

Budget Recommendations Advisory Committee
Parks & Recreation, Library, Welfare & Human Services
November 9, 2020, 6:30 PM
Draft 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: Pam McElroy, Hope Godino, Greg Bisson, Melissa Roy, Doreen Chester

Mr. Kelly called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and read a statement:

As Chair of the Budget Recommendations Committee, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Public notice of this meeting was posted on the town website and on the bulletin board of the town offices at 10 Front Street. As provided in that public notice, the public may access the meeting online and via phone.

Please note that all votes taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote. Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting and who that person is (son, daughter, spouse, etc...), which is required under the Right-to-Know law.

1. Parks and Recreation

Greg Bisson and Melissa Roy were present to discuss the Parks and Rec budget. Ms. Soutter said the Recreation budget was bare bones, so there was not much to be discussed. The increases are things out of their control. Mr. Stevens asked if line item 55058, Contracted Services, will be spent. Mr. Bisson said yes, contractors are helping with fall cleanup, which is ongoing. Mr. Stevens asked if the funding levels are appropriate. Mr. Bisson said in a normal year, they would use more for contracted mowing, but they didn't have to mow as much due to the drought. Mr. Stevens said that line item 55319, Vehicle Maintenance, has \$3,000 unspent. Mr. Bisson said they will spend it on snow tires for the van and two trailers, and the decking on the trailers is going to be replaced.

Ms. Chester said the new Recreation total is \$357,313.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Recreation budget at \$357,313. Ms. Soutter seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

Ms. Soutter said similar to Rec, the Parks budget increases are related to benefits. Mr. Bisson said Covid put a large strain on their park system, and revenues are massively down, around 60-70% less. The Revolving Fund will end in a negative for this year. They're trying to do things cheaply; for example, Ms. Roy and Mr. Tovey were the instructors for some of their fall programming. The potential winter basketball program comes with a large cleaning bill. They're trying not to price people out of programming. They got some grant money this summer for the CareKids program. Their biggest fundraiser, the Powderkeg Festival, was cancelled this year. They're joining a NH e-Sports league, which is a safe platform for people to play video games with others in the state. They're looking to offer wilderness training this winter. They're doing a lot of surveys to determine interest in programming.

Ms. Chester said the new Parks total is \$222,863.

MOTION: Ms. Canada moved to approve the Parks budget of \$222,863, Ms. Belanger seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

Ms. Soutter said that the Parks & Rec CIP is a \$43,000 contribution to the Parks Improvement Fund. The parks are used even more now, but they still tried to reduce it for this year. Mr. Bisson said they're deferring maintenance, not making cuts. They will have a list of projects and deferrals on CIP night.

2. Library

Hope Godino, the Library Director, was present to discuss the Library budget. Ms. Soutter explained that the Library has a Board of Trustees that vote on its budget, by State law. There were very few changes in the budget from last year. The expansion is going full force.

Ms. Godino said that in 2020, they put extra money in the budget to replace the HVAC system in case the warrant article for the Library expansion didn't pass. They didn't need it, so they took it out of the Public Services budget, which covers books, audiobooks, programming, phones, and anything needed to run the library other than salaries and benefits. Book costs have increased in the last few years. Because of Covid, the Library was closed from March through July 6th, but is now fully open again. They added Hoopla to their remote offerings; if a book is on the Hoopla platform, patrons don't have to wait for it, unlike Overdrive. Dr. Zwaan asked if this budget was approved by the Board of Trustees, and Ms. Godino said yes.

Mr. Kelly asked for an update on the Library construction. Ms. Godino said the Children's Room is about half finished, and in the next six to eight weeks they should be able to open the entire Children's Services floor. On the Adult Services floor, they're adding the new lighting and heating. They've found a few problems in the existing construction, such as a sprinkler system installed incorrectly, with pipes on the outside of the walls. All the windows on the second floor are in now, and they're hoping to start using the space in the next eight to ten weeks. The Mezzanine floor is nearly finished, with one large meeting room for 100 people and a room equipped for Podcasting. They've been running some programs, like book groups and story times. The expansion budget is doing well, and they have a large contingency that they haven't had to dip into.

They expect the building itself to be finished by the spring. Patrons will be able to exit from the building directly to Chestnut Street, as they've solved an engineering problem with that entrance.

Ms. Chester said the new Library total is \$1,081,267

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Library budget of \$1,081,267. Ms. Rowan seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

3. Health and Human Services

Pam McElroy was present to discuss the Human Services funding. Ms. Soutter said they have a committee that goes through all of the non-profit organization funding applications, which were due in July. A lot of the organizations were level-funded. Many non-profits were able to receive CARES Act funding as well. Dr. Zwaan asked about Key Collective, a new organization. Ms. Soutter said Key Collective provide funding for after-school activities to families that can't afford them. Mr. Stevens asked what are the criteria that go into a funding award. Ms. Soutter said they look at whether other municipalities provide the organization funding, and how much, although some are Exeter-only. They also look at how many Exeter residents are served by the organization, as well as their overall budget and mission. Mr. Clement asked for information about the Transportation budget numbers, as they didn't seem to line up. Ms. McElroy said the Transportation budget is just informational, it doesn't have anything to do with the Human Services budget.

Mr. Kelly asked if there was discussion about level-funding the budget this year, given uncertainty with revenues, although the budget hasn't gone up much. Ms. Soutter said there's a new organization, so they can't strictly level fund. The total dollars are small. They didn't have big increases in requests. Mr. Zigmont said the people who ultimately receive this funding have the most need, and he would not like to see the budget cut. Ms. McElroy said that when people come to her office for help, she turns to these organizations for assistance.

MOTION: Ms. Soutter moved to approve the Human Services budget at \$106,720. Ms. Belanger seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

Ms. Chester said the new Welfare total is \$73,120.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Welfare budget of \$73,120. Dr. Zwaan seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

Mr. Stevens said Other Culture and Recreation is at \$17,000.

MOTION: Mr. Stevens, Ms. Belanger. During the roll call vote, Don Clement had stepped away, and the motion passed 11-0.

Mr. Stevens said that Special Events: Brass Band, Veterans Activities, and Fireworks is at \$15,000.

MOTION: Ms. Soutter moved to approve the Special Events budget of \$15,000. Ms. Belanger seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

Mr. Stevens said Cemeteries is at \$1.

MOTION: Mr. Stevens moved to approve a Cemeteries budget of \$1. Ms. Belanger seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

Mr. Stevens said they should consider Payroll Taxes and Benefits, Unemployment, Worker's Comp, and Insurance. Mr. Kelly said they should lump them together as "Benefits".

Ms. Chester said the Benefits total is \$463,307.

MOTION: Mr. Stevens moved to approve the Benefits total of \$463,307, Ms. Belanger seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

4. Review Calendar

The next meeting is Thursday, November 12, for Water/Sewer.

5. Adjournment

Mr. Kelly adjourned the meeting at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary