

BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday March 22, 2023 – 3:00 PM – Hybrid

PRESENT: Roger Manzolini, Chair of Board of Selectmen; Al Hanson, Selectman; Neal Pilson, Selectmen; Danielle Fillio, Town Admin.; Bob Gniadek, Chair Finance Cte.; Bob Youdelman, Finance Cte. Steve Patterson, Finance Cte.; Eileen Martin, Finance Cte.; Kristen Smith, Librarian; Angela Garrity, Town Acct/Clerk; Kathy Wilson, Library Trustee; Catherine Tino????, Library Trustee

Bob G. called the meeting to order at 3:02 PM

Approval of the Minutes of the February 22, 2023, Meeting of the Budget Advisory Cte. Bob G. moved to approve the minutes of February 22, 2023, Meeting of the Budget Advisory Cte. As corrected. The motion was seconded by Bob Y. and passed by unanimous vote.

Library Budget: \$72,699 plus an anticipated use of State Aid of \$867 equals \$73,566.

Roger questioned an addition of \$4,000 for rent. Danielle explained that she made that addition to cover the potential rental expenses for the months of July, August, September, and October in the current location.

Overview of Changes: Kristen said that an increase in Personnel Expenses reflects an increase in her salary from the Trustees. She explained that she will continue to work the same number of hours, as will the other employees, but those hours will be reorganized so that the new Library can be open Monday through Saturday for three hours per day.

Supplies remain the same. Fuel was removed, Telephone Service, which is connected to the alarm system and the fax machine, is at \$500. That may be removed at a future date, in which case the library would use less of their State Aid.

Electricity included for the months of July, August, and September; For the time being, C.W. Mars does our computer hardware. Maintenance of the fire extinguishers will become unnecessary as the new building is equipped with a sprinkler system. Advertising – a direct advertising program for patrons remains the same. Rent will go away after the move, but does continue until that time. Building Maintenance – reduction because security system has been removed. Eventually, that entire cost will be absorbed by the Town.

There was a discussion that included an explanation of how the new library hours would work and of having that portion of Kristen's salary currently paid by the school to be taken over by the Town. A difference in the hourly rate paid to Kristen between the library and the school required determining how to adjust Kristen's salary to reach an hourly rate that would fairly reflect an average of the two different rates.

It was also suggested that Kristen's Health Insurance Coverage be taken over by the Town, which would reduce the school budget, although it would increase the Town's budget by the same amount.

Some additional discussion included clarification of details of the budget to make answering questions from the residents easier and there was a discussion to clarify how State Aid funds and the funds of the Friends of the Library can be and have been used.

Total Budget Review – Expenditures: Danielle said that the line for Longevity Bonuses and Vacation Buy-Outs could be reduced to \$9,500, which would reflect the amount paid in the past. The Board agreed.

Tax Title Expenses: Danielle suggested that for this budget, a line item of \$5,000 be created rather than establishing a Revolving Fund. Next year it will be more apparent if a revolving fund is the better way to proceed. The Board agreed.

Town Hall Expenses: It was suggested to increase this line by \$20,500 to reach \$51,500, which will cover utility costs. Roger asked if future costs would continue to be in the \$50,000 range and Danielle said that they could, unless the Town goes to Solar. Danielle noted that if the additional Maintenance Person is approved at the Town Meeting, we can hire someone this spring and use that time to train him on every aspect of the new building and equipment.

Conservation Commission: This budget was reduced from \$4,600 to \$3,500 as the full amount has never been expended.

Technology, Hardware, Software: \$24,300 was put together from several locations as this had never previously been budgeted for separately. In the next three years, the Town will have to find a new software company and the price will likely double. It was requested that an explanation be prepared for Town Meeting approval.

Council on Aging: Reduced by \$2,500 based on spending over the last three years.

Legal Advertising: Level funded, which reduced it to \$5,000.

Animal Control Expenses: Reduced to \$500, based on expenditures for the last three years. Eileen Martin raised the issue of the Town's Leash Law which she said does not appear anywhere in print. It was suggested that Angela make sure the new dog licensing process clearly indicates the existence of a Leash Law.

Emergency Management: Reduced to \$3,500 based on prior spending.

Inspection Services: Roger noted that this item would be placed on the agenda for the next Building Committee meeting, but offered a brief overview of how payment for inspections differ between personal and municipal properties and how that impacts the compensation for those services to the inspectors. Municipal property inspection services costs are waived and the

inspectors, therefore, are not paid. It was decided to leave the line item as it is and take payments for services done on municipal properties out of the Building Fund.

Tree Warden Expenses: \$7,500 based on previous spending on outside vendors

Rubbish Disposal: Danielle explained that the amount shown is for a one-year contract with Casella beginning July 1st at a 2.9% increase.

Highway Budget: Steve asked about the Town Beach line. That represents lifeguards' salaries and all other Town Beach salaries.

Bob G. suggested that the entire cost of the new loader be taken out of Chapter 90 money rather than partly out of Chapter 90 funds and partly out of free cash as is the intention now. Danielle explained how she arrived at the decision to use only part of Chapter 90 and the remainder out of Free Cash and what the impact would be of using all of Chapter 90 monies to pay for the equipment, including leaving nothing to pay for supplies for road improvement projects. It will be necessary to provide an explanation of the part inflation paid in increasing some line items. The Highway budget was approved. Bob asked that his suggestion receive further consideration at a later meeting.

Group Insurance: A 20% increase in this line item was the result of budgeting for an additional Family Plan and by including Kristen under Town Health Insurance. A discussion of the reason for the addition of a Family Plan led to a decision to keep the amount at \$154,000, to highlight it and to discuss it further.

Cemetery: Bob Y questioned whether increasing Steve Parson's salary by 28% to compensate him for the possible additional days he will have to be available was a good idea. There was a question of sharing those services with the Cemetery Superintendent from West Stockbridge, who has expressed his willingness to be available on an as-needed basis in the winter, which would free Steve in the winter and eliminate the need for an increase in his salary. It was decided to give Steve a partial raise this year and revisit it next year.

Next Meeting: Friday March 24, 2023, at 3:00 PM.

There being no further business before the Committee, a motion was made to adjourn at 5:00 PM. The motion was seconded and adopted by universal consent.