Budget Committee Meeting

Town of Gorham

Gorham Town Hall

Public Meeting Room

Minutes of FEBRUARY 1, 2024

Members Present: Mary White, Adam White, Marie Duguay, Judy LeBlanc, Paul Bousquet, Stephanie Russell, and Dio Thagouras, and Kathy Corrigan (via Zoom)

Absent: Greg O’Neil

Town Staff Present: Peter Gagnon, Town Manager; Bronson Paradis, Finance Director; Michelle Lutz, Assessing; Phil Cloutier, Fire Chief; Jimmy Willhoite, Police Chief

Minutes Taker: Shelli Fortin

AGENDA ITEMS & DISCUSSION

**1.** Call to order: 6:00 PM by Mary White

**2.** Review of Minutes of January 30, 2024

**On a motion by Adam White, seconded by Marie Duguay, the Committee voted to approve the minutes of January 30, 2024, as written. Mary White-abstain**

**3.** Finalize the Budget Committee’s Budget for Public Hearing

**On a motion by Paul Bousquet, seconded by Marie Duguay, the Committee voted to approve the Executive Office budget, in the amount of $168,434, as presented.**

**On a motion by Paul Bousquet, seconded by Judy LeBlanc, the Committee voted to approve the Financial Administration budget, in the amount of $292,690, as presented.**

Mary White asked why the fiscal assistant line was more than the permanent position line, and was advised it is for the fiscal assistant and half of the payroll/HR position.

**On a motion by Paul Bousquet, seconded by Judy LeBlanc, the Committee voted to approve the Welfare budget, in the amount of $25,075, as presented.**

**On a motion by Paul Bousquet, seconded by Adam White, the Committee voted to approve the Personnel Benefits budget, in the amount of $1,050, as presented.**

**On a motion by Adam White, seconded by Stephanie Russell, the Committee voted to approve the Legal Expenses budget, in the amount of $72,000, as presented.**

**On a motion by Judy LeBlanc, seconded by Dio Thagouras, the Committee voted to approve the General Government Building budget, in the amount of $96,885, as presented.**

**On a motion by Paul Bousquet, seconded by Judy LeBlanc, the Committee voted to approve the Welfare budget, in the amount of $25,075, as presented.**

**On a motion by Paul Bousquet, seconded by Judy LeBlanc, the Committee voted to approve the Advertising and Regional Associations budget, in the amount of $4,597, as presented.**

**On a motion by Judy LeBlanc, seconded by Adam White, the Committee voted to approve the Insurance budget, in the amount of $57,158, as presented.**

**On a motion by Paul Bousquet, seconded by Dio Thagouras, the Committee voted to approve the Animal Control budget, in the amount of $2,050, as presented.**

**Paul Bousquet moved, with a second by Dio Thagouras, to approve the Election and Registration and Town Clerk budget as presented.**

**Paul Bousquet moved, with a second by Marie Duguay, to amend the Town Clerk budget to approve a salary increase of 3.5% including benefit lines.**

The Committee was reminded that the Selectmen and administration are still working on this budget, and still have some legal questions. Judy LeBlanc advised that they want to avoid the perception that they have increased the hours just to qualify the position for insurance, and not due to workload. LeBlanc noted that they may be able to include the insurance without the additional hours. Bronson Paradis advised that the salary increase would increase the bottom line from $66,490 to $67,780.

**The motion to amend, and second, and motion to approve as presented, and second, were withdrawn.**

The Committee agreed to table the Town Clerk budget and wait for the Selectmen to meet on Monday, February 5, 2024.

**On a motion by Judy LeBlanc, seconded by Adam White, the Committee voted to approve the Tax Collector budget, in the amount of $90,279, as presented.**

Bronson Paradis advised that he has adjusted the Software line in the Assessing Budget to $33,193, which brings the total to $328,565.

**Paul Bousquet moved, with a second by Judy LeBlanc, to approve the Assessing, Planning and Zoning, and Building Inspection budgets, as presented.**

Adam White asked for the cost of the additional full-time position and was advised it is between $60,000-$73,000. Mary White noted that the office used to have one full-time person, and then a part-time assistant was added, and now the assistant is full-time. Peter Gagnon advised there is more building inspection work required with short-term rentals, and as the secretary to the planning and zoning boards there is a lot of technical and follow-up work required. Adam White noted that he would like to see this position as part-time. Stephanie Russell asked about the job, and Michelle Lutz stated that she needs to be in the field more now that they are losing the Assessor on March 31. Sansoucy will pick up some of the assessing work in addition to the commercial work they already do. Phil Cloutier noted that it is difficult to find someone to work part-time that has qualifications. Adam White questioned whether after training someone to be an assessor, they would stay. Michelle Lutz noted that if they were trained, the Town could save money on assessing services. Marie Duguay asked if the job description had changed, and Lutz advised the workload has increased. Stephanie Russell asked if Lutz had any overtime and Lutz advised she did not. Paul Bousquet asked what the tax impact would be on the additional $40,000 and was advised it is about ten cents per thousand. Marie Duguay asked if the committee could send a letter to the Selectboard asking to be notified in changes in positions and was advised they would not. The budget committee can choose to reduce the budget, but it is up to departments heads as to how it will be spent.

**Adam White made a motion to amend the Assessing/Planning and Zoning/Building Inspection budget by decreasing it $44,050, which was seconded by Dio Thagouras. The vote was 4 in favor, and 4 against, and the motion failed. Bousquet – no, Russell -no, LeBlanc - no, Duguay - no**

**The Committee voted on the original motion to approve the budget as presented and 5 were in favor and 3 opposed. The motion carried. Thagouras – no, Adam White -no, Mary White -no**

**On a motion by Paul Bousquet, seconded by Judy LeBlanc, the Committee voted to extend the meeting past 8:00 pm if needed. Thagouras – abstain**

**On a motion by Paul Bousquet, seconded by Marie Duguay, the Committee voted to approve the Police Department budget, in the amount of $905,300, as presented. Mary White - no**

Paul Bousquet noted that he is voting in favor of this as there are many additional people in town in the summer, crime has gone down with the addition of another officer, he does not want a lack of coverage from midnight to 6am, and these officers put their lives on the line every day. Adam White stated that Chief Willhoite would like to see two officers per shift, and predicted that they will need nine officers to do this, and the town cannot afford this with the current tax base.

**On a motion by Paul Bousquet, seconded by Judy LeBlanc, the Committee voted to approve the Dispatch budget, in the amount of $352,856, as presented.**

**On a motion by Judy LeBlanc, seconded by Adam White, the Committee voted to approve the Patriotic Purposes budget, in the amount of $6,660, as presented.**

Stephanie Russell noted that the town has increased costs due to tourism and asked if they could tax extra on commercial properties since they are benefitting from this. Peter Gagnon advised that the legislature does not allow this, and they are looking at other revenue streams.

**On a motion by Paul Bousquet, seconded by Judy LeBlanc, the Committee voted to approve the Fire Department budget, in the amount of $196,909, as presented. Mary White- recused, Adam White – recused**

**On a motion by Paul Bousquet, seconded by Dio Thagouras the Committee voted to approve the EMS budget, in the amount of $706,536, as presented.**

Mary White noted that the EMS budget does have revenues that offset the expenses.

**On a motion by Judy LeBlanc, seconded by Dio Thagouras, the Committee voted to approve the Emergency Management budget, in the amount of $7,287, as presented.**

**On a motion by Judy LeBlanc, seconded by Marie Duguay, the Committee voted to approve the Highway budget, in the amount of $1,027,117, as presented.**

**On a motion by Judy LeBlanc, seconded by Adam White, the Committee voted to approve the Solid Waste budget, in the amount of $327,590, as presented.**

**On a motion by Marie Duguay, seconded by Adam White, the Committee voted to approve the Cemetery budget, in the amount of $47,775, as presented.**

**On a motion by Judy LeBlanc, seconded by Dio Thagouras, the Committee voted to approve the Street Lighting budget, in the amount of $24,000, as presented.**

**On a motion by Dio Thagouras, seconded by Adam White, the Committee voted to approve the Gas/Diesel budget, in the amount of $41,000, as presented.**

**On a motion by Adam White, seconded by Judy LeBlanc, the Committee voted to approve the Recreation budget, in the amount of $181,908, as presented.**

Stephanie Russell asked if they could fund the Recreation assistant position from the Revolving Fund this year, and Peter Gagnon advised that they had already spend money that was not anticipated on repairs at Libby Pool this year. This suggestion could be included in the budget for next year.

**On a motion by Judy LeBlanc, seconded by Stephanie Russell, the Committee voted to approve the Parks budget, in the amount of $48,873, as presented.**

**On a motion by Paul Bousquet, seconded by Judy LeBlanc, the Committee voted to approve the Library budget, in the amount of $166,442, as presented. Mary White – no, Adam White – no**

**On a motion by Adam White, seconded by Stephanie Russell, the Committee voted to approve the Water budget, in the amount of $616,145, and the Sewer budget, in the amount of $646,705, as presented.**

**On a motion by Paul Bousquet, seconded by Adam White, the Committee voted to approve the transfers as presented.**

**On a motion by Paul Bousquet, seconded by Judy LeBlanc, the Committee voted to approve the Conservation Commission budget, Principal on Long Term Debt, Interest on Long Term Debt, Interest on TAN, and the transfers to trusts and agency funds as presented.**

Mary White advised that Capital Reserve Funds has been reduced by $188,000 from the 2023 appropriations. Mary White reviewed the amounts of the appropriations, which total $607,900. Mary White asked how much would be in the Road Resurfacing CRF with the $150,000 added this year and Bronson Paradis advised it would be about $720,000.

**On a motion by Marie Duguay, seconded by Adam White, the Committee voted to approve the Capital Reserve Funds budget, in the amount of $607,900, as presented.**

**On a motion by Stephanie Russell, seconded by Dio Thagouras, the Committee voted to approve the Road Resurfacing budget, in the amount of $80,000, as presented.**

**On a motion by Dio Thagouras, seconded by Judy LeBlanc, the Committee voted to recommend the Petitioned Warrant Articles, in the amount of $57,640, as presented.**

**4.** Next Meeting Date

Tuesday, February 13, 2024, Public Hearing

**5.** Adjournment

**On a motion by Dio Thagouras, seconded by Stephanie Russell, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Shelli Fortin