

**BOARD OF SELECTPERSONS AND
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, January 16, 2024

Immediately Following the Monthly Board of Selectpersons Meeting

1. Chairman of Board of Selectpersons opens the session at 6:57 p.m.
 - a. Selectpersons Present: Shelly Ekholm, Bryon Weymouth, Kevin Emery, Jimmy Hartin
 - b. Budget Committee members present: Jean Brown, Robert Brown, Leesa Coates, Gary Chapman
 - c. Employees Present: Alicia Harmon, Felice Lyford, Jessica Wyman, Autumn Chadwick, Kevin Black, Shawn Mitchell, Philp Cook
 - d. Residents/Others Present: N/A

2. Budget Committee Chairperson Selection

Motion to appoint Gary Chapman as the Budget Committee Chairperson.

Motion : Jean Brown Second : Leesa Coates Vote : Unanimous

3. 2024 Initial Budget Presentation

Town Manager's Presentation –

To arrive at the figures presented, I met with Department Heads to compile the "initial request." Although it is typically viewed as a departmental request, I participated and had input through that entire process, and in many cases figured the wages, payroll taxes and insurance costs, particularly for full-time or regular scheduled employees. The "initial request" reflects what we believe is needed to run each department effectively.

We will see increases in 2024 that we do not have control over, such as wages, payroll taxes, retirement, insurances (including workers comp, property & casualty and unemployment). Minimum wage increased from \$13.80 to \$14.15/hr. Social Security increased 3.2% and we have proposed a \$.50/hr increase for regular full-time and part-time staff. Health insurance premiums increased 4.25% this year. The Health Trust has held the line for several years with no increases. Fortunately, none of our short-term disability, dental, eye and basic life insurance premiums increased. Employees who opt to have additional life insurance coverage had increases up to 15% in those premiums.

Kevin plans to retire in early June. Our hope is to have the hiring process start in February/March to get a new person onboard in April. That would give his replacement a little more than two months to learn the ropes. You will notice larger increases in the wage lines that reflect Kevin's salary. This person will likely be an hourly employee vs salary, making their wages variable due to overtime. Kevin's salary was also split with water and sewer. It is unlikely we will find someone with those licenses, so the allocation of salary is heaviest on public works

Our electricity supply contract ran out in November 2023 and our new negotiated rate went from \$.06/kw to \$.11/kw for the next four years. We have increased sewer rates in the last quarter and are filing for a water rate increase to be effective 7/1/2024. Water rates will affect the Fire Protection Service line as it directly relates to the hydrants. The town also has several properties on town water and sewer and is not exempt from paying those fees.

Our county tax assessment increased approximately \$9,000 for 2024. Penquis Solid Waste Corporation assessment increased by about \$10,000 as well. We have increased traffic and administrative responsibilities in the front office and have one part-time

administrative assistant that we would like to change to full-time. We moved Code Enforcement and Local Plumbing Inspector (LPI) from Administration to Public Safety as it make more sense. Looking at Fire/EMS calls, they increased substantially over last year with less ambulance responders and neighboring first responders available to assist. Milo also turned over the responsibility of travel sports to our Recreation Department and we supply an employee for a small number of hours (during school) to assist the Milo Rec Bearcats After School Program, which accounts for small increases in that department.

Since we had to replace our loader, you will see the new "Debt" line for that annual payment (approved at a special town meeting), and we have that loan for five years. Our reserves are severely lacking in many departments. Sanitation seems to be on point; however, Fire and Highway are just a small percentage of what would be needed to replace one of our trucks. Ideally, we should be putting away a lot more in our reserves, but it is very difficult to do and keep taxes at an affordable rate.

Although we've been working on this budget for weeks, there are still figures to pull together such as overdrafts to be ratified, carry-overs, our surplus balance and what we have in reserves as well as our capital replacement plan.

Department Heads Presentations –

Shawn spoke about Public Safety and Kevin spoke about Public Works budgets and their departmental needs in greater detail. Wages, fuel, supplies and labor costs have all increased substantially in the last few years, driving up our costs as well.

4. Future budget meetings scheduled for Tuesday, January 23rd and 30th at 6:00 p.m.

5. Adjournment at 7:51 p.m.

Motion : Leesa Coates

Second : Jean Brown

Vote : Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Wyman
Deputy Clerk

Selectboard:

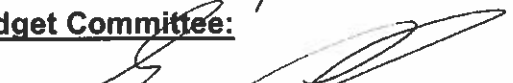

Byron Weymouth, Selectboard Chair


Shelly Ekholm



Kevin Emery

James Hartin

Budget Committee:


Gary Chapman, Budget Comm Chair


Leesa Coates


Marie McSwine

Michael Washburn


Jean Brown


Robert Brown