

TOWN OF EPSOM  
BUDGET COMMITTEE  
NOVEMBER 12, 2019

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

**Not in Attendance:** Bill Yeaton, School Board Representative; Tony Soltani

**Other Attendees:** Nancy Wheeler; Ralph Weeks; Cheryl Gilpatrick; Rob Topik

Marylou opened the meeting at 6:34 PM.

**Minutes of September 26, 2019**

The minutes of September 26, 2019 were reviewed and amended.

**Len motioned to approve the minutes of September 26, 2019 as amended, Mary seconded the motion. The motion passed with one abstention.**

Marylou noted she had copies of the employee salaries. Additional information had also been requested that was not presented.

Meeting on Thursday was discussed as no Department Heads are scheduled for that date. There was a consensus to not have a meeting on November 14 with the next meeting being December 3.

Virginia presented the proposed 2020 Town Budget. She noted there is an additional pay period in 2020.

The rent on the Town Office will increase. This line also includes the postal machine and the post office box rentals.

Linda noted that she would be looking at the large and small increases to make decisions regarding reducing the proposed budget.

The increase for the Secretarial/Administrative salary includes a fifty cent per hour increase. Gary asked the percentage of increase. It is different for each person. The committee requested copies of the information comparing increases using fifty cents per hour vs. two percent of the existing wage. Certain employees (Police and Highway Department Employee) have higher increases.

The property insurance increase was discussed. Nancy noted that there is an increase in

the auto insurance due to an additional truck at the Highway Department.

Virginia noted that the Town Clerk/Tax Collector will be retiring April 1<sup>st</sup>. There are funds for a temporary position for three months at \$15.00/hour. Also included are the payout for the current employee. Gary asked who appoints the Town Clerk after the election. Virginia noted the Board of Selectmen.

Len thought that the position should be elected in March, not appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Virginia noted that the way it is being completed is to allow for a good transition. Len thought that it should be an appointed position rather than elected per the RSA. Joni discussed that a new person has to complete training by the State before they can register vehicles, etc. The position has been posted for applicants. It can only be filled by a town resident. The training period was discussed.

Joyce questioned who supervises the person. It was indicated the Board of Selectmen until the March 2021 election. Gary asked about the salary. It was discussed that it is an election position and the new person has to receive the budgeted salary. Virginia noted that it is a difficult position as it has to be a town person.

It was noted that there are four elections in 2020. The Supervisors of the Checklist have requested an increase due to the increase in the work to be completed. The Ballot Clerk increase is due to the number of elections.

The Financial Administrative Officer is retiring with the payout increasing the budget. There is an overlap for training a person for five weeks. Gary asked if there is a pay scale for the position. Both Linda and Gary suggested there should be a pay scale. Virginia noted that it is an important position in town, we have to be competitive for the position.

Marylou noted that she would not hire someone unless they are a CPA. Nancy discussed the various qualifications for the position. Marylou noted that it is government accounting, not normal accounting. Len noted that the Selectmen should have a salary number. Nancy noted that the proposed \$73,100.00 includes her salary, an additional pay period, and the new person's salary.

Linda asked why the salary for the part-time person is not broken out as it was for the Town Clerk/Tax Collector. Nancy noted that the part-time Town Clerk/Tax Collector position is shown separately as it is a new position for a short period of time.

Joni asked if the previous person who held the position had the same qualifications as Nancy. She did not with the position having different qualifications today.

The Tax Collector has the same issues as the Town Clerk.

Joni asked if the two persons retiring would be receiving the fifty cent per hour increase. It is planned that they would.

A revaluation of properties will be completed in 2020. The figure is based on a contract that has been executed.

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The Health Insurance increase is to plan for additional employees with the higher number being used for the new employees as it is not known which plan they will select. Gary noted that the Health Insurance costs have increased since 2018. Virginia noted that employees also receive an increase in their costs of Health Insurance. Joni noted that not all towns are enrolled in the State Retirement System. She noted that the benefit package Epsom provides has to be considered.

Virginia noted the reductions made in the Planning Board budget. The Assistant Zoning Compliance Officer's salary was increased to accommodate more hours.

Mary asked what the Secretarial Support Services includes under the ZBA lines. It was explained it was for sending out notices, etc.

Virginia noted that the Insurance/Computer Maintenance costs will increase. The contract with Sharp will not be renewed as they are changing what is being offered.

The salaries for the Police Department employees will increase by \$1.00/hour. Gary noted that four years ago the Selectmen did not grant any increase for the Police Employees even though money was included in the budget. Virginia noted that it is a very competitive field both in New Hampshire and nationwide. The Chief reduced his Equipment Purchase line by \$1,000.00. Virginia noted that the Administrative Assistant also does dispatching during the day.

Marylou asked about the increase in Police Department Vehicles. Joni noted that the whole amount for a vehicle has to be included in the budget even if money is used from other funds not included in the budget. It was also noted that new equipment for the vehicle would have to be purchased as the old equipment would not fit into a new vehicle.

Chief Yeaton asked for additional funds for the Part-Time and Volunteer Stipends due to the number of people. They can go to abutting towns and receive a higher pay.

Linda noted that the Police Department increased \$52,899.00 and the Fire Department increased \$68,425 at 13.96%

Emergency Management decreased the budget due to a grant received to purchase equipment in 2019 that will not be purchased in 2020.

The Highway Department Full Time position was increased by \$1.00/hour with an additional increase of fifty cents per hour in the future. The part time position is reduced.

The Road Agent increased the Engineering Services as the Center Hill Road bridge over the Little Suncook River needs to be reconstructed.

~~The Road Agent is hiring fewer subcontractors to complete work as it is being done in-house.~~

The Salt and Sand Line is reduced as he will not be using rocks for winter maintenance.

The maintenance costs for the F550 were discussed. Len discussed the Federal Regulations that are creating the increased maintenance costs.

It was noted that the BCEP budget has increased. There are composting issues. Gary asked if the \$100,000.00 added to the budget as a onetime thing about four years ago has continued since that time. It was noted that it is still included in their budget.

Virginia noted that the BCEP minutes are online. Len noted that he had spoken with Lisa regarding the budget. Len noted that the Federal Government is requiring new guidelines for landfills.

Penny noted that the BCEP's budget is based on population with Epsom having the highest population of the four towns.

The Welfare Officer has a larger need on rents. Joyce asked if money has been spent for the Deputy Welfare Officer. Virginia noted the current officer has not, but the position is required in case it is needed.

Gary asked if the Library budget include raises; Virginia noted it does at fifty cents per hour.

Meadow asked about the Land Acquisitions and Easements. She asked if this was to make land purchases or are they retaining the funds for future acquisitions. Meadow and Len questioned if the Town needs to acquire more land. The issues were discussed.

Mary asked if the Conservation Fund also received other funds from the Town. Nancy noted the additional funds they received. All Conservation Fund balances will be requested.

Gary asked the amount of the additional pay period, Nancy noted \$56,000.00. He noted that it was not much considering the 7.62% increase.

Gary asked why only \$10,000.00 was used from the Undesignated Fund to reduce the 2019 property taxes.

Nancy noted that as of December 2018 the balance in the Undesignated Fund was about 2.13 million with 1.13 million in cash. Gary asked what would have happened if they had used \$100,000.00 to offset taxes.

Linda noted that the \$56,000 for the additional pay period is 1.2% of the budget increase.

Meadow asked how the revaluation would impact taxes. It was noted that about 1/3 of the taxes would be reduced, 1/3 would increase and 1/3 would remain the same based on previous years.

Nancy explained what goes into setting the tax rate. Gary did not see the proposed budget passing. Nancy noted the original proposed budget was a 17% increase and the Selectmen have cut it down.

Nancy noted that in the past few years Warrant Articles have used funds from the Undesignated Fund.

Penny asked if there would be Warrant Articles that would use money from the Undesignated Fund.

The roof costs for the Library were discussed.

Joni asked if the Warrant Article could be written to take \$56,000.00 from the Undesignated Fund to pay for the 27<sup>th</sup> pay period.

Joni asked if DRA or the auditors would look at the line item increases. Nancy noted they do not.

Penny asked Marylou if they want to make changes in the budget when should they be presented. Marylou noted any time. She indicated it might be good to do so when the Department Head is present. Gary noted it would be good to obtain information from the Department Heads prior to their coming before the Committee. Penny verified it has to be a line item.

Linda noted that \$34,000.00 is equal to 1% of the budget.

Ralph Weeks noted that the Committee was discussing the BCEP and the law passed in 1984 that a cost cannot be passed on to a lower entity without funding the cost.

Len noted the increase cost of the budget asking if the Department Heads could be asked to reduce their budget by 7.62%. He indicated he would rather have them have an opportunity to reduce their costs.

Gary noted that salaries are increasing and we have to look at cutting. Virginia noted that the people are providing the services. Meadow asked if the salaries, benefits, and insurance were not considered what impact would they have to consider.

The school budget was discussed and the costs of the SAU. It was noted that other school districts are also concerned with the increased SAU costs.

Linda asked if there was agreement on sending something to the Department Heads. It

was discussed that something should be sent to them before they make their presentation to the Committee to make a 3% reduction in their budgets. The departments to be sent notice to include Highway, Police, Fire, Library, Conservation, Emergency Management, Zoning and Planning.

Len discussed the difference in the budgets of the BCEP and the Library. He asked why the Library costs are more than the Town's share of the BCEP. Len noted that tipping costs at the BCEP are \$75.00 a ton. He discussed that recycling does not make money.

**Len motioned to adjourn; Joni seconded the motion. The motion passed. Marylou adjourned the meeting at 9:43 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Bosiak  
Recording Secretary