

Budget Recommendations Advisory Committee
October 27, 2021
6:30 PM
Town Offices – Nowak Room
Public Works Budget

Members Present: Bob Kelly, Chair; Corey Stevens, Judy Rowan, Nancy Belanger, Kathy Corson, Anthony Zwaan, Liz Canada, and Mark Fabian

Members Absent: Christine Soutter, Vice Chair, Enna Grazier, Christopher Zigmont

Others Present: Russ Dean, Doreen Chester, Niko Papkonstantis, Julie Gilman, Melissa Roy

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

1. Public Works - CIP program

Public Works Director Jennifer Perry and Highway Superintendent Jay Perkins were present to discuss the DPW budget.

Mr. Stevens said there wasn't much adjustment to the budget made by the subcommittee. He'd like to start with CIP items. The DPW Complex project will renovate the DPW Complex facilities. The Public Works Department has been working on a plan for this work for a few years. In 2020, they engaged an Architect for preliminary work and scoping. Some site surveys and wetlands work were done on land next to the DPW complex where they hope to expand. In 2022, they're looking for \$50,000 in the CIP to continue the project. This work would be to site future buildings, including the fuel island, and develop cost estimates for the project. The fuel island is a particular concern, as there are issues with the measuring mechanisms.

Ms. Perry said there is a need to upgrade the Highway/Maintenance garage area, where there are substandard conditions and structural concerns, as well as concerns about space needs. We did an analysis last year with Lassel Architects of our current and near-future needs. We're seeing growth in stormwater, and may need an extra sweeper at some point. This year we did a topo survey and wetlands delineation on the adjoining 4.8 acre parcel that the town acquired. That data is not yet finalized, but there are some limiting factors to the site. For 2022, we're asking for \$50,000, which was reduced from the initial ask of \$75,000, to continue the siting evaluations. There would be coordination between Lassel Architects and the site engineers on cost estimating. We're currently using cost estimates that are based on square footage.

Mr. Stevens asked if they know what the future state of DPW needs are. Ms. Perry said we've done a preliminary space needs assessment with Lassel, but there's room for refinement. Mr. Stevens asked if she is working with the Facilities Advisory Committee, and Ms. Perry said yes. The committee has submitted a number of questions which she went in person to their meeting to answer. She will also provide a written version of her responses.

Dr. Rowan asked Ms. Perry to present more information at the CIP meeting about what the \$50,000 is actually for. It seems like they have engineers on staff who could do some of this work.

Dr. Zwaan asked why the ask went from \$75,000 to \$50,000. Ms. Perry said we decided to reduce it because Public Works has the most requests. We tried to find places where we could reduce our efforts.

Ms. Corson asked if Ms. Perry could address whether they were going to stay within a project number, so we're not surprised at the end by it being too expensive. Ms. Perry said the CIP project was listed as TBD for Engineering and Construction costs, due to anticipated price increases. Ms. Corson said she wants to see this pass and she doesn't want to make it too expensive for the voters to approve. Mr. Stevens said if we're being careful about defining what we need we can make a case for it.

Dr. Zwaan asked how this project fits into the site. Ms. Perry said just received the topo survey of the new site, and have not yet combined it with the data on the existing site. Mr. Stevens said we'd like to see something basic by the November 18th meeting. Dr. Zwaan said he'd also like to see information about what phasing might be possible.

Mr. Dean said the Lassel report from Dec 2020 may be worth reading. It's posted on the town website.

Mr. Stevens said the Facilities Advisory Committee has been working on putting together a Facilities Condition Assessment to track the repair and replacement schedule of our town's 10 public buildings or "vertical assets." We would likely hire an outside contractor, with the hope that the data could be incorporated into People GIS, the software that the town already uses. The FAC is recommending \$45,000 for this project as a CIP item.

Dr. Rowan said when the FAC was established, wasn't what Mr. Stevens described going to be what they were doing? Mr. Stevens said he doesn't know whether they were going to do it themselves or see that it gets done. Dr. Rowan asked how this is different from what the Facilities Committee has been doing. Mr. Dean said the goal is to bring someone in from the outside and do a micro-level review of all facilities and put them in a replacement schedule.

Ms. Perry said this work is aligned with the DPW philosophy on managing the assets in town. We've developed a detailed database we can work with. We support the concept of the FCA to get to that programmatic approach. We recently did an asset report for the stormwater and sewer; this was a \$75,000 effort, but that was a grant from the State. The review should be done by an outside independent agent, not the same group which did the installation. Mr. Stevens said it's not uncommon for towns to do this internally, but it's a question of bandwidth. It's probably too much for a volunteer committee to do.

Mr. Stevens said he wants to make sure the results will be used. He would like to hear more about the integration between the committee, the consultant, and the Department. Ms. Perry said historically the point person has been Matt Berube, but she feels that this project needs to be more of a team effort.

Mr. Stevens said that in December of last year, Exeter was issued a Great Bay Total Nitrogen General Permit (NPDES) for 5 years. This is issued to municipalities that discharge directly into a surface water body, in our case Great Bay. The permit comes with an adaptive management process, which allows municipalities to choose alternate methods of reducing

the nitrogen going into the bay. We joined an intermunicipal agreement to implement AMP together and do cost-sharing. Town Engineer Paul Vlasich showed him the Department's detailed 5 year plan for reducing nitrogen. Ms. Perry said one strategy is replacing septic systems which are within 100 meters of a water body. If we can't remove nitrogen elsewhere, we will have to modify the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Mr. Dean said this will be a never-ending regulatory compliance issue. Ms. Corson asked if they would go for grants on this, and Ms. Perry said yes, we will continue to go for grants. Mr. Stevens said Mr. Dean had proposed paying for some items from Fund Balance, and Mr. Dean said this series of activities and also the best management process for Winter Street Area are being considered for ARPA funds.

Mr. Kelly said he'd like to see something like a 5 year expenditure plan by the meeting on Nov 18th. Mr. Stevens said there's \$6,000 for two years for tracking, and the catch basin replacement at \$28,000. Mr. Stevens said they're looking at \$120-130,000 in nitrogen efforts in year 1, will future years be similar? Mr. Kelly asked if this work is all going to a consultant, and Ms. Perry said no, some will be done in-house. We've also been working with researchers at UNH. Mr. Kelly asked if there is staff time to work on this, and Ms. Perry said yes, this is a major requirement, so staff will be pulled in. Mr. Kelly asked if they may need to hire someone to coordinate this. Ms. Perry said possibly. Stormwater is one of our biggest efforts, and we're at the point where we're not sure how much more we can do. It would make sense to have a lead person. Mr. Dean said there is an engineering tech vacancy in Public Works, which would be a position that could absorb some of this work. Mr. Kelly said he thinks the person should be higher up than an engineering tech.

Mr. Fabian asked if they are reducing the amount of runoff, with efforts like permeable sidewalks, rain gardens, etc. Ms. Perry said that's an important aspect. We tried to factor in the cost per pound of nitrogen removed. At this point, those projects are pretty expensive. We tried to use tree filters in the downtown area which was not good, since the water was infiltrating in basements.

Mr. Kelly asked if Mr. Dean could speak to the decision-making with the ARPA fund. Mr. Dean said he's interested to hear what the BRC has to say about these projects. This project is a good candidate for ARPA. If it were paid from that fund, it wouldn't have to go to the voters, it would be an internal matter. Paying with the General Fund Balance would need to be an article, but ARPA was unanticipated revenue. The Select Board accepted the funds and we can expend them.

Mr. Kelly said the BRC isn't in a position to vote this down, but can make a recommendation on how it gets paid for. Mr. Dean said we could pull the \$28,000 for the catch basins from the Operating Budget and fund from ARPA, if that's the recommendation.

Mr. Stevens said the Intersection Improvements Program CIP would evaluate intersections in Exeter and identify those in need of improvements. Because of recent public concerns, the FY23 request has been moved to FY22. Phase 1, which is complete, identified intersections in need of improvements. This \$50,000 is to take this inventory of intersections and have the DPW prioritize them, and have an outside consultant assist with conceptualls and cost estimates. Ms. Perry said there has been significant citizen interest in this in the last year. Dr. Rowan asked if they've consulted with the Police Department to get information about accidents, and Ms. Perry said yes.

Mr. Stevens said regarding Pickpocket Dam, Exeter was issued a letter of deficiency and was required to do a breach analysis, which led to a reclassification of Pickpocket Dam as a "High Hazard" dam. In 2021, legal work was performed on our position with regard to dam modifications, and various breach event scenarios were run. We originally had a timeline of modifying or replacing the dam by 2025, but we weren't going to reach that milestone. We sought an extension to 2027, which was approved. In 2022, DPW would like to take the remaining dollars from previously appropriated funds and add \$185,000 to do the feasibility study to give us alternatives. Could this be ARPA eligible as well?

Ms. Perry said "High Hazard" really means the potential for death, not just property damage. The dam has to be able to discharge 2.5 times the 100 year flood event. The next step would be to move forward with a feasibility study. There will likely be multiple alternatives, including modifications to the dam, anchoring the dam, armoring abutments, or dam removal.

Mr. Stevens asked if the legal review raised any questions, and Ms. Perry said this dam is partially located in Brentwood but entirely owned by Exeter. We had questions about impoundment and water rights that overlap with Brentwood. Mr. Dean said the conclusions were that we had the ability to do what's needed with the dam to meet the requirements, without being concerned about the impoundment behind the dam. The River Advisory Committee is the clearinghouse for this project, and they get regular updates by Paul Vlasich. We have seen a few of the potential alternatives the town might pursue, but not the costs.

Mr. Fabian asked if the feasibility study will determine which approach will be, and Ms. Perry said the feasibility study will come up with alternatives, vet them, and provide detailed costs. The proposal will ultimately go to the voters. The work has to be complete in 2027.

Dr. Zwaan said the town needs to remember that deadline so we don't end up with a contentious situation with a high price tag that's a surprise. That's how it felt with the Great Dam removal. Ms. Perry said we won't wait until the last minute, for example we got the deadline extension years in advance.

Mr. Kelly said he'd like the committee to see the letter from legal counsel on Pickpocket Dam before the 18th.

Mr. Kelly said a lot of projects have been thrown out as possible ARPA funding or Fund Balance funding. Is the town looking for opinions on the method of funding? Mr. Dean said the committee should evaluate the project itself and see whether now is the time to do it with the ARPA funds. We need to commit the funds by 2024 and spend them by 2026, so we're not looking to spend them all at once.

Mr. Dean said we can justify using \$1.1M of the \$1.6M in ARPA funding on General Government activities. We don't have an internally generated list of projects for this money. We have had issues with siphons project. Won't know anything about the approved \$600,000 for siphons or the funding from Senator Shaheen for the Webster Ave project until at least December 3rd. Mr. Stevens asked if Pickpocket Dam could be eligible, and Mr. Dean said it's likely.

Mr. Stevens said the Sidewalk Revolving Fund has a fund balance of \$185,000. We appropriated \$60,000 to this fund in the last couple of years, but it was not included this

year. Ms. Perry said we applied for a community funded project through Rep Pappas for Linden Street, but this was not selected, and we don't have adequate funds in the reserve. Mr. Stevens said he recommends leaving it out for 2022 per the Town Manager's recommendation.

Mr. Stevens said the Winter Street Stormwater Mitigation at \$66,800 would contribute to Exeter's NPDES credit. This would be 60% grant funded and 40% from the General Fund balance. Mr. Stevens asked why the Winter Street area is a point source. Ms. Perry said we're not sure why, but this is the largest contributing watershed. Mr. Kelly said he'd like to see possible alternative areas for this work to be done. Ms. Perry said this is the best location we've been able to come up with. Mr. Kelly asked if this work was internal or with a consultant, and Ms. Perry said an internal Engineering team working with a Geotech consultant. Mr. Kelly asked Ms. Perry to confirm the details prior to the November 18th meeting.

Mr. Stevens said there are three proposed vehicle replacements. A Jeep Patriot, #65, would be replaced with a Ford Explorer. This is the primary vehicle for the EHD Superintendent. According to the point system, this vehicle is generally in ok condition, so they will swap it with a Crown Victoria used in Water/Sewer. We put this off last year. Ms. Perry said this is the last Crown Vic to replace. The Ford Explorer is a hybrid, since we're looking to incorporate energy efficient operations.

Mr. Stevens said the paving hotbox was deferred in the budget narrative, but the Department wanted to discuss it further. Ms. Perry said she asked for this to be included for next year. The hotbox keeps paving and patch material hot, and to have a successful pothole patch, the material has to be hot. The old one is from 2005, and needs a significant amount of work, which would be a poor use of our money. We can get through this winter but it would be a stretch to get through two winters. It's a \$60,000 piece of equipment. Mr. Dean said it's a possible General Fund Balance project, but there were no maintenance costs identified in the CIP submittal. Ms. Perry said we could have the costs for the Nov 18th meeting.

Mr. Stevens said that with Truck 9, they're looking to replace a one ton truck with a dump body truck. The truck is at 140,000 miles, and is 13 years old. It's in the shop monthly for repairs. They're looking to replace it with the General Fund Balance. Ms. Perry said the maintenance on this truck has been significant. We're also looking to change this to a hook lift truck so we can switch out the body. This has been delayed for replacement for several years. It's a cost of \$71,800. Mr. Kelly asked if there's usage for the truck on-site. Ms. Perry said no, they actually have work tricycles on site to get around.

Ms. Corson asked if the BRC could see pictures of the outdated vehicles. We should also post the pictures in the voting area to show that replacement is needed.

2. Public Works - Budget

Mr. Stevens said he felt it was more appropriate to evaluate the FY22 budget compared to the FY20 budget, since the budget was cut so much last year.

Ms. Chester said the new benefits total in DPW Admin is \$193,913.

Mr. Stevens said line item M55051, Conferences, Rooms and Meals, was restored to the 2020 level.

Ms. Chester said the DPW Admin total is \$420,391.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve \$420,391 for DPW Administration. Mr. Stevens seconded. All were in favor.

- Highways and Streets

Ms. Chester said the new benefits total is \$392,652.

Mr. Stevens mentioned line item 55066, Culvert Repair and Replacement. Ms. Perry said this is for minor repair of culverts and drainage pipes, and is a separate line from major replacements. Mr. Stevens said this was raised \$2,000 over the 2020 budget. Ms. Perry said this was due to increased material costs and needing to catch up on the work. Mr. Kelly said they did Garrison Lane last year, but the YTD as of August don't seem to match. Ms. Perry said the work is ongoing, and most expenditures are just coming in. Mr. Stevens said line item 55107, Equipment Rentals, had a \$2,500 increase, bringing it back to the 2020 budget. Line item 55286, Street Marking, had a \$5,000 increase over the 2020 budget, since we're looking at contractor price increases.

Ms. Chester said the new Highways and Streets total is \$2,158,344.

MOTION: Ms. Canada moved to approve \$2,158,344 for Highways and Streets. Ms. Belanger seconded. All were in favor.

- Snow removal

MOTION: Mr. Stevens moved to approve the Snow Removal budget of \$313,201. Dr. Rowan seconded. All were in favor.

- Solid Waste

Mr. Stevens said in line item 55018, Blue Bags, they were anticipating a 30% increase but it's around 18%. They dropped the request to \$115,000.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to level fund line item 55018. Dr. Rowan seconded. All were in favor.

Mr. Stevens mentioned line item 55082, the Disposal and Recycling contract. They're anticipating level tipping fees for next year and an increase in the value of recycling materials, leading to a decrease in that line. Mr. Stevens asked what we're seeing with the Mr. Fox program. Ms. Perry said we're averaging about 1 ton of materials a month being taken out of the solid waste stream. Mr. Stevens asked if the composting is cheaper than solid waste disposal, and Ms. Perry said yes. She said we're also looking at a program with a company called Helpsy that would do curbside collection of textiles. This would be at no charge to the town and they would pay us \$40 per ton. Ms. Corson said she talked to the attendant at the transfer station and it didn't sound like the composting program was being used enough. It's only 30 families weekly. Dr. Zwaan asked if there is a cost for composting, and Ms. Perry said yes, it's in line item 55551, Food Waste Compost Program. There's no cost to residents who are composting.

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Mr. Kelly said Hazardous Waste day, the town budgeted \$42,000, but our share to pay is \$11,000. Ms. Perry said this cost is offset by a grant, and we also bill the other communities that participate. Mr. Dean said this is gross appropriated. We get a report from RPC that itemizes each town's share. We also get the \$15 charge to the public no matter what town they are residents of.

Mr. Kelly said in Landfill Monitoring, they bumped up the budget in the last two years. Ms. Perry said we had to expand the groundwater management zone and add additional wells, which was done last year. This year, we plan to address the settlement of the cap. We're not going to be able to complete it due to contractor availability, so we will have to encumber the funds for the spring.

Ms. Chester said the YTD spend is \$18,325.

Mr. Stevens said Brush Grinding went up, but it was a decrease over the 2020 budget. Regarding line item 55244, Recycling Containers, the town is now only purchasing 65 gallon totes, so there's an increase in tote cost. Ms. Perry said most communities in the state do not have the small bins.

Dr. Rowan asked about the brush removal item, which appears to have dropped out. Mr. Dean said it was a change in the line item.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved \$1,314,555 for Solid Waste and Recycling, Mr. Stevens seconded. All were in favor.

Street Lights

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MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved \$169,000 for Street Lights. Dr. Zwaan seconded. All were in favor.

- Stormwater

Mr. Stevens said line item 55058, Contracted Services, had a \$4,500 increase over the 2020 budget. There's \$6,000 for AMP Nitrogen Tracking. The 2021 budget will be spent. Ms. Perry said we have to prioritize wet weather sampling, which we are required to do by MS4. This is not done in every storm event; we have to select an event once a year. In prior years, we did dry weather sampling. It's tough to do in-house, because we have to cover a lot of ground. We have to test multiple watersheds with a whole crew.

Mr. Stevens said line item 55386, Catch Basin Replacement, would cover 7 replacements at \$4,000 each. Some of our catch basins are too shallow. Ms. Perry said the basins must have at least three feet of sump. Some of ours run straight through, so are not functioning as catch basins at all. This project is spread out over many years. There are 1,400 catch basins total, and half of them have inadequate sumps.

Dr. Zwaan asked what other communities have been doing, and Ms. Perry said they're also making significant contributions. The responsibility is based on the town's population.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved the Stormwater total of \$92,360. Mr. Stevens seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Chester said the subtotal is \$4,467,851.

- Maintenance

Ms. Chester said the new benefits total in Maintenance is \$144,893.

Mr. Stevens said line item 55048, Computer Software, had a \$2,000 increase over 2020, due to the conversion to PeopleGIS. Line item 55058, Contract Services, increased \$3,500 related to cleaning public buildings due to Covid. Ms. Perry said as there have been increased cleaning needs as the town has reopened its buildings for public use.

Mr. Stevens said we recommend level funding line item 55549, Covid-19. The increase of \$3,500 was not needed. Ms. Perry said this was broken out to help with applications for reimbursement by FEMA. Mr. Kelly said he'd like to see what happens with it next year. Ms. Perry said part of Contract Services is snow removal on Highway roof, need to have that money even if we don't end up needing it.

MOTION: Mr. Stevens moved to change line item 55549 to \$6,000 for 2022. Ms. Belanger seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Chester said the new total for General Maintenance is \$559,818.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved to approve \$559,818 for General Maintenance. Dr. Zwaan seconded. All were in favor.

- Town Buildings

Dr. Rowan asked if the Town Hall is being used enough. Mr. Dean said Parks and Rec has been doing the permitting. He doesn't think it's been heavily used in 2021. Dr. Rowan asked if the fees are appropriate. Mr. Dean said the Board did their due diligence and spent a lot of time going through the fees recently. We're still maintaining the building, and had a significant sewer project there over the summer, at a cost of \$25,000.

Mr. Stevens said regarding the Covid line, he feels like there may be some costs related to Covid. He did an analysis since 2015 and budgets to actual were within \$10,000. \$5,000 was not spent on Covid expenses, but there are other lines that would make that up. Ms. Perry said it's important to continue to carry a line forward. This would be more for Covid-related modifications to the buildings, rather than cleaning.

Mr. Kelly asked about the line for Building Maintenance in the Town Buildings budget. Ms. Perry said it's for minor issues that arise rather than planned replacements and repairs.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved the Town Buildings budget of \$294,175. Dr. Zwaan seconded. All were in favor.

- Maintenance Projects

Ms. Chester said YTD spend is \$56,304. Ms. Perry said we're just wrapping up some roofing projects at the Swasey Park Pavilion. Mr. Stevens said the \$100,000 seems like a good number based on the Department's capacity. Ms. Corson said it

should be adjusted for inflation. Ms. Perry said we could ask for more, but we would have to justify it. We're planning to go through the Facilities Condition Assessment process, so the request could be going up next year. Mr. Kelly asked if would we have the capacity to do more work if the budget allowed, and Ms. Perry said she thinks so.

Ms. Corson asked about the ADA study. Ms. Perry said she thinks it was completed. A lot of the results were more programmatic rather than project-related. Mr. Dean said there were still some things being hashed out between the Town Planner and the company that did the study.

MOTION: Mr. Stevens moved \$100,000 for Maintenance projects. Ms. Belanger seconded. All were in favor.

- Mechanics and Garage

Ms. Chester said the new Benefits for Mechanics and Garage is \$110,161.

Mr. Stevens said there had been a slight bump for Mechanics Allowance for tools. It hasn't gone up since 2000.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved the Mechanics and Garage total of \$277,842. Dr. Rowan seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Chester said the new Public Works General Budget is \$5,699,686, a 2.5% increase.

MOTION: Ms. Belanger moved the Public Works General Budget of \$5,699,686. Dr. Rowan seconded. All were in favor.

3. Adjournment

Mr. Kelly adjourned the meeting at 9:41 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary