

TOWN OF EPSOM  
BUDGET COMMITTEE  
JANUARY 5, 2021

**Present:** Marylou LaFleur-Keane, Chairman; Joni Kitson, Vice Chairman; Gary Kitson, Water District Representative; Virginia Drew, Selectmen's Representative; Meadow Wysocki; Joy Sheehan; Penny Graham; Mary Frambach; Joyce Heck; Len Gilman

**Virtual:** Linda Hodgdon

**Not in Attendance:** Brian O'Sullivan, School Board Representative

**Other Attendees:**

Marylou opened the meeting at 6:30 PM.

Marylou noted there were no Warrant Articles as the Selectmen reviewed them last night and DRA has not reviewed them. They should be available for the meeting on Thursday.

Marylou noted that she has requested the school to return on Thursday. Concerns with the school budget were discussed. It was discussed that the Committee will not make any decisions until the School Board returns with a revised budget. Gary thought that every day the school is closed there is money being returned to the Town. It was discussed that the overall cost is less if they are not in school.

Len asked Virginia how the tuition is calculated for students at Pembroke Academy. Virginia noted that tuition at Pembroke Academy is budgeted for every student who could attend.

**Minutes of December 29, 2020**

The minutes of December 29, 2020 were reviewed and amended.

**Meadow motioned to approve the minutes of December 29, 2020 as amended, Len seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

Virginia noted that the Parks Commissioner was able to encumber funds from 2020 for Forest Restoration (**Line 4520470**).

**Town Budget**

The Committee reviewed and adjusted some lines in the proposed Town budget.

**Line 4135370 – (Training & Conferences – Budget Committee)** - Meadow questioned the amount in this line. Marylou explained that allows members to attend the annual budget conference.

Marylou asked if the Town had the final numbers for the Health and Dental Insurance. Virginia was not sure but would check on it.

**Line 4192150 – (Zoning Compliance Officer Wages)** - Len questioned the number of hours the new Officer works. Virginia noted between 25 to 30 hours. She explained the new Officer is paid an hourly wage vs. the old Officer being paid a salary.

Len clarified that the Zoning Compliance Officer was paid by the hour. Len noted that the Selectmen could track what he is doing. Virginia noted that the Town has time sheets and employees can add what they are doing on the back of the time sheet.

Linda asked if there would be an updated revenue sheet. It was discussed that there should be an updated revenue sheet for 2020 as the one received was from December 15.

### **General Government Buildings**

**Line 4194310 – (Site Design – Building) - most likely be** Virginia noted this line would be for the Old Town Hall. She discussed the original contractor is unable to complete the work to repair a structural deficiency and a new contractor will cost more.

Virginia noted the Selectmen would like to make more use of the Old Town Hall. She discussed they are trying to put funds into the Town buildings so they can be used.

Len asked if it should be a warrant article rather than funds in the budget so voters have a say in the work. Virginia noted that the Selectmen would not want to do anything without input from the town residents. Virginia noted the money in the warrant article is for future use for construction on Town buildings.

Len discussed in 2014 the Selectmen noted there was a beam that cracked and employed a contractor to do the work. It was noted that contractor did not complete all the work, but installed a cable. Virginia noted if they can get more than that work completed, they would like to.

Virginia noted the Selectmen added funds for completing the repairs even though they did not know the amount to complete the work. She noted this line would have to be used for site design not the work.

It was discussed that site design could be gotten for less. Virginia noted she would like to see the building to be able to be used (Old Town Hall).

Meadow thought the funds should be in the repairs and maintenance line rather than in site design. Meadow was willing to leave the funds in the line as long as if the site design

is less than the funds could be used for repairs and maintenance. Virginia noted there is a \$14,000.00 increase in General Government Buildings lines.

Penny noted that for a historic building it is the appearance on the outside. She asked if there were repairs for other buildings. Joni noted the other departments have their own repair lines.

Virginia noted the Meetinghouse Committee is doing fund raising to complete work on that building.

**Line 419660 – (Insurance)** - Meadow asked about the insurance line. Virginia noted a new line was created for insurance with the funds being moved from another line.

### **Police Department**

Mary noted the Police Chief originally requested \$1.00/hour increase in wages for the officers. The Selectmen had reduced it to .50/hour.

Gary noted the year Mr. Curley was the Selectmen's representative to the Committee all departments received substantial increases with the Police Officers not receiving anything.

Virginia noted that the officers are paid much lower than other departments.

The salaries for the Police Officers were discussed. Linda noted that if the salaries are increased then other lines, including retirement are also increased.

Len noted he did not like comparing our town with other towns. Meadow noted that the Town has added businesses that would require additional coverage. Virginia felt that other departments would have requested the increases also.

Penny noted the Police Chief discussed the waiver for the non-use of the sick leave three-day pay was being discontinued in the Employee Handbook.

Virginia discussed the use of sick leave. She noted only 4 people would be affected by the removal from the Police Department plus one within the Fire Department that may be eligible this year.

Gary asked if the reason for the change was monetary, Virginia noted it was not. Len discussed the funds that are needed when someone retires and the Town not having a contingency fund for that payout of time accrued.

Len thought if something was put in the handbook for the non-use of sick time every two years is used rather than accruing the time to 288 hours.

Further discussion occurred. Virginia noted she will complete further research regarding

the payouts and the cost. She did not believe funds were included in the budget for the non-use of sick time payout. Linda noted the liability for the accrued time.

Gary noted that for the employees of the Police and Fire Departments the Budget Committee only sees a lump sum on the salary lines in the budget.

As the funds for this payout are not in the budget Marylou noted the budget should be adjusted to include the funds since the handbook had not been finalized therefore it is still in effect.

## **Fire Department**

Virginia noted the Board of Selectmen had a Fire Department request if the Committee would include an additional \$10,000.00 as a person has left and the Chief would like to employ a Para-medical/Firefighter. Joni asked what would occur if the budget would not pass.

Gary asked if we had a Para-medical now. The department currently has one that is only a Para-medical. Gary discussed personnel changes in the Fire Department.

Joni noted the \$10,000.00 would be for a partial year and next year the salary would increase more.

This person would also be able to complete training for the department.

Joni asked why the current Para-medical has 8 hours of overtime each week included in the budget every week. The issue was discussed with no one knowing why these hours were included.

Marylou called the Chief for a response for the Committee regarding the position. He feels he needs an additional Para-medical due to COVID. It was discussed that the Chief needs a better calculation for the total costs of hiring this person. Marylou will speak with the Chief to have him obtain a firmer number to include all costs, including retirement, etc. The salary would be \$26 to \$30 per hour for the position.

Len noted the ambulance service brings money in. Len asked if some of that money could be used to cover some of these costs. It was discussed that the fund covers other costs. Linda asked where that money is as it is not included in the revenue reports. Linda noted it would be nice to obtain the amounts in these funds (Ambulance and Police Department Special Detail Funds).

**Line 422150 – (Forest Firefighting)** - Meadow noted more funds were requested for the Forest Fire Line for 2021. Virginia noted last year funds were taken from another line which is why he put funds into the line this year.

**Line 422150 – (Forest Firefighting) – Meadow motioned to reduce this line by**

**\$500.00 to \$1,000.00, Gary seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

Penny noted the Fire Road Maintenance line was also increased and has not been spent in the past. Meadow noted the Chief indicated there was some work to be completed on the fire roads and some Class VI Roads.

**Line 4225430 – (Fire Road Maintenance) - Meadow motioned to reduce the line by \$200.00 to \$800.00, Joy seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

Penny asked if the Selectmen knew what the building maintenance funds would be used for. Virginia noted to replace the carpet after the other work is completed on the second floor.

### **Parks & Recreation**

**Line 4520470 - Forest Restoration – Joni motioned to remove \$1,000 from the line, Len seconded the motion.**

It was discussed that before trees are planted irrigation would need to be installed to be able to water the trees.

**The motion passed.**

### **Library**

**Line 4550680 – (Library Management Services) - Joni motioned to reduce the line by \$5,000.00 to \$90,389.00, Joy seconded the motion.**

Joni noted that they did not know how much was spent on books in 2020. Linda noted that there was \$24,000 in a book fund that they could take out \$5,000.00 a year over several years before the fund was drawn down to zero. It has been discussed in the past the Trustees have been requested to use this fund but have not.

Len discussed that a Library is not a necessity. He noted the Library needs to be self-sufficient. He thought there should be a way for the people who use the Library to pay for it. It was discussed that out-of-town residents have to pay a fee for use of the Library. Joy asked what happens to the old books. It was discussed the Library does have book sales.

**The motion passed.**

Penny asked if the groups that use the meeting room at night can be charged. Virginia noted the Library cannot charge for using the building. Penny asked if groups from out of town could be charged. Virginia reiterated the library could not charge for use of the building by groups.

Meadow noted that the Committee has requested other departments to come in with a reduction, she would support a reduction in this line.

Gary discussed that the Library salary line would increase for the 2022 year as they will be paying the two part time persons the same hourly rate as they receive now. Joyce noted the children's section has a lot of value to the community with many people using its services. Gary discussed the current Library Director remaining at her current salary and in 2022 the line will have to be increased substantially. Len noted they did not decrease the budget.

**Line 4550680 – (Library Management Services) - Len motioned to remove an additional \$2,000.00 from this line reducing it to \$88,389.00, Meadow seconded the motion.**

Len questioned paying for things that not all residents are using. Joy questioned the prices they are paying for books. Meadow noted they could use \$5,000.00 out of the book fund.

**The motion passed.**

### **Conservation Commission**

Marylou noted she has not had a response to any of her questions from the Conservation Commission. Meadow reiterated they could keep any funds not spent from their lines. She noted that the Town is not getting the things being mentioned by the Commission. Meadow noted it is difficult due to not having a response to the questions.

Joy noted the last meeting of the Conservation Commission was to be held on the day of the snow storm and it was under the understanding that no one attended.

The final sale of the Barton property has been completed. Joni asked if that is what the \$8,963 was spent on. No one knew.

Meadow asked if the fund could be used just for land purchase or other items. Joy noted they are having a difficult time keeping maps and she knew there are maps being printed and there were hunter safety vests to be used at the Town Forest during the fall hunting period.

Len asked if the Barton's had approached the Town about purchasing the land or if the Conservation Commission requested it. Joni noted the Barton's had asked for the money to be distributed over time. Len asked if we had an accounting for the money spent.

**Line 4611312 – (Mapping - Trails) - Joni motioned to reduce the Mapping and Trails fund by \$1,300.00 to \$200.00, Meadow seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

Penny noted the Town budget has been reduced by \$10,000.00.

**Line \$611310 – (Land Acquisitions & Easements) - Len motioned to reduce this line by \$2,500.00 to \$2,500.00, Joni seconded the motion.**

Virginia read an e-mail from Bear Paw regarding the acquisition of the Barton property with the Town now owning 700 acres of Conservation land. She noted New Hampshire has a great deal of land not being taxed in conservation.

**The motion passed.**

**Line 4611313- (Maintenance) – Len motioned to remove \$300.00 from this line reducing it to \$700.00, Joyce seconded the motion. Len withdrew the motion; Joyce withdrew the second.**

Len noted he did not see any maintenance expenses. Joy noted that they had worked with the Road Agent for maintenance of Tarleton Road to the parking area.

**Line 4611313- (Maintenance) – Len motioned to reduce this line by \$500.00 to \$500.00, Meadow seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**Line 4611690) – Land Management - Joni motioned to reduce the Land Management Line by \$500.00 to \$500.00, Len seconded the motion.**

Gary noted in the past 5 years only \$26.84 was spent in 2016 from the line.

**The motion passed.**

Meadow asked if the intention of the band was to come back next year. Penny noted they did not know due to COVID. Meadow asked if she thought they would hold all five performances. Penny discussed the performances and was not sure depending on COVID.

Penny asked if the Selectmen had a final default budget. Virginia noted the final amount is \$3,531,446. Virginia noted the revisions in the default budget.

Joni noted items for Thursday's agenda.

Penny asked if Marylou would let people know of the changes. She will be.

Linda noted the reduction in the budget from tonight's vote is \$13,500.00.

It was discussed that the committee is trying to keep the increase as little as possible.

Gary discussed increases in the Village Water District budget.

**Meadow motioned to adjourn; Len seconded the motion. The motion passed.  
Marylou adjourned the meeting at 9:40 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Bosiak  
Recording Secretary