- Norm asked if the hours for the Transfer Station can be changed for the winter since it is so dark there. He would like to keep Saturday the same and change the hours on Sunday and Wednesday. The Select Board didn't think changing the hours would be a good idea but told Norm to look into some better lighting for the bins. Norm will reach out to Paul Morrison.
- Norm said he doesn't think that Jeremy Haney will get to the cement pads this year. The Select Board said this needs to get done if possible. Tony will talk to Jeremy.

Tax Rate

The Town received the preliminary tax rate so the Select Board wanted to go over options to lower it for the Town. Sara explained she worked hard with the DRA and auditors to make sure all information is accurate and it is. Without adjusting the Town's portion, the tax rate would have gone up \$3.13 making the tax rate \$19.96 with the Town portion being \$5.61, the county being \$2.60, the local education being \$7.96 and the state education being \$3.79.

There is no way around it, the tax rate will be going up but it will depend on what you decide on Tuesday for how much it will go up. I think it is best to not mention the tax rate to anyone yet until you all meet and make a decision, that way the Town doesn't hear rumors or panic. Unfortunately, the timing of the tax rate going up is unfortunate since we are trying to pass the building this year so it may leave a bad taste for some people and they may vote due to that. However, some things to keep in mind is that this is the 2020 tax rate which goes by the budget and revenues for 2020 and the building will be for 2021. Also, we should be completing our projects this year and not carrying money over so we will have more money in the fund balance next year to be able to apply to the 2021 taxes. Once the budget and warrant articles are decided on, we can create spreadsheets to show the differences from the year before and hopefully 2021 will come in lower to show the taxes will be lower in 2021.

The one thing that is different this year is that we do not have as much money as we have had in the past to apply from the fund balance. Our total fund balance is \$189,977. DRA recommends keeping a minimum of 5% in that fund balance which would be \$138,056 which means we would only be able to apply about \$50,000 to the tax rate. The Select Board can apply more than that, it is up to you all if you want to which is why I gave examples and tabs to apply up to \$175,000.00. You want to keep money in the fund balance a positive fund balance serves three important functions:

- Eliminates the need for short term borrowing – cash flow
- Used to lower taxes to smooth out major changes
- Unanticipated emergencies or opportunities.

The reason we don't have as much to start with is since in 2019 we had a warrant article for the Culvert Grant, which the town raised \$183,821 for this and since we didn't use it in 2019 due to July 2019 storm, the money has to be considered an assigned fund balance since it was being used in 2020 but wasn't in the 2020 budget since it was budgeted in 2019. The Assigned Fund balance represents the money set aside for warrant articles of unused tax dollars raised for those projects. Since the Town raised the money for the project it needs to be set aside until the project is complete and/or closed. The amount is associated with Warrant #3 which was for 183,821. Therefore, the fund balance had \$373,798 but since \$183,821 was assigned for the culvert grant project, that leaves us with \$189,977 in the fund balance.

Sara provided the following options:

- If we apply \$50,000, it would bring the Town rate to \$5.014 and the total tax rate to \$19.36
 - This would leave \$139,977 in the fund balance
 - This would be an increase in the Town rate from last year of \$2.944
 - This would be an increase in the total tax rate from last year of \$2.53
- If we apply \$75,000, it would bring the Town rate to \$4.714 and the total tax rate to \$19.06
 - This would leave \$114,977 in the fund balance
 - This would be an increase in the Town rate from last year of \$2.644
 - This would be an increase in the total tax rate from last year of \$2.23
- If we apply \$100,000, it would bring the Town rate to \$4.414 and the total tax rate to \$18.76
 - This would leave \$89,977 in the fund balance
 - This would be an increase in the Town rate from last year of \$2.344
 - This would be an increase in the total tax rate from last year of \$1.93
- If we apply \$125,000, it would bring the Town rate to \$4.114 and the total tax rate to \$18.46
 - This would leave \$64,977 in the fund balance
 - This would be an increase in the Town rate from last year of \$2.044
 - This would be an increase in the total tax rate from last year of \$1.63
- If we apply \$150,000, it would bring the Town rate to \$3.814 and the total tax rate to \$18.16
 - This would leave \$39,977 in the fund balance
 - This would be an increase in the Town rate from last year of \$1.744
 - This would be an increase in the total tax rate from last year of \$1.33
- If we apply \$175,000, it would bring the Town rate to \$3.515 and the total tax rate to \$17.86
 - This would leave \$14,977 in the fund balance
 - This would be an increase in the Town rate from last year of \$1.445
 - This would be an increase in the total tax rate from last year of \$1.03

As general guidance, unassigned fund balance in the general fund should be no less than one month of operating revenues or operating expenditures.

It was agreed to use the overlay of \$5,000.00 and apply \$150,000.00 from the unassigned fund balance to bring the tax rate to \$18.16. **John motioned use the overlay of \$5,000.00 and to apply \$150,000.00 from the unassigned fund balance to the tax rate, to approve the submission of the final tax rate to the DRA, and to come in and sign the tax warrant when it is ready, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Budget Meetings

Town Clerk/ Tax Collector

Ruth met with the Select Board to discuss her budget.

TC Salary

Ruth proposed an increase \$1,394 bringing this to \$32,000.00. Sara explained a 3% increase would be \$918.18 a year which would bring this to \$31,524.18.

Deputy Wage

Ruth originally proposed \$11,000 but it was agreed to keep it \$9,000.00.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Dues

Ruth proposed an increase of \$80.00 making this \$140.00 due to Clerk and Deputy dues.

Town Clerk Expenses

Ruth proposed an increase of \$200.00 making this \$1,200.00.

Tax Collector Expenses

Stayed the same

Workshops/Seminars

Stayed the same

Telephone/Internet

Ruth proposed an increase of \$550.00 making this \$2,000.00 due to charges from IDC

Computer Maintenance/Software

Stayed the same

Advertising

Stayed the same

Supplies-general

Stayed the same

Postage

Stayed the same

Election supplies/Expense (ballots, advertising, etc.)

Stayed the same

Ballot Clerks

This is a different budget meeting and will be done in the Moderator's budget.

Checklist Supervisors

This was a different budget meeting and will be done in the Supervisor's budget.

Mileage

Ruth proposed a decrease of \$500.00 making this \$1,500.00.

Other items:

Ruth got a \$5,000.00 grant. She had looked into getting a ballot counting machine which would be \$3,500 but there are a lot of other expenses with it, like \$750 for the program card each time. They also stopped making these in 2007 so there will be other changes coming down the road. It was agreed that this was not needed due to the other expenses and work that will go along with it. The Select Board and Ruth agreed to use this for the extra election costs. Sara and Ruth will sit together and work on this.

The Select Board was okay with the Town Clerk/Tax Collector budget as is.

Highway Budget

Robert Ellis met with the Select Board to discuss the Highway Budget.

Highway Administration

Wages

Bubba proposed an increase of \$1,356.00 making it \$46,865.00. This is to reflect the 3% increase.

Assistants

Stayed the same.

Telephone

Stayed the same

Training/CDL Testing

Stayed the same

Electricity

Stayed the same

Heating fuel

Stayed the same

Mileage

Stayed the same

Membership/Dues

Stayed the same

Supplies

Stayed the same

Highway Streets

Vehicle-Equip Maintenance and Repairs

Stayed the same

Contracted Services/Equipment Rentals

Stayed the same

Material

Stayed the same

Signs

Stayed the same

Uniforms

Stayed the same

Tools & Equipment Purchases

Stayed the same

Gas

Stayed the same

Diesel

Bubba proposed a decrease of \$3,000.00 making it \$5,500.00.

Salt, Sand, Deicer

Bubba proposed an increase of \$4,000.00 making it \$24,000.00.

Hydrants

Stayed the same

Culverts

Stayed the same

Safety

Stayed the same

Tree Maintenance

Stayed the same

Utility Charges, street lights

Stayed the same

Other questions/concerns

- Bubba explained that he added Groton Roads line to the budget since the townspeople recommended this last year at the Town meeting since it is on the warrant every year. He would like \$25,000.00 for that line.
- Paving has been completed for this.
- The guardrails were completed this week for the three culverts that were done this year.
- We still have grant money for truck. The broom was \$16,000 which was too much money. The sander is over 25 years old. We can get a new sander with everything and installed for \$7,500.00. Sara will check with USDA to make sure the sander would be covered.
- The sprayer for the new truck will be here tomorrow.

The Select Board was okay with the Highway budget as is.

Fire Budget

Sara met with the Select Board to discuss the Fire budget.

Stipend

Sara proposed decreasing this by \$499.00 making it \$1.00 since we no longer have a Fire Chief.

Communications/Training

The Select Board agreed to make this \$1.00.

Equipment

Sara proposed decreasing this by \$200.00 making it \$200.00 since we no longer have a Fire Chief. We could even go lower but she didn't know if the Select Board wanted to leave some in there in case something comes up.

Contracted Services- Hebron

Stayed the same

Contracted Services- Rumney

Stayed the same; haven't yet received the updated numbers.

Lakes Region Mutual Aid

Stayed the same

Dues

Stayed the same.

Mileage

Sara proposed decreasing this by \$49.00 making it \$1.00 since we no longer have a Fire Chief.

Advertising Regional Association Dues

Sara met with the Select Board to discuss this budget.

Advertising

Stayed the same

Dues

Stayed the same

GHS

Stayed the same

NLRA

Stayed the same

The Select Board was okay with the Advertising budget as is.

Executive

AA Wages

The Select Board proposed an increase \$1,394.00 making it \$47,279.00 to have room for a 3% merit increase of \$0.67 for 2021.

Selectmen's stipend

Stayed the same

Moderator/Assistant wages

Waiting to get Moderators budget

Other Town Meeting expenses

Stayed the same

Contracted services (web hosting)

Stayed the same

Workshops/Seminars

Stayed the same

Telephone/Internet

Stayed the same

Mileage

Stayed the same

Supplies

Stayed the same

Postage

Stayed the same

Furniture/Fixtures

Stayed the same

Office Equipment Maintenance

Stayed the same

Hiring expenses

Stayed the same

Computer/Computer software maintenance

Stayed the same

Other office expenses (CU recordings, etc.)

Stayed the same

The Select Board was okay with the Executive budget as is.

Financial Administration

Financial Reporting (Town Report)

Stayed the same

Auditing

Stayed the same; waiting for costs

Assessing

Stayed the same

Treasurer

This was gone over at a prior meeting with Pam Hamel.

The Select Board was okay with the Financial Administration budget as is.

General Government Buildings

Town Hall Repairs & Maintenance

Stayed the same

Town Hall Repairs & Maintenance Wages

Stayed the same

Town Garage Repairs & Maintenance

Stayed the same

Transfer Station Repairs & Maintenance

A decrease of \$700.00 was proposed since the staining if the building is complete.

Cleaning supplies

Stayed the same

General Supplies

Stayed the same

Contracted Services (security, elevator)

Sara proposed an increase of \$495.00 to cover the increase in the elevator maintenance costs.

Town House Electric

Stayed the same

Town Heat

Stayed the same

The Select Board was okay with the General Government Buildings budget as is.

General Insurance

Property/Liability

Sara proposed an increase of \$795 making it \$9,633.00 due to the quote we received in the mail from Primex showing the increase.

Workers Compensation

Sara proposed a decrease of \$927.00 making it \$5,029.00 due to the quote we received in the mail from Primex showing the increase.

Unemployment Compensation

Stayed the same

The Select Board was okay with the General Insurance budget as is.

Health

Salary

Stayed the same

Supplies/postage

Stayed the same

Mileage

Stayed the same

Training

Stayed the same

Dues

Stayed the same

Water testing

It was agreed to make this \$100.00.

Legal

Stayed the same

Transport Central

Transport Central requested the same amount of \$20.00 for 2021.

CADY

CADY requested an increase of \$500.00 making it \$1,000.00 for 2021. Two years ago, we increased from \$250.00 to \$500.00. It was agreed to keep it \$500.00.

CASA

CASA requested an increase of \$250.00 making it \$500.00 for 2021. They requested this last year as well and it was agreed not to increase it and keep it at \$250.00.

Mid-State Health

Stayed the same; we haven't received the request for 2021 yet.

Pemi-Baker

Pemi-Baker requested an increase of \$14.00 making it \$2,837.00 for 2021. The Select Board is okay with the increase.

Voices against Violence

Voices Against Violence requested an increase of \$50.00 making it \$550.00 for 2021. They requested this last year as well and it was agreed not to increase it and to keep it at \$500.00.

Genesis

Stayed the same

The Select Board was okay with the Health budget as is.

Legal

Claims, Judgements and/or Settlements

Stayed the same

Attorney Fees- General Advice

Stayed the same

Junkyard Dog

Stayed the same

The Select Board was okay with the Legal budget as is.

Other General Government

Exigent/Hazardous Circumstances

Stayed the same

Forestry

Sara proposed a decrease of \$200.00 making it \$1,000.

Tax Mapping

Stayed the same

Grants/Engineering

Stayed the same

The Select Board was okay with the Other General Government budget as is.

Parks Recreation

Maintenance of Parks

It was agreed to lower this to \$500.00.

Maintenance of Recreational Facilities

Stayed the same

Porta Potty

Stayed the same

Advertising

Stayed the same

Tapply Thompson Center

Stayed the same

Old Home Day
Stayed the same

Electricity
Stayed the same

The Select Board was okay with the Parks and Recreation budget as is.

Patriotic Purposes

Patriotic Purposes
Stayed the same

The Select Board was okay with the Patriotic purposes budget as is.

Personnel

Benefits not allocated to department (NHRS)

Sara proposed an increase of \$600.00 making it \$10,600.00 which reflects the increase in NHRS costs to match increase in pay.

Life and Disability
Stayed the same

Medical Insurance
Stayed the same- waiting on 2021 numbers

FICA/Medicare
Stayed the same

The Select Board was okay with the Personnel budget as is.

Welfare

Dues
Stayed the same

Direct Assistance
Stayed the same

Tri-County Community Action
Stayed the same

Grafton County Senior Citizens
Stayed the same

Other Vendor Payments
It was agreed to reduce this to \$3,000.00.

The Select Board was okay with the Welfare budget as is.

Other Budget Items

- Bridge House: This is a program serving veterans from housing through hospice. We have never donated to them before and they are asking \$2,000.00. Hold off this year.
- Day Away Program: This is a day care program for adults in the early stages of Alzheimer's or dementia. They are requesting \$500.00. The Select Board decided to hold off on this for this year.
- Forester request for Town owned lands: The Forester emailed and asked if the Town had any interest in sustainable maintenance and planning for the forests owned by the Town. It was agreed that the Town does not have any interest this year.
- The NH Lottery is requesting us to consider Keno. We agreed not to last year and agree not to this year as well. There is really no place in Groton for this to take place.
- The American Red Cross is also requesting money, but we have opted out the last few years. It was agreed to hold off again this year.

Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to adjourn at 6:57pm, Ron 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant