

Town of Groton  
Select Board Work Session Minutes  
November 1, 2022

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

**Absent: Tony Albert**

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

***Budget Meetings***

**Town Clerk/ Tax Collector**

Ruth met with the Select Board to discuss her budget.

TC Salary

Ruth proposed an increase \$975.00 bringing this to \$33,450.00 which is a 3% increase

Deputy Wage

Stayed the same

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Dues

Stayed the same

Town Clerk Expenses

Stayed the same

Tax Collector Expenses

Stayed the same; she did change from Total Notice to Newfound Title.

Workshops/Seminars

Stayed the same

Telephone/Internet

Stayed the same

Computer Maintenance/Software

Ruth proposed an increase of \$500.00 making this \$2,000.00. She will need a new printer/copier/fax machine. This could come out of the CRF depending on the price. We will revisit this.

Advertising

Stayed the same

Supplies-general

Stayed the same

Postage

Ruth proposed an increase of \$600.00 making this \$2,000.00. There is an increase in the cost of postage and in registered letters.

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 an increase of \$200.00 making this \$1,000.00.

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 \$1,449.00 making it \$49,720.00. This is to reflect the 3% increase.

Assistants

Stayed the same

Telephone

Stayed the same

Training/CDL Testing

Stayed the same

Electricity

The Select Board agreed this should be increased the 40% that electric went up making this \$1,540.00.

Heating fuel

Bubba proposed an increase of \$900.00 making this \$4,500.00 due to the increase in the cost of heating fuel.

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

Bubba proposed an increase of \$500.00 making it \$4,000.00 due to the increase in gas prices.

Diesel

Bubba proposed an increase of \$1,000.00 making it \$5,500.00 due to the increase in diesel prices.

Salt, Sand, Deicer

Bubba proposed an increase of \$6,000.00 making it \$30,000.00 due to the cost increases across the board.

Hydrants

Stayed the same

Culverts

Bubba proposed an increase of \$500.00 making it \$2,000.00.

Safety

Stayed the same

Tree Maintenance

Bubba proposed an increase of \$1,000.00 making it \$4,500.00.

Groton Roads

Stayed the same

Utility Charges, street lights

The Select Board agreed this should be increased the 40% that electric went up making this \$1,540.00.

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

**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 \$1,461.00 making it \$50,159.00 to have room for a 3% merit increase.

Selectmen's stipend

Stayed the same

Moderator/Assistant wages

This was part of the moderator's budget meeting and was \$640.00.

Other Town Meeting expenses

Stayed the same

Contracted services (web hosting)

Stayed the same

Workshops/Seminars

The moderator proposed an increase so she can attend workshops. This increased by \$100.00 making this \$500.00.

Telephone/Internet

Stayed the same; we may need to revisit this.

Mileage

The moderator proposed an increase so she can attend workshops. This increased by \$100.00 making this \$500.00.

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)

Sara proposed an increase of \$150.00 making this \$1,350.00 due to increase on quotes and cost last year.

Auditing

Stayed the same; waiting for costs

Assessing

Stayed the same; waiting for costs

Treasurer

This was gone over at a prior meeting.

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

**Fire Budget**

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

Stipend

Stayed the same

Communications/Training

Stayed the same

Equipment

Stayed the same

Contracted Services- Hebron

Stayed the same

Contracted Services- Rumney

Stayed the same; waiting on 2023 numbers

Lakes Region Mutual Aid

Stayed the same; waiting on 2023 numbers

Dues

Stayed the same

Mileage

Stayed the same

**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

Stayed the same

Cleaning supplies

Stayed the same

General Supplies

Stayed the same

Contracted Services (security, elevator)

Stayed the same

Town House Electric

The Select Board agreed this should be increased to \$4,000 to reflect the 40% increase.

Town Heat

The Select Board agreed this should be increased to \$8,000 due to the heating cost increase.

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

## **General Insurance**

### Property/Liability

Sara proposed an increase of \$1,433 making it \$13,371.00 due to the quote we received in the mail from Primex showing the increase.

### Workers Compensation

Sara proposed an increase of \$1,621.00 making it \$4,421.00 due to the quote we received in the mail from Primex showing the increase.

### Unemployment Compensation

Sara proposed an increase of \$235.00 making it \$500.00 due to the quote we received in the mail from Primex.

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

## **Health**

### Salary

Sara proposed an increase of \$1,250.00 due to a discussion in a previous meeting to hire Audrey Cline from MRI to be the deputy Health Officer.

### Supplies/postage

Stayed the same

### Mileage

Stayed the same

### Training

Stayed the same

### Dues

Stayed the same

### Water testing

Stayed the same

### Legal

Stayed the same

### Transport Central

Transport Central requested an increase of \$480.00 making it \$500.00. The Select Board agreed that they will give them \$100.00 but with all the other increases this year they do not want to increase it to the \$500.00.

### CADY

CADY requested an increase of \$500.00 making it \$1,000.00 for 2023. Four years ago, we increased from \$250.00 to \$500.00. Last year they asked for \$1,000.00 and it was agreed to keep it \$500.00.

CASA

Stayed the same

Mid-State Health

Mid-State requested an increase of \$850.00 making it \$1,050.00. The Select Board agreed to keep it the same as last year at \$200.00.

Pemi-Baker

Pemi-Baker requested a decrease of \$154.00 making it \$2,866 for 2023.

Voices against Violence

Voices Against Violence requested the same amount as last year.

Genesis/LRMHC

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

Stayed the same

Tax Mapping

Stayed the same; waiting on 2023 numbers.

Grants/Engineering

Stayed the same

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



## **Parks Recreation**

### Maintenance of Parks

Stayed the same

### Maintenance of Recreational Facilities

Stayed the same

### Porta Potty

Sara proposed an increase of \$235.00 making it \$1,500 due to the increase in costs of the porta potty.

### Advertising

Stayed the same

### Tapply Thompson Center

Tapply Thompson Center requested an increase of \$600.00. This is the first increase request since 2016. The Select Board agreed to meet them half way at \$3,034.00.

### 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)

Stayed the same

### Life and Disability

Stayed the same; STD went up very slightly but life stayed the same

### Medical Insurance

Sara proposed an increase of \$4,500.00 making it \$53,500.00 due to the 11.7% increase in cost of health insurance.

### FICA/Medicare

Sara proposed an increase of \$2,500.00 making it \$15,000.00 due to the increase in costs. We may need to revisit this.

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; waiting on 2023 numbers

### Grafton County Senior Citizens

Stayed the same; waiting on 2023 numbers.

### Other Vendor Payments

Stayed the same

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

## **MS-434R**

The DRA worked with Sara and made some changes to our MS-434. We went over the revenues and made changes based on that and not getting the grant, etc. There were a few other minor changes. The report is all set now.

## **Tax Rate**

The Town received the preliminary tax rate so the Select Board wanted to review it and look at all options for the Town. Sara explained she worked hard with the DRA to make sure all information is accurate and it is. All portions except the state education went up from last year.

We have money in the unassigned fund balance and they recommend you keep 5%-17% in there with 17% being the maximum recommended. 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.

Sara did reach out to the DRA to see if they have to apply money from the unassigned fund balance? The current amount retained is at 24.58% and the maximum recommended is 17% retained. *They should definitely bring this number down but this is a recommended amount and it is in the discretion of the selectmen as their role to manage the town's prudential affairs.*

Sara provided the following options:

- If we apply \$0, with \$5,000 overlay it would bring the Town rate to \$1.44 and the total tax rate to \$9.86.
  - This would leave \$507,880 in the fund balance which would be way over the 17% maximum they recommend at 24.58%
  - This would be an increase in the Town rate from last year of \$0.89
  - This would be an increase in the total tax rate from last year of \$0.89
- If we apply \$0 from unassigned fund balance with \$30,000 overlay like we did last year it would bring the Town rate to \$1.66 and the total tax rate to \$10.09

- This would leave \$507,880 in the fund balance which would be way over the 17% maximum they recommend at 24.58%
- This would be an increase in the Town rate from last year of \$1.12
- This would be an increase in the total tax rate from last year of \$1.12
- If we apply \$100,000 from unassigned fund balance with \$45,000 overlay it would bring the Town rate to \$.90 and the total tax rate to \$9.32
  - This would leave \$407,880 in the fund balance which would still be over the 17% maximum they recommend at 19.74%
  - This would be an increase in the Town rate from last year of \$0.35
  - This would be an increase in the total tax rate from last year of \$0.35
- If we apply \$125,000 from unassigned fund balance with \$45,000 overlay it would bring the Town rate to \$.67 and the total tax rate to \$9.09
  - This would leave \$382,880 in the fund balance which would still be over the 17% maximum they recommend at 18.53%
  - This would be an increase in the Town rate from last year of \$0.12
  - This would be an increase in the total tax rate from last year of \$0.12

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 \$45,000.00 and to apply \$125,000.00 from the unassigned fund balance to bring the tax rate to \$9.09. **John motioned use the overlay of \$45,000.00 and to apply \$125,000.00 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 2<sup>nd</sup>, so voted.**

***Update on EOP, call with June; Set up an Emergency Management Meeting***

Sara and Bubba had a call with June. She may be retiring but if she doesn't, she will assist Groton with the Hazard Mitigation. She is not happy with the way things rolled out with the EOP.

We need to schedule an Emergency Management meeting since the Select Board agreed we should meet every six months and we can discuss the EOP at that time. It was agreed to see if Bill can meet on Tuesday, November 15, 2022 at 5:00pm.

***Quote for Town House work***

We are still waiting on quote from SB Custom Homes. Sara sent an email to follow up with them on 10/13/22 and is waiting for a response.

***Meeting 11/8/22***

Tony asked Sara to ask the Select Board if they want to plan a meeting for November 8<sup>th</sup> to at least sign meeting minutes since they will all be here for the elections. They agreed to have a meeting at 2:00pm. Sara will post this.

The Select Board agreed that the Select Board office should be closed that day due to Sara assisting with elections.

### ***Meeting with Carol Miller***

Carol Miller met with the Select Board to provide an update on broadband. NHEC was awarded the \$50 million grant. They will have two years to build it. The towns that have full membership will be done first, which is Groton.

Melinda from Charter which is the parent company for Spectrum attended the meeting. Melinda shared a presentation that she put together. She shared information on options of partnering with the Town. In NH, they have 77,000 customers and 83 employees. They serve 56 communities in the State which is mostly the north country. They are looking at expanding broadband. They serve 340 locations in the Town that can access their services. They have broadband speeds of 1000x35Mbps. They have two low-cost broadband options for those that need it. They can apply. It is usually for the families that have kids in school on the lunch programs and for senior citizens that qualify. They participate in the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program. They went over their offerings and prices. The new build outs are fiber to the home which is faster speeds with 1000x1000 being top speeds. They also offer a bulk program where the Town acts as the sole agent for billing and one bill goes to the Town and then the residents can add on from there. The Town would gather the money on their tax bills or in other ways to get the money from the residents. People may be on the older services so if they are having problems, they should contact Spectrum.

Carol mentioned that even though it is looking like everything will happen with NHEC, we still want to keep the options open. For the next meeting she would like to do some training on the affordable connectivity program. She will also check in with NHEC and see where they are at.

### ***Meeting with Bubba***

Bubba met with the Select Board to go over the following:

- The backhoe has been delayed. It should be in the end of December.
- John mentioned that you can tell that where Bubba mowed and where the electric company cut are in totally different places.
- We need to set up the next building committee meeting. We need to reach out to USDA with new numbers and plans so we need to discuss this. Bubba got some quotes for the sand and salt sheds which was \$89,547.86 this does include blocks, etc. (see notes). Sara will reach out to the building committee members to see if they can be here by 7:15pm on 11/15/22 for this meeting- the SB will be first so it will depend how long that meeting goes. Sara will put this on the website.

**Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to adjourn at 6:55pm, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Smith  
Administrative Assistant