

TOWN OF EPSOM
BUDGET COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 15, 2022

Attendees: Marylou Keane, Chairman; Gary Kitson, Water District Representative; Meadow Wysocki, Selectmen's Representative; Mary Frambach; Joyce Heck; Len Gilman; Linda Hodgdon; Michael Muise, School Board Representative

Not in Attendance: Joni Kitson, Vice Chairman; Penny Graham

Other Attendees: Virginia Drew; Cheryl Gilpatrick

Marylou opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

Minutes

The minutes of September 22, 2022 were reviewed and amended.

Gary motioned to approve the minutes of September 22, 2022, as amended; Floyd seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Marylou passed a letter to Committee members received from the Northwood Lake Watershed Association.

TOWN BUDGET

Meadow noted the proposed budget has a 2.7% increase. The salary increase was \$1.00/hour with some employees not accepting an increase, the Road Agent and Zoning Compliance Officer.

Meadow noted ARPA funds were used for additional increases for the Police and Fire Department. They received an additional \$2.00/hour from these funds.

The Board of Selectmen determined there will be a \$1.00/hour increase for town employees. Other costs (FICA, Workers Comp, etc.) would have to come out of the budget, not from the ARPA funds. Other ARPA funds are being used for the Water Department and the renovations for the Town Hall.

Len thought it was confusing with the way the funds are being used and the increases not put into the budget.

Gary suggested using the \$60,000.00 for purchasing supplies in 2022 that will be needed in 2023 and then use the money saved in the 2023 budget for raises in 2023. Meadow noted there are Federal guidelines for the use of ARPA funds. The issues were discussed.

Marylou asked how long the funds could be used, Meadow noted until December 31, 2024. Meadow noted \$499,000.00 was the total amount of the ARPA funds the Town would be receiving.

Virginia noted items that the ARPA funds could be used for.

The raises were discussed with Floyd asking what would happen if the budget was defeated next year. Meadow noted the raises were given in October to the employees.

Floyd noted that this year a \$1.00 raise shows; where the Town is committed to giving the additional \$2.00 an hour is not shown.

Linda discussed if the tax payers don't vote for the increase in 2024 what could occur. Marylou noted that the raises will be included in the default budget in 2024. Marylou noted that the Selectmen have to show where the FICA, etc. payments are coming from. Meadow noted the \$60,000.00 was determined by the Selectmen for the increases.

Len noted that 2024 is going to be a hard year as the funds are not being shown in the budget for previous years. Linda noted that if the purpose is to not lose employees it would be difficult in 2024. Len asked if there was a way to show the funds in the budget and where the funds are coming from.

Meadow will research and obtain responses to the questions.

Rental and Leases is reduced as they hope to move to the Town Hall in March. The Administrative Assistant wages were increased by \$1.00/hour.

They reduced the Budget Secretary by 3 meetings to \$1,380.00. Marylou noted that she liked having a buffer for the number of meetings.

The Town Clerk/Tax Collector wages are increased by \$1.00/hour along with the Deputy wages.

They reduced the wages for the Supervisors of the Checklist due to less elections and the purge has been completed.

The Financial Administrator wages will increase \$1.00/hour.

Meadow discussed the items that Legal Expenses were used for.

Health and Dental Insurances will increase. Retirement will be reduced by 3% as of July 1, 2023. The State has increased their portion of matching funds.

The Zoning Compliance Officer has an assistant so his wages were reduced.

Government Buildings has an increase due to utilities for the new facilities for offices. The heat in the new building will be electric. There will be increases for maintenance – snow plowing, lawn mowing, etc.

Gary asked if the Selectmen looked at Primex for insurance. He noted that they should obtain a quote from them.

Meadow noted that they have offered Lt. Michaels the Chief's position as of January 1, 2023 when the current chief retires. Marylou asked if other positions would be changing. That has not been discussed. Police Dispatch is increasing. Mike noted it is based on calls, etc.

Police Department fuel costs are increasing. The new Police vehicle will cost more in 2023. Marylou asked if any funds would be coming from the Special Detail line, Meadow will research.

Floyd asked if the Fire Department is fully staffed. Meadow noted that a new person was just hired. All positions have a \$1.00/hour wage increase. Utilities will be increasing for the building.

The new Emergency Management Director is bringing things into compliance, etc. He is working on a grant for a new generator for the Fire Department.

The Road Agent chose to waive the increase in wages, the Full-Time employee wages will be increasing by \$1.00/hour.

Meadow indicated that BCEP will be a flat budget.

The Welfare Officer will receive a \$1.00/hour increase.

The Town Band was reduced to 4 performances this year vs. 5 in previous years. The current year had 4 performances.

Gary asked the amount used from the Fund Balance to offset taxes. Meadow noted \$320,000.00 was used. The tax increase is .20/\$1,000.00.

Len discussed the wage increases and justifying them to the tax payers. Meadow discussed that the town wages are so far behind surrounding towns that they are trying to catch up. Floyd noted that training, etc. for lost staff is costly. Len is looking at not just this year, but next year also. Gary noted that if we increase our wages then the surrounding towns will increase their wages.

Marylou verified that the actual for Police and Fire wages for 2022 does not include the \$2.00/hour raise.

Meadow discussed that it is difficult to get the information out to the voters. Budget issues were discussed.

Floyd discussed the Ambulance Fund and using some of the funds for wages and other costs. Marylou noted it used to be an 80/20 split, but then it went to 100%. Floyd asked if there was something at the Police Department these funds could be used for. Gary thought it might be a good thing.

The amount in the Ambulance Revolving Fund was discussed. Meadow will verify the amount in the fund.

Virginia noted when the Board discussed salaries it was a public meeting. Len noted that no one attends the Board of Selectmen meetings.

The school budget was discussed and that the SAU budget was discussed in a non-public meeting.

Marylou noted that Joy has officially resigned from the Committee.

Issues with the budget were discussed and the wage increases. Len noted that if the Town is so far below with wages where are we with the scale of wages and how far do we have to go before we catch other towns.

Meadow noted that you have to budget for the worst-case scenario. Marylou noted that in the end the funds will have to show in the budget. She cannot see how the funds are not shown as revenue.

Mary asked what would occur with the vacant position. Marylou has spoken with someone, but she has not received an answer.

Mary asked when the next meeting is – Marylou noted December 1. Mike will not be available on December 1. Other meetings will be December 6, 8 (at the library), 15 and 20.

Gary motioned to Adjourn; Floyd seconded the motion. The motion passed. Marylou adjourned the meeting at 9:12 PM.

Respectfully,

Betsy Bosiak
Recording Secretary