

Budget Recommendations Advisory Committee
Human Services, Library, Parks and Rec
Nowak Room
Town Office Building
November 4, 2019
Draft Minutes

Members Present: Bob Kelly, Chair; Christine Soutter, Vice Chair; Corey Stevens, Dan Gray, Don Clement, Judy Rowan, Nancy Belanger, Enna Grazier, Dave Beavens, Anthony Zwaan and Liz Canada

Members Absent: Nicholas Gray, Tai Chin Tung

Others Present: Russ Dean, Doreen Chester, Julie Gilman, and Molly Cowan.

Mr. Kelly called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

1. Human Services

Pam McElroy and Sheri Nixon were present to discuss the Human Services budget. Mr. Kelly reminded the commission that the Welfare budget was already approved as part of General Government.

Mr. Clement asked about 211 and its relationship with Coordinated Entry, a state service which is no longer functioning. Ms. Soutter said that in the subcommittee's meeting with Ms. McElroy, they heard that now 211 sends people in need directly to the towns rather than to the Coordinated Entry service. This has resulted in Ms. McElroy's workload increasing dramatically. Mr. Dean said Coordinated Entry operated like an intake; that organization would evaluate the situation. Now they are doing that within the Town Offices. In the month of October, Ms. McElroy had 200 client/landlord phone calls and emails, 132 agency calls, 18 scheduled appointments, 27 walk-ins, two cremation calls, five Police-involved calls, and eight emergency hotel stays. The town is not in a crisis situation, but they should acknowledge that an agency that played a significant role went away.

Ms. Soutter said that the Human Services Committee worked with just about every agency that was interested. Only one agency that was previously funded did not apply; something fell through the cracks there, and they will be applying next year.

Ms. Rowan asked Ms. Soutter to describe what services each agency provides; Ms. Soutter asked Sheri Nixon to go through the list. Ms. Nixon said that Annie's Angels help families in need, mostly with health care needs. Big Brothers/Big Sisters is a mentoring program. CASA NH represents young people in the NH court system. Crossroads House is a shelter for the homeless. Exeter Area Charitable Foundation provides for specific needs, such as winter clothing and accessories. The Friends Program RSVP offers help, activities, and services for seniors. Great Bay Kids Company is a nonprofit daycare provider that provides scholarships to kids in need. Greater Seacoast Community Health addresses health needs. Haven supports victims of domestic violence. New Generation is a shelter for single mothers.

One Sky Community Services offers help for those with disabilities and mental health challenges. The Richie McFarland Children's Center helps young people with disabilities. Rockingham Community Action provides heating assistance, utility assistance, and fills in gaps in services. Rockingham Nutrition/Meals on Wheels delivers and provides meals to seniors and those with disabilities. Seacoast Eat Local provides a program where SNAP funding is doubled at the Farmer's Market. Seacoast Family Promise is an interfaith group that provides services to the homeless. Seacoast Mental Health is a mental health provider. Seacoast VNA provides hospice support. St. Vincent DePaul provides food, dental services, and other services. Waypoint provides different resources. Womenade of Greater Squamscott is an all-volunteer organization that helps individuals with needs they can't get covered elsewhere.

Mr. Kelly asked if the actual recommendation is \$103,805, because there is a typo in the amount. Ms. Soutter confirmed that \$103,805 is correct.

Mr. Clement said there are a lot of people in need, and less provision from the government. Area Homecare didn't apply this year, but should they level fund them anyway? Or should they bump up some organizations by a few hundred dollars? Ms. Soutter said they have to go with what the organizations ask for. Increases are based on the organizations demonstrating an increased need. Ms. Nixon said if the organization didn't lay out how its costs or the number/percentage of people served increased, its funding didn't increase. Ms. Soutter added that if they don't require that, the asks will go way up. Dr. Zwaan said the amounts have increased and decreased, that's one reason they advocated for a standing subcommittee who is continuously vetting these applications. He urged people to respect the time and effort that's going into that.

Ms. Rowan said that they did increase the Welfare budget; if there's a desire to increase help for people, they could revisit that budget. Mr. Dean said that Welfare is an obligation, and they will spend what they need to spend. Some of the Welfare costs have reimbursements. Also, some organizations on the Human Services list are actually contributing back to the town.

MOTION: Dr. Zwaan moved to adjust line item 53660 to \$103,805 for the Human Services Funding budget. Ms. Belanger seconded. All were in favor.

2. Library

Hope Godino, the Library Director, was present to discuss the Library budget.

Ms. Soutter said that the library has its own separate government; there's a Board of Trustees that Ms. Godino reports to, which goes through the Library budget and makes decisions. The Library Board of Trustees has approved the budget presented to the BRC. Staffing is underspent due to an unfilled position in the children's area for much of the year; since this position is working with children, they needed to make sure they got the right person. They're requesting higher funds in Technology for new computer equipment.

Mr. Stevens asked about the renovations. Ms. Godino said they expect to get started by December. They're in the process of moving and storing books from the children's room and the nonfiction area. The renovation will take over a year, but they're not going to close for more than a day or two.

Mr. Kelly asked about the history of the Water/Sewer budget for the Library. The usership of library has gone up, and the rates have gone up, so it's hard to believe the bills are stable. Ms. Godino said there is a historical agreement with Public Works to keep it at \$2,000.

Mr. Dean confirmed that there is an agreement between the town and the Library to charge a flat amount. Mr. Kelly observed that some years of the budget have an actual number and some a flat rate. When it shows the actual number, it's less than \$2,000. He suggested that it needs to be looked at again. Ms. Chester said she had no year to date spend. Mr. Dean said it could be a once a year read there. He will look into it further.

Ms. Chester stated that the new benefits total is \$196,198.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved a new benefits total of \$196,198. Ms. Canada seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Chester stated that the total Library budget is \$1,032,905.

MOTION: Ms. Canada moved the Library budget of \$1,032,905. Ms. Belanger seconded. All were in favor.

3. Recreation

Greg Bisson, the Parks and Rec Director, and Melissa Roy, the Assistant Director, were present to discuss the Recreation budget.

Ms. Soutter said there's an increase in Salary and Wages due to the residual impact of the part time position moving up to full time last year. There's a new request of \$7,500 for Senior Programming. In 2019, Rec managed to fund \$7,500 in programming for seniors through donations and sponsorship; they'd like to get this amount in the budget, but will still be raising donations in addition to that.

Mr. Bisson gave the BRC two handouts: one on the proposed senior programs in 2020, and a summary of the 388 Older Adult Survey responses. According to the survey, a majority of seniors are interested in health and wellness classes, socialization opportunities, dances, a walking program, arts and crafts, cooking classes, luncheons, special events, classes, and intergenerational programs. 65% of respondents are fully retired. Ms. Roy said she has been starting these programs from scratch. The town had a "Senior Center" but not a lot of senior programming. They've been successful in soliciting funds for this so far. Ms. Canada asked if there were a question in the survey about whether the respondent participated in our programs. Ms. Roy said yes, as part of a question that included 10-15 local organizations, including Parks and Rec. Mr. Bisson said they designed the question in this way because Rec participates in a Senior Council, and they wanted to encompass all of the member organizations. 188 respondents to this question said they use Parks and Rec resources. Ms. Canada said it seems like more people responded to the survey than currently participate, so this could be an opportunity for growth.

Ms. Soutter said they'd done \$7,500 worth of activities in 2019, and asked if they were looking to double that. Ms. Roy said they were awarded a \$5,000 grant from Exeter Hospital for 2020, and have more potential sponsorship opportunities, but other organizations will only fund in the fiscal year. Mr. Clement said if they're looking to expend a certain amount of money for services and hope to have some of it recouped by grants, shouldn't all of the expenditures be in the budget? Mr. Dean said if the organization is paying the bill, it doesn't go through the town's books. Mr. Bisson added that they use the revolving fund as a vehicle to accept donations and to pay expenditures. They are looking for grants in order to expand programming, not to offset the budget.

Mr. Clement asked if they should put the senior programming money into the revolving fund. Mr. Bisson said that the revolving fund programs break even or make money, but senior programs won't bring in money. They want to continue to support this population.

Mr. Stevens asked for details on the intergenerational programs. Mr. Bisson said they haven't really started this programming yet, but have been working on it. There was the Halloween parade, where they got seniors from 277 Water Street to hand out snacks and help with the judging. Ms. Roy said the goal is not only for each side to enjoy it, but for each side to feel like they're part of the community. They'd like to see seniors or kids helping to plan a program. Ms. Roy said one program they're looking at is forming a "Snow Angels" group, where they find kids or adults that may be able to help shovel for seniors, and at the end of the year have a party for those who helped.

Ms. Chester stated that the new Rec benefits total is \$88,661.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved the Recreation benefits total of \$88,661. Ms. Canada seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Chester stated that the new Rec total is \$345,668.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved the Recreation total of \$345,668. Ms. Canada seconded. All were in favor.

4. Parks

Greg Bisson, the Parks and Rec Director, and Melissa Roy, the Assistant Director, were present to discuss the Parks budget.

Ms. Soutter said that last year, the department tried to hire part time seasonal people, but it didn't work. They moved funding from that line item, 51200, into line item 55058, Contract Services. The subcommittee talked with the department about trying again to hire and offering more money, but Mr. Bisson said the contract work gives them a lot of bang for their buck. Mr. Stevens asked what more they would be getting for the increase of \$10,000. Mr. Bisson said they want to add poison ivy mitigation at the Rec Park, since they had lots of poison ivy cases this year. They would also like to increase in fertilization. Costs are going up. They have to oversee the athletic fields, and they don't have that equipment in-house. They need to make sure they have a mowing contractor that can handle the various parks. The contractor can do small spots like the Town Offices or little cemeteries. Dr. Zwaan said the subcommittee went through and whittled down the list of Contracted Services to what was essential. Ms. Soutter added that they brought it down by around \$3,000. Mr. Clement asked if Contracted Services involved multiple vendors. Mr. Bisson said yes. Mr. Clement asked if they took bids on the supplemental mowing contract of \$13,000. Mr. Bisson said yes, but last year only one vendor submitted a bid. With more sites included in the RFP, they may get more interest.

Mr. Bisson said they're also looking to landscape in order to make mowing more efficient. For example, at the Public Safety Complex, less green space would mean less time mowing.

Mr. Stevens asked whether the increase in landscaping supplies was related to the 9/11 memorial at the Safety Complex. Mr. Bisson said yes, the Fire Department is paying for the memorial but Parks is paying for the landscaping. Also, they just renovated the softball fields, and to maintain them they need to put things into them. They will use ProSlide, which costs

\$1,800 per pallet, and they need one pallet per field per season. He had a conversation with the leagues, and the town will buy one and the leagues buy the others.

Ms. Chester stated that the new benefits total for Parks is \$45,613.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved the Parks benefits of \$45,613. Ms. Canada seconded. All were in favor.

MOTION: Dr. Zwaan moved \$45,050 for line item 55058, Contract Services. Ms. Belanger seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Chester stated that the Parks General Expenses is \$91,715.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved \$91,715 for Parks General Expenses. Ms. Canada seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Chester stated that the new Parks total is \$218,182.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved the Parks total of \$218,182. Ms. Canada seconded. All were in favor.

Mr. Bisson mentioned that in April, they'd gotten around \$15,000 of free labor on the resident park cleanup day. It also gives residents a feeling that they have ownership of town property. Recently, PEA renovated the landscaping in front of the Rec building.

Ms. Chester stated that the final Parks and Rec total is \$563,850, a 4.7% increase.
[There was no vote.]

Ms. Chester stated that the Other Culture and Recreation budget is \$17,000.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved the Other Culture and Recreation budget of \$17,000. Ms. Canada seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Soutter stated that the Special Events budget is at \$15,000, level funded. Dr. Zwaan said the Exeter Brass band concerts are fantastic, and attendance is better than ever.

Mr. Bisson requested that Ms. Chester change line item 55006 to "Fireworks," rather than "AIM Festival."

MOTION: Dr. Zwaan moved \$15,000 for Special Events. Ms. Belanger seconded. All were in favor.

5. CIP Requests for Parks and Rec

Ms. Soutter said that one of Rec's CIP requests was a handicapped accessible van, since people in town need accessible transportation. However, the subcommittee asked if there were other ways to meet the need. Mr. Bisson said he can talk with Meals on Wheels and use their van sometimes. He could also discuss working with RiverWoods. The department may not need to buy a van at this point.

Ms. Soutter said that in the Parks Improvement fund, they didn't see anything that wasn't needed or wouldn't be good for the community, but they talked about putting off a couple items. They recommend putting off the Gale Park renovation for a year. They talked about living

without water fountains, since people carry water now. Mr. Bisson said they have laundry list of parks improvements; they're not neglected, but by national standards they're behind. If the department accepts Land Water Conservation funds, they're obligated to maintain the park as if new. The Rec park needs to have a higher standard of maintenance. Ms. Grazier said that regarding the water fountains, she's seen kids carry bottles and refill them repeatedly from the fountains. There's always a line of kids at the Park Street water fountain. Mr. Bisson said the new water fountains they're proposing have an option to fill your water bottle. They would be paid for from the revolving fund.

Mr. Clement said that last year, the town appropriated \$100,000 to the revolving fund in a warrant article, and asked if there would be an accounting of the expenditure. Mr. Bisson said yes, he will provide a report. There's not much left, since they've done a lot of projects.

Ms. Rowan said that with the new multigenerational programs, Parks and Rec may need to change to "Health and Rec" at some point. She appreciates the overall philosophy guiding this work. Mr. Bisson said they've developed a new mission and vision statement for the department. Decisions are not made in a vacuum, they're being fiscally responsible and meeting the new vision and mission.

6. Review Calendar

On Thursday 11/7 they'll discuss the Water/Sewer budget and a preliminary discussion of their CIP request. Next Wednesday, 11/13, is the meeting for CIP. That meeting will end at 9 PM, and the CIP discussion will continue if necessary on Monday 11/18.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Kelly said the meeting stands adjourned at 8:04 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary