

**TOWN OF EPSOM**  
**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES**  
**October 22, 2019 AT 5:30 PM**

Hugh Curley  
Virginia Drew  
Cheryl Gilpatrick

Approved: **Cheryl / Virginia**  
**Vote: 2 – 0 in favor**

Staff Present: Nancy Wheeler, Dawn Calley-Murdough, Dawn Blackwell, Kathy DesRoches, Scott Elliott, Gary Perry, Rick Bilodeau

Other Attendees: Meadow Wysocki, Mary Frambach, Joni Kitson, Linda Hodgdon, Robert Paine

Virginia called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm and asked Dawn B. to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Virginia reviewed the agenda and no changes were needed.

**Motion by:** Cheryl to accept the agenda. **Second by:** Virginia. **Vote:** 2 – 0 in favor.

**Budget Presentation Discussion:**

**Town Clerk/Tax Collector:** Dawn B. announced her retirement for March 2020. She indicated the increase in her salary account is because of the payout of her earned vacation time, but it did not include a raise for herself, or a raise for the Deputy, and she would leave the decision up to the Selectmen. The proposed budget includes a new account for an Assistant Town Clerk/Tax Collector position, which is the salary amount for her replacement. She proposes \$15.00 per hour with funding for 35 hours per week for at least three months, as she hopes someone is hired by January. Dawn B. stated all salary accounts include the amount needed for the extra bi-weekly payroll for 2020.

Discussion took place about the job experience and training the new Town Clerk must have in order to complete vehicle registrations and what will be helpful. The Training account includes attendance to the Town Clerk Training and the Tax Collector Training, as well as hotel stays with a single occupancy. There are other increases across the TC/TC accounts for the new Assistant, including funds to become a Notary.

Printing and publishing has increased because there are four elections in 2020, and it would be wonderful to have the new Town Clerk/Tax Collector on staff for the Presidential Primary.

Dawn B. stated she included a repeat request from 2019 for a new cabinet to store license plates; which are currently stored in a hand me down from the school that is very difficult to open. She reduced the amount needed for dog forfeitures because of the decreasing trend of numbers. Additional funds were included to pay the full amount needed for the blank tax bills.

Dawn stated while there is an overall increase for her budget it is primarily due to her retirement and the training of the new Town Clerk/Tax Collector, which is unusual for her budget.

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Virginia expressed her appreciation for all the work Dawn B. did for the town and stated she will be missed.

**Emergency Management:** Rick stated his budget is level funds, except for the Equipment Purchase, which decreased \$2,000.00 as he has no plans to purchase new equipment for 2020, and he is currently not seeking any grants.

Cheryl asked how many hours are needed for the position. Rick stated there is no set number of hours, and is a stipend payment. However, he is required to complete a variety of tasks throughout the year, including different surveys, update the P.O.P., and he can complete Table Top trainings. It was stated his annual stipend is paid out quarterly.

Rick stated he does have purchases planned for his 2019 budget, now that he has passed the year without any emergencies and he was informed of the purchase order deadlines.

Discussion took place about mileage and Nancy stated it is a reimbursement for his travel when he uses his own vehicle for the position.

**Parks:** Gary stated he did not increase the proposed 2020 budget at all, leaving it level funded with only some adjustments between accounts, and it still includes \$1000.00 for fireworks.

Gary stated he did have some tree replacement for 2019, but doesn't expect to expend as much for 2020 reforestation. Discussion took place about what work took place in 2020, which included stump grinding and hauling and removing of the stumps. There was also enough clean material which is being used to cover a lot of the park area to make it ready to start planting new trees. Gary stated he will ask the board to encumbered funds to purchase the trees in the spring.

Gary stated he is looking to complete updates to the railing and spindles for the bandstand for grounds work, and he expects to continue replacing posts within the fencing surrounding the park and around the playground. Gary stated he also hoped to install a new walk way near the playground area. Eagle Scouts are welcome, if there are any seeking to complete projects.

Gary stated he does a lot of the work at the park for free, seeks volunteers when he can, and utilizes all available materials for what is needed at the park.

Virginia thanked Gary for keeping his budget level funded.

**Planning Board:** Kathy reviewed the proposed 2020 budget for the Planning Board, stating budget has been increasing slightly over the last few years, and will do so again in 2020 with the audit process of the forms, checklists, and Planning Board processes. The Central NH Regional Planning Commission will review all the forms, checklists, and processes used by the board to make sure they are consistent with the ordinances and regulations and will make recommendations for any needed updates. This audit process is being completed by many towns

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and should provide a better experience for the customer. Discussion took place about how the audit process will be split between the 2019 and 2020 budget at \$1,125.00 per year.

Kathy stated it can be difficult to know how to budget when you do not know how many or what type of applications the board will receive. It was stated the increase in the Regulatory Planning Updates account is the \$1,125.00 for the audit process and funds to update the Capital Improvement Plan, which happens every other year. Updating the Master Plan continues, but Kathy thought that no additional funds were needed.

Kathy stated there is an increase in legal expenses to address previously filed cases and some expectation for additional legal services in 2020. There is some free help from the NH Municipal Association and the CNHRPC, depending on the case, but it isn't the same as town specific advice. It was stated the CNHRPC does not provide legal assistance, only planning assistance. Kathy stated she feels the legal assistance helps protect the town from possible lawsuits. Cheryl stated the audit process of the forms and processes will help tighten up the requirements, preventing future legal complications.

Kathy would determine if the CIP must be completed in 2020 and she will verify if any additional increases in Regulatory Planning Update funds would be needed.

**Library:** Bob presented the Library budget for 2020, as well as their 2019 expenditures, stated the Library Trustees have planned for minor increases for 2020. Book prices are stabilizing, with suppliers such as Amazon, which is helping to keep their budget low.

Cheryl asked for descriptions of each of the library supply categories. Bob stated the accounts pay for all books and reference materials, as well as periodicals, DVD's, computers and computer programs, and magazines as well as other citizen used materials. The leveling out of many book costs has helped the Library take care of the other needs.

The library is asking for some additional funds to clean the old library once a week. There are also minor increases for Utilities to match the current usage, water based on a notice from the Water District, and telephone. The Trustees have caught up on many needed building maintenance items and does not anticipate anything significant for 2020.

The Trustees did provide all employees with a \$0.50 raise in 2019, and is planning to do so again for 2020, as well as a raise for the Page. The Page is a high school student who assists with general library work, such as putting away books. Bob stated the salary amounts also include the amount needed for the extra pay period.

Bob stated the total proposed increase to the Library budget is approximately 5% for 2020.

Cheryl asked about the typical programs offered by the library. Bob stated adult programs such as book club, movie night, and special programming, as well as providing things for the

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Children's Program with story times, crafts, and much more. Many programs are offset by donations made by Friends of the Library.

Virginia stated the Library is also used for community meeting space. Bob stated most programs provided by the library are free.

Bob explained the Trustees have paid a lot of attention to library employees, as Epsom pay rates are significantly lower than many of the other surrounding towns in New Hampshire. There is an expectation for further salary changes as current staff considers retiring from the library.

It was stated the library roof repair would be included in the general operating budget.

**Highway:** Scott reviewed the Highway budget, stating he kept the Road Agent salary level funded, but did request a raise for the Highway Assistant at \$2.00 per hour, and the salary amounts also include the extra pay period. Epsom salary amounts for highway help is less than many of the surrounding communities. Jessie has provided additional technical service to the town with vehicle repairs, which has helped provide savings in vehicle repair accounts. Overtime pay is of course dependent upon the number of snowstorms. The department has benefited from using the Department of Correction Prisoner assistant program and he lowered the Part Time Position.

Scott stated he decreased the Snow Removal/Labor account for subcontractors; however, the amount can change based on the amount of snow that is received. An increase for Pipes and Culverts was included to replace needed culverts and to have some on hand in case of an emergency. Additional funds are being asked for engineering services to repair Center Hill Road bridge, which will include assistance in finding an appropriate repair contractor.

The Detail account was reduced and flagging companies will be used instead.

Scott stated he will continue to complete a lot of the road work on his own with rented equipment, which has provided the town savings over contracting the work out to a subcontractor. Subcontractors will still be needed for mowing, grading, and crack sealing. He will complete road striping next year, and he will focus on the road that have more traffic. The rental account includes renting an excavator, but by doing so, it saves in other areas of the budget.

Scott stated he did increase the Vehicle Maintenance account because of the number of vehicle repairs he has seen in 2019; in case his warrant article for a new truck does not pass.

Scott stated there are areas of his budget where one account was increased, but others were decreased. The biggest increase in his budget is related to completing work on North Pembroke Road that will be completed with both operating budget funds and \$150,000.00 from capital reserve funds. He would like to complete paving on Mountain Road North, Range Road, and the bridge on Center Hill Road.

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Training is estimated at five classes per year at \$60.00 per class. Most classes are taken at UNH under the T2 road program. Scott stated he just received his Road Scholar I certification.

There is the hope to replace the F550 in 2020 and the Expedition in 2021. If the warrant article does not pass, there is the expectation to spend more funds repairing both older vehicles.

Scott stated he found his last snow plow truck driver for the season, but it did take a while to find enough drivers.

The department has minimal postage, with only periodic notices to the residents about upcoming road work. New Orchard Road residents received notices regarding the road work and replacement of mailboxes.

Discussion took place about the delay in receiving the new truck. The gas and diesel accounts are tough to estimate with the change in fuel types being used. There has been additional usage because of the additional driving, including meeting with additional property owners.

Scott stated he does like to try and keep many of the day to day supplies available for when they are needed, which is the reason for the increase in Operating Supplies. He is also requesting an additional amount in the Equipment Purchase account to buy a leaf vacuum, a Billy Goat, for the front of the F550. A decrease is seen in Electricity but there is an increase for Heat & Oil to match the actuals.

Scott stated he received approval to take some building materials from the old Care Pharmacy building to construct an area with a roof covering to hang spreaders, to help extend the life of the equipment.

The account for Bridge Expense increased \$22,000.00 for the Center Hill Road bridge repair.

It was stated while the budget increase is listed as \$254,136.00, funds from the capital reserve fund of \$150,000.00 will offset that amount.

Virginia asked if there is any concern about having too many projects in 2020. Scott stated he is confident about being able to get the work done.

**Salaries:** Nancy stated the town had previously reviewed and established a pay grade schedule, along with a wage matrix and step increases. Nancy stated she updated the matrix for cost of living increases.

Nancy provided the board with the history of the Thornton Wage Scale and Matrix. It was recommended by Mr. Thornton to adjust the grades based on employee job duties and the salary matrix based on changes in cost of living. The study wasn't adopted by the Board of Selectmen, but it is used for period adjustments to salaries. There haven't been any adjustments to the job grades for individual positions, even though there have been some changes proposed to job description duties.

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Virginia stated there have been a variety of methods prior boards have used to consider raises for employee salaries. Including individual percentage amounts, a specific dollar amount, or not even at all. There have been situations where the boards have raised salaries of emergency responders, but because it hasn't been consistent the town now finds it is again at the lower end of the pay scales and is causing employee retention problems.

General discussion took place with the board members about what method they would consider for employee raises. Virginia asked each board member to consider what they would like to do for employee raises.

Nancy asked the board if they wanted to see the comparison between Epsom and other municipalities. Virginia asked for Nancy to supply the information.

**Selectmen Reports:** None

**Public Comments:**

**Other Business:** Nancy stated the town received the preliminary tax rate and asked the board when they wanted to meet and determine any adjustments. The board decided they would meet Thursday, October 24 at 8:00 am.

**Adjourn the Meeting**

8:42 PM Motion by: Cheryl to adjourn the meeting. Second by: Virginia. Vote: 2 – 0 in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Calley-Murdough