

Budget Recommendations Committee

August 12, 2020

6:30 PM

Remote via Zoom

Final Minutes

Members Present: Bob Kelly, Chair; Corey Stevens, Christine Soutter, Don Clement, Judy Rowan, Nancy Belanger, Anthony Zwaan, Amy Farnham, Christopher Zigmont, Kaley Briden, Enna Grazier, and Liz Canada

Members Absent: None

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

1. Call Meeting to Order

Mr. Kelly called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. Per RSA 91-A:2(3)b, this meeting will be conducted without a quorum of this body being physically present in one location. He welcomed the members of the public attending remotely, and said the usual rules of conduct and decorum will apply. All votes will require a roll call vote.

2. Nomination and Election of Chair and Vice Chair

MOTION: Mr. Clement nominated Bob Kelly as Chair. Ms. Rowan seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

MOTION: Mr. Stevens nominated Christine Soutter as Vice Chair. Ms. Rowan seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

3. Select Board Comments and Goals

Niko Papakonstantis, Chair of the Select Board, said Finance gave their update at the last Select Board meeting, and they said that tax collections were at a normal rate. The town had seen no effect of Covid-19 on the tax collection. Water bill collection also remained the same. However, they don't know what will happen in Q3 and Q4. He wants the BRC to bring their usual careful evaluation to the budget process. He added that all full BRC meetings will be conducted via Zoom, but subcommittees can meet in person in the Nowak Room with social distancing.

4. Town Manager's Report

Mr. Dean said the town's share of the tax rate is 25%. Just after the voting in March, the Town Offices were closed and they operated in a virtual environment, but the town never stopped providing services to the public. The Departments put together a list of things that could be put on hold if there were negative revenue impacts. General Fund Balance is \$1.36 M. Typically, they allocate the fund balance to offset the budget. From

the GOFER program, which allocates the State CARES Act funds, they secured \$362,000 to “plug gaps” in revenue, such as a decline in building permits. The revaluation will be at 1 or 1.2% this year, which will add more tax base. The Departments have deferred the mini loader, Highway Truck 9, Transit Van, the Conservation Fund allocation of \$50,000, the Public Safety repeater project, and the Pickpocket Dam project.

Ms. Soutter asked if the positions that went unfilled have affected the running of the town. Mr. Dean said the open Electrical Inspector position has caused them to be stretched thin in the Building Dept. There are other positions that they are still advertising, so it’s not a total hiring freeze.

Mr. Stevens asked if they have a report on the Covid expenses. Ms. Chester said they’re tracking them closely. The GOFER funds mostly went to the Safety and First Responder payroll. First responders received a Covid-19 stipend: any certified police officer or firefighter received \$300 extra per week for 8 weeks, which was fully reimbursed by the Federal government. Mr. Dean said they didn’t add line items in the budget for Covid, but the BRC will hear from the Departments about things they had to buy. PPE was provided by the State to the town, not purchased. There were no extra costs for the remote meetings, because EXTV would have been covering meetings anyway.

Ms. Farnham asked about the General Fund Revenue decrease this year. Ms. Chester said it’s partially due to a slightly different reporting period YOY, but they’re watching it. Mr. Dean said they typically do \$800,000 in paving but there was a decrease there of \$200,000, which was set aside as an offset for lost revenue. They received the GOFER revenue as well.

Dr. Zwann asked if the liens figure of \$5.78M was typical. Ms. Chester said it was within \$17,000 of the prior year; further, the quarter ended 6/30 and the bills were due 7/1. Dr. Zwaan asked whether health insurance rates might be less, since health care consumption should be way down. Mr. Dean said it’s premature to say, but he hasn’t seen projections of a decrease.

5. BRC Process

Mr. Kelly gave an introduction to the work of the committee for the new members. The committee reviews the General Fund, Police/Fire, Water/Sewer, Public Works, Library/Parks/Human Services, and the CIP. The subcommittees are made up of two or three people each and work with individual depts. There’s a small BRC group this year, so some will double up. In the subcommittee work, they should touch base with the Departments beforehand to get communication going and avoid being surprised by projects. He will send out agendas and reminders for meetings. Friday October 16th will be the all-day meeting where they review the Town Office budgets; the other four areas plus the CIP get one evening each. He made preliminary assignments of each member to the subcommittees.

Mr. Dean said tomorrow night is the first meeting of the Planning Board to review the draft CIP, and the packet is posted on the website. There are quite a few items up for discussion, including the Library, Water/Sewer, and Facilities.

Dr. Zwaan asked if the subcommittee meetings with the departments should be noticed and keep notes. Mr. Dean said subcommittees should schedule meetings through Pam McElroy. If they meet via Zoom, they have to allow the public to attend and take minimal notes. He added that subcommittees can also meet in person, which does not have to be noticed, but they should still take notes.

The next BRC meeting is Wednesday September 23rd.

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary