



Budget Committee Meeting
Town of Gorham
Gorham Town Hall
CONFERENCE ROOM

MINUTES OF JANUARY 28, 2020

Members Present: Diane Bouthot, Douglas Gralenski, Abigail Evankow, Daniel McCrum, Mary White, Lee Carroll, Jessica McCreedy, Judith Leblanc, Selectmen's Representative

Absent: Robert Demers

Town Staff Present: Denise Vallee, Town Manager; Paul Bousquet, Library Trustee; Clare Fox, Library Trustee; Michelle Lutz, Assessing; Reuben Rajala; Marion Aldrich; Tara MacKillop; Patti Stolte; Moriah Tilton; and Rebecca Lavoie

Minutes Taker: Shelli Fortin

1. Call to order: 6:03 PM

2. Approve Minutes 1/21/2020: **Motion to approve as amended by adding "EPA expertise" by Diane Bouthot, seconded by Jessica McCreedy. Voted in the affirmative. Mary White abstained.**

Approve Minutes 1/22/2020: **Motion to approve from Abigail Evankow, seconded by Diane Bouthot. Voted in the affirmative. Jessica McCreedy and Daniel McCrum abstained.**

Paul Bousquet requested to speak on behalf of the Library Trustees. Bousquet thanked the Committee for what they do and stated that decisions they make are not easy. Bousquet pointed out that the Library budget is only up \$35.00, and the Trustees and Directors keep in mind the best interests of the citizens, patrons, and visitors to the Town of Gorham. Bousquet advised that the Trustees had considered a considerable raise for the Library Director, but cut it back to 2%, following the rest of the town. The Trustees reduced the CRF by \$5,000. With the retirement of the Assistant Director, the Trustees decided that in order to attract and retain quality candidates, they needed to keep benefits with the position. Bousquet pointed out that Buteau looks for grants to reduce costs and provide programming. They have established the Friends of the Gorham Library, which will hopefully lead to more involvement and activities to generate funds. Bousquet stated that he feels the budget is fiscally responsible, at only 2.6% of the municipal budget, and meets the needs of the community. Bousquet asked the Committee to support the budget as presented.

3. Old Business

Mary White brought up the topic of posting agendas and minutes. It was decided that the minute taker would bring the Agenda to the Police Department to be posted, and will forward a copy of the agenda and minutes to Michelle Lutz to post on the town website.

Mary White advised that she contacted the NHMA concerning the authority of the Budget Committee to modify the total amount proposed for the Library's annual budget. She was advised by the NHMA that the budget committee can cut the bottom line of the recommended budget. White requested to present her research on the Library and potential cuts that could be made at the meeting on Thursday. It was agreed that the meeting could run past 8:00 pm on Thursday to allow for this to happen.

Denise Vallee advised that she will present the final budget to the Committee on Thursday at 5:45 pm.

Doug Gralenski advised that he will have a draft copy of the Budget Committee Report for the Annual Report at the meeting on Thursday.

4. New Business

a. North Country Home Health and Hospice

Marion Aldrich presented information about North Country Home Health and Hospice. Aldrich advised that they have submitted a warrant article for \$5,000. In 2019, they served 74 Gorham residents. NC Home Health and Hospice does receive reimbursement from Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance, with Medicare being the majority. Aldrich stated they would not be allowed to provide a breakdown of clients on these insurances, as that would violate HIPAA regulations, however their financials are available in the packet. Aldrich advised that Berlin has 306 residents served by their organization, but does not provide funding. They have requested \$10,000, and it will go before the City Council again this year. They also provide community services, such as grief support groups, and classes on advanced directives, and would like to know what the community is looking for. Judy LeBlanc asked about Bethlehem's portion, which is only \$4,000, even though they have 9% of the clients. Aldrich advised their clientele is usually lower. LeBlanc asked if the majority of clients are home health or hospice and Aldrich advised they have more patients with home health needs, but provide more visits to hospice patients. Diane Bouthot mentioned that AV Home Health bills monthly and returns the money they do not use. Aldrich stated they are only asking for \$5,000, not \$18,000, and use the money to help cover their \$14,000 shortfall. Abigail Evankow asked where the other \$9,000 comes from to cover the shortfall and Aldrich advised from grants and endowments. Mary White noted that of the 26 communities served, only Berlin does not contribute. White also mentioned that the amount requested comes out to \$67.57 per patient. Aldrich stated that services are available 24/7, 365 days a year for the community and they are not asking for more than they need. The Committee asked if there is any overlap or duplication of services with AV Home Health and was advised there is not, as AV Home Health provides different services.

b. Androscoggin Valley Home Health

Tara MacKillop, the Executive Director of AV Home Health, advised that in 2019 they served 46 Gorham clients with personal care and homemaking needs.

MacKillop advised they do receive funding from Berlin in the amount of \$8,774.00 and serve 207 Berlin clients. They are asking for \$18,000 from Gorham. MacKillop advised they expanded their services to all of Coos County on July 1, 2019. They are trying to seek additional funding but have been unsuccessful with most. The only other community besides Berlin and Gorham for funding will be Groveton, which has 24 clients. MacKillop stated they have had trouble reaching other communities. They also receive funding from Medicaid CFI, the VA, and from private pay. Doug Gralenski expressed concern that Gorham was carrying the burden for other communities. It was also noted that \$18,000 is a large amount for the number of clients served. Gorham picks up the amount that is not covered by other funding. Of their budget, clients pay \$9,500, the state pays \$44,000, and thru November of 2019, Gorham paid \$16,425. Judy LeBlanc pointed out that Berlin is paying less for more patients and must have a deficit as well, MacKillop advised they do fundraise to offset those costs. Dan McCrum asked if grants are also applied to Gorham's costs and was advised they are. Lee Carroll asked for clarification on the amount requested, and it was confirmed that the warrant article was submitted for \$18,000. It was noted that page 11 of the financial report is missing. Denise Vallee has a copy of the final auditor's report and will forward that to the Committee.

c. Family Resource Center

Patti Stolte advised that they are again requesting \$15,000 for the Family Resource Center, which in years past has been used for matching grants, but this year will be used for the After School Program at the Edward Fenn School. They also request \$15,000 from the SAU. This year they did not get the grant from the Department of Education for the ASP, as their free and reduced lunch percentage was below 30%. Stolte advised that parents do pay for the program, and they are implementing a new fee structure this year. The program is held at EFS until 5:30 pm. The cost of the ASP is \$50,000, and others grants received include \$2,500 from Citizens Bank, a portion of a \$5,000 grant from the Tillotson Fund, and a Community Development Grant for \$2,000 from Eversource. Other groups, such as the NH Food Bank, the Library, and the Recreation Department, help with in-kind services. The FRC does get the same rate for oil and electricity as the town. Mary White stated that the current lease has expired and requested a list of maintenance costs that the FRC has paid for over the last 20 years, in lieu of rent. The SAU is an 11% owner in the building, and also pays rent for extra space. The FRC currently pays \$225 per quarter for office space in Colebrook and just purchased a building on Main Street in Berlin for \$69,000. They also provide programs working with families with substance abuse issues, visitations for DCYF, and child and maternal health for the Department of Health. They do receive reimbursement from the state for these programs, and the cost of the Littleton program is completely covered by Healthy Families. Denise Vallee advised that the FRC is one of the top 10 employers in Gorham, currently employing 80 people. There are 14 full-time positions, and 15 residents of Gorham are employed there. Stolte advised that the FRC also brings people to the area for meetings, who help to support our local businesses.

d. Gorham Community Learning Center

Moriah Tilton and Rebecca Lavoie were present to answer questions about the Gorham Community Learning Center. They have submitted a warrant article for \$6,000 this year. They have added an infant program this year, and provide services for children age 6 weeks to 12 years. They currently have 2 infants from Gorham, 1 toddler, 17 preschool students, 10 Pre-K, and 15 aged 5-12, for a total of 45. Berlin has 14 residents in the program, and parents transport the children there. Berlin does not currently provide any funding. Shelburne has 10 residents, and Randolph has 5. Both of these communities currently do support GCLC, Randolph with \$3,500, and Shelburne at \$2,500. Randolph also gives an additional benevolence in the amount of \$2,500. They currently only have 1 preschool special needs student enrolled. Last year the SAU looked at providing their own preschool services, but it was determined that was not needed. Mary White requested to know if this money was in the SAU budget and how it was used. Diane Bouthot asked about the increase in tuition from \$210,000 to \$307,000, and was advised it is due to an increase in rates. The rates are \$45 per day for an infant, \$40 for toddlers, and \$37 for others. They are open from 6:30 am- 5:30 pm. After school care is \$15 per day and the school provides transportation to the center. Doug Gralenski suggested that Berlin residents be charged a higher fee until the city starts providing some financial assistance. Tilton advised that the majority of employees are part-time by choice, and they do have one employee who has another job in addition to this one. There are no benefits included, except for one employee who gets a stipend towards insurance. The cost for rent increased this year due to needing extra office space.

e. Gorham Historical Society

Reuben Rajala spoke on behalf of the Gorham Historical Society. The Society operates mainly on a donation basis through the museum, model railroad, and engine displays. Improvements on the building are done in fits and starts, and some of the collected railroad equipment is in need of repair. Most grants for railroads are given to active ones. They are applying for a grant for work on the building, including fixing rotted eaves, painting, replacing windows, insulating, and installing a heating system. They are requesting \$4,000 from the town to cover operational costs, the same amount they have requested over the last several years. They hired someone last year to provide tours 3 days per week from 10 am- 3 pm, and pay \$10.00 per hour. She was originally an ABLE trainee, but that cost is only covered for three years. They are open May through October. They have a telephone line and take messages on a recording system. Rajala advised that 75% of their visitors come from the park after stopping there. They do sell a limited number of shirts, books, and postcards. They are hoping for new members to get involved and are looking into sending out a newsletter to residents. Diane Bouthot asked if they have contacted the Recreation Department to add information to the kiosk at the common and Rajala commented that many ask about the Historical Society at the Information Booth. The building is owned by the Historical Society but the land is leased. The cost of the lease is \$157 per year. Jessica McCreedy suggested that offering regular hours would allow residents to feel better about the money given to the Society.

5. Date of Next Meeting: Thursday, January 30, 2020

8. Adjournment – **Diane Bouthot made a motion to adjourn at 8:17 PM, seconded by Lee Carroll. Voted in the affirmative.**

Respectfully Submitted
Shelli Fortin