

Budget Recommendations Advisory Committee

November 10, 2021

6:30 PM

Town Offices, Nowak Room

Draft Minutes

Members Present: Bob Kelly, Chair; Christine Soutter, Vice Chair; Corey Stevens, Nancy Belanger, Kathy Corson, Christopher Zigmont, Anthony Zwaan, Mark Fabian, Judy Rowan, Liz Canada

Members Absent: Enna Grazier

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

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

1. Library

Executive Director of the Library Hope Godino was present to discuss the Library budget.

Ms. Soutter said the Library is governed by a Board of Trustees, but they're just as careful with the funding as the rest of the town. She encouraged the Board members to go see the renovations, which are fantastic. They did their own fundraising for the walkway out front.

Ms. Godino said people should subscribe to the library's newsletter, which has information about the Library. We added Hoopla which is downloadable books, audiobooks, movies, etc.

Dr. Zwaan asked if there were any adjustments in maintenance and repair given the recent renovations. Ms. Godino said we only took over the building last month, and don't have a way of knowing what things will cost next year. KW hours should decrease, but that may not mean that the cost will decrease. The building itself is more efficient. Dr. Zwaan said maintenance is \$5,000, which is probably reasonable, but hopefully it won't need too much maintenance and repair. Ms. Godino said we will monitor it, but we can't tweak the budget until we know more about what will happen in the building. We talked to Revision Energy about solar panels, but they suggested we wait a year.

Ms. Chester said the new benefits total is \$240,495. The total Library budget is \$1,125,282.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Library benefits budget of \$240,495. Dr. Rowan seconded. All were in favor.

Dr. Rowan said it was a wonderful renovation plan that focused on problems and was well done in connecting the interior with the town. Ms. Godino said we got a grant for the outdoor furniture, so the town didn't pay for that, as well as a grant to digitize the Exeter Newsletter and a townwide discussion of a book about the history of voting.

## 2. Welfare and Human Services

Pam McElroy, the Welfare and Human Services Coordinator, was present to discuss this budget.

Ms. Soutter said the budget really didn't change, despite Covid. Ms. McElroy has a good relationship with agencies and knowledge of what's available. She encourages applicants to tap into other resources before the town provides assistance. Ms. Belanger said she's glad Ms. McElroy is in that position.

Mr. Kelly asked if she feels the budget is enough, or if there's more we could be doing, and Ms. McElroy said she does feel it's enough. She taps into Federal, State, and County funding. When the eviction moratorium ended, that was scary, but County rental assistance and community action rental assistance helped. The lack of affordable housing and shelters has put the hotel stay budget way up. She's careful about hotel stays, and there are prerequisites: the person must be elderly, disabled, or with very young children to keep their stays going. Everyone who's granted a hotel stay must sign up to shelter lists. Mr. Kelly asked if we get a lot of new applications for Human Services organizations? Ms. McElroy said no. Recently we funded the Key Collective, but they called and said due to Covid they hadn't spent the money from last year.

Mr. Zigmont said Ms. McElroy has built an incredible network to make the money go a long way. Ms. McElroy said sometimes people ask about Great Bay Kids Company, but they provide grants to children in town that are not able to attend a preschool. Dr. Zwaan said these agencies serve Exeter residents, so this reflects the town's efforts to support the town's residents.

Ms. McElroy said people don't need to go through the Welfare department, they can go directly to agencies on their own.

Ms. Chester said there were no health changes.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Welfare budget of \$73,048. Dr. Rowan seconded. All were in favor.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Human Services budget of \$105,105. Ms. Canada seconded. All were in favor.

## 3. Parks and Rec

Greg Bisson and David Tovey were present to discuss the Parks and Rec budget.

Ms. Soutter said this is a lean budget while still providing services to the town.

Ms. Chester said the new Health total for Recreation is \$124,999. Mr. Bisson said there are six full time employees. Two are new and one will be coming in at the end of the month, so there's a change in benefits.

Ms. Soutter said there is now a foreman and laborer. Mr. Bisson said to improve efficiency, we reintroduced the foreman position to keep people on task. He's developing better routes for mowing crews to have less reason to come back to the office. We're also looking to purchase an enclosed trailer which would be like a mobile garage. Dr. Zwaan asked if they're fully staffed in both Departments, and Mr. Bisson said there's a

laborer starting Nov 29th, and then they will be fully staffed. We hired Tara Barker as Rec Coordinator. Mr. Dean said she was the Assistant Rec Director in Newmarket. Mr. Bisson said she's experienced in producing revenue with programs. We almost have 98% of next year planned out and she's been here less than a month.

Ms. Canada asked about senior programming. Mr. Bisson said it was reduced by \$2,000 due to more sponsorship opportunities. Seniors have been hesitant to come out, but hopefully new programs will interest them.

Dr. Zwaan asked if Rec meets the residents where they are, such as the Water Street Apartments? Mr. Bisson said pre-Covid we were going down there regularly, but then they were locked down. They're slowly opening again, and Mr. Tovey has a meeting with Water Street's Director to talk about programming. We started back up a YMCA walking program, and we're providing free transportation. We're also starting a free Zumba Gold program for seniors, a painting class, small group music ensemble, and various yoga classes.

Mr. Kelly asked if this would be the first enclosed trailer for the Department. Mr. Bisson said yes. Mr. Kelly said it seems like a good idea. It might be nice to consider making it into something like a mobile office. Mr. Bisson said it would be good for security of the equipment as well as extending the life of the equipment. We still have use for the current trailers, although one needs major repairs. Mr. Kelly asked where we would store the trailer in the winter. Mr. Bisson said on our property. Mr. Kelly suggested a Quonset hut to protect it.

Ms. Chester said the new total is \$389,485

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved the Recreation total of \$389,485. Dr. Rowan seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Chester said the new Benefits total for Parks is \$68,545. The new Parks total is \$245,212.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Parks budget of \$245,212. Ms. Canada seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Chester said the new Parks and Rec total is \$634,697.

Ms. Chester said the Exeter Brass Band has been at \$3,500 forever. They went \$35 over last year. Mr. Dean said they do four concerts, so we could raise it \$500 and give them \$1,000 for each concert. Mr. Bisson said \$1,000 is about average for what we pay a band. Mr. Dean said the Christmas Parade did a Citizens Petition article for more funding.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve \$18,500 for Culture and Recreation. Dr. Rowan seconded. Dr. Zwaan said he frequently misses the summer concerts. How many people really know what's happening with it? Mr. Bisson said we do email blasts, Facebook marketing, posters, etc. We have an average 75 - 200 people depending on the weather. All were in favor.

Ms. Canada asked where the Memorial Parade is in the budget. Mr. Dean said it's under Veteran's Activities. Florence Ruffner submits invoices through his office. There was a committee, but they're active some years and not others. Ms. Canada asked if there's a committee for the Holiday Parade, and Mr. Dean said not an official town committee, but there's a group of volunteers that works with Beth Dupell.

### Special Events

**MOTION:** Ms. Soutter moved to add \$500 to the Exeter Brass Band Concert budget. Ms. Belanger seconded. All were in favor.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved to approve the Special Events budget of \$15,500. Dr. Rowan seconded. All were in favor

Mr. Kelly said the new Culture and Recreation number is \$34,000.

### CIP – 10 Hampton Road Purchase

Ms. Soutter said we want to talk briefly about the opportunity to purchase a building for Parks and Rec and move them out of their current building. The new space would work better on several levels, with more space, more parking, and a better location. We would have a vacant building downtown, which we could use or sell.

Mr. Bisson played a video about the property. Mr. Kelly said he and Ms. Soutter took a tour, and there were recent updates. Very few infrastructure updates are necessary. Parks and Rec had almost \$12M of projects over the next five years, and this would buy us time and ensure that work would not run alongside the Public Safety work.

Mr. Bisson said this is not in the CIP; it came in too late, because we just recently started the conversation with the current owner. We're looking at \$1.25M for the property, with \$100,000 going into renovations to get staff in there. This will create a safer environment for programming. It will be quick for staff to get to the pool or summer camp immediately. The Parks Improvement Fund request was reduced from \$150,000 to \$50,000 to be fiscally responsible.

Dr. Zwaan asked about the square footage. Mr. Bisson said it's similar to 10 Hampton Road, since we won't have immediate access to the second floor, but 10 Hampton Road provides three meeting spaces where Court Street only has one meeting space on the first floor. Dr. Zwaan said the current building is barely ADA accessible. Will 10 Hampton Road need a lot of ADA retrofitting? Mr. Bisson said we're only looking at a couple points. The \$100,000 would get us ADA compliant access to the building. We will do a study of the Department's needs in order to plan a view of moving forward. The Facilities Committee voted 5-0 to support this.

Ms. Corson said this is a great opportunity. She would like to see what the \$100,000 would be used for, since it seems like it's not enough. We could potentially put more money into this. The parking lot looks like it needs a makeover as well. Where is Meals on Wheels going to go? Mr. Bisson said the Court Street property will still be an active site. There will be a discussion about what to do with the site. They like the central

location. Mr. Dean said getting voter support is the most important thing, so we want to keep the warrant article at a reasonable level. Mr. Kelly said he would like to see what work the \$100,000 could accomplish.

Dr. Zwaan asked if \$1.25M gets to a point where you are going to move everything from Court Street in and vacate the old building. Mr. Bisson said definitely the staffing. Some programming may continue at Court Street until we renovate the spaces.

Mr. Zigmont said he's supportive. It's close to the park and has a lot of upgrades that make it a more suitable building. However, it seems incomplete for a warrant article, because the vision isn't scripted out well. It should be a clear plan for 3 and 5 years. Mr. Kelly said that may not be able to be provided next week. The proximity to the Rec Park is the most important thing. Ms. Belanger said the accessibility to the fields is incredible. The building will come into place. Mr. Bisson said as soon as the info about the potential sale came out, people started parking there. Ms. Belanger said the parking at Access Sports Medicine could get cut off at any time, making this even more important.

Ms. Soutter asked if the Parks Improvement Fund was \$100,000? Mr. Bisson said we were going to put in for \$150,000 to address issues. Ms. Soutter said she doesn't support dropping it to \$50,000. Mr. Bisson said we want to be fiscally responsible. Mr. Dean said this purchase is going to take a lot of work, which will take away from parks. There's a balance of \$117,000 in the accounts. Mr. Kelly said we can talk about it next year.

Dr. Rowan asked how "lean budgets" came about. She appreciates the work of whomever made this possible, since it's easy to approve these budgets. Mr. Dean said the Departments have done a great job this year in their budgets. Mr. Kelly said there's an understanding of needs vs wants now.

4. Adjournment

Mr. Kelly said next Tuesday is Water and Sewer, Thursday the 18th is CIP and wrap up.

5. Mr. Kelly adjourned the meeting at 7:56 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary