



Budget Committee Meeting
Town of Gorham
Gorham Town Hall
CONFERENCE ROOM

MINUTES OF JANUARY 30, 2020

Members Present: Diane Bouthot, Dan McCrum, Abigail Evankow, Robert Demers, Mary White, Jessica McCreedy, Lee Carroll, Judy LeBlanc, Selectmen's Representative

Absent: Mary White

Town Staff Present: Denise Vallee, Town Manager; Shannon Buteau, Library Director; Paul Bousquet and Claire Fox, Library Trustees; Michael Waddell, Selectman; Adam White, Selectman

Minutes Taker: Shelli Fortin

1. Call to order: 5:49 PM

2. Review of Revised Selectmen's Budget

Denise Vallee advised that the revised budget from the Selectmen has a total increase in the operating budget of \$82,779, and a decrease of \$70,827 in the non-operating budget. This is an estimated tax increase of \$0.046 on the tax rate. Michael Waddell advised that the Selectmen were trying to hold the budget flat, and removed \$72,000 from the Road CRF. This will still leave an addition of \$200,000 this year, which will give the town the money needed for the OHRV lawsuit and the police radios. Waddell explained that they are putting forth ideas for lessening the impact of motorized recreation in town, but noted that anything that the town does will present issues. However, they need to pay attention to the neighborhoods. The Police Department will reduce their CRF in 2021 since they are getting an increase this year to purchase the new radios. Vallee explained that the quote for the new cruiser came in at \$51,963, so the Cruiser CRF was increased to \$49,300. Police Equipment is \$13,500 and there is already a balance of \$8,298. The additional funds needed will come from the drug forfeiture account, which is separate fund. It was requested that Denise Vallee email a list of funds such as this to the Budget Committee. Jesse McCreedy suggested that in the future, sources of funding, such as this, should be disclosed in order for the Budget Committee to have a more informed process.

On a motion by Judy LeBlanc, seconded by Diane Bouthot, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the budget presented tonight by the Board of Selectmen for the Public Hearing.

3. Approve Minutes 1/28/2020:

Motion to approve minutes of January 28, 2020 from Lee Carroll with a second from Dan McCrum. Voted in the affirmative.

4. Old Business

No old business was discussed at this time.

5. New Business

a. Northern Human Services

Kassie Eafrazi advised that they are requesting the same amount as in previous years, \$2,895, which is per capita. Jesse McCreedy asked if the money is used for their mental health component and was advised by Eafrazi that it is. The money received from Gorham becomes part of their general fund, which is also used to subsidize services that are not paid for by insurance or the client. There were 98 Gorham residents served last year and they do not anticipate much fluctuation in that number. There is a sliding scale fee charged for services not covered by insurance. Services utilized by residents are 24/7 emergency services, which they are mandated to provide but are not funded, and emergency evaluations at the hospital, which are billed by the hospital. McCreedy requested that they provide a program line which could show how the money from Gorham is used. McCreedy requested a breakdown of services by town and Eafrazi advised that Berlin is 78.61%, Milan 5.64%, Dummer and Randolph both 0.79%, Shelburne 1.31%, and Gorham 12.86%. Eafrazi advised that 13% of total write-offs for last year would be \$19,000, and McCreedy pointed out that some municipalities may have more write-offs than others.

b. Gorham Public Library Budget Discussion

Doug Gralenski advised that Mary White sent copies of her library research to members of the Committee. The Committee noted that the primary issues seem to be with the operating hours and book purchases. Shannon Buteau advised that they like to keep their non-fiction up-to-date and provide new releases to patrons. Jesse McCreedy suggested that the Trustees find out what the standard budget for purchases is for similar towns, and also requested to find out what the budgets are for the towns listed by White. Buteau presented a study last year of how reduced hours would affect the budget and the savings were not huge. Gralenski asked how the Trustees oversee and create the budget and Paul Bousquet advised they begin the process in September or October and usually meet 3 times. There are 3 Library Trustees, who are elected, and one alternate. Meeting minutes are available on the website. Clare Fox stated that they also take into account feedback from customers about the services they would like the Library to provide. Bousquet advised that they attended a workshop for Library Trustees that was held in Gorham and have established a Friends of the Library group. Jessie McCreedy asked if this would help reduce cost and Bousquet and Fox stated they would like to see increased programming and purchase of materials. Bousquet stated that the Trustees built a budget as close to last year as possible, while still providing a living wage and benefits to employees. Fox noted that the Library is something to be proud of and helps to bring people to the community. Gralenski suggested that they come up with a way to handle issues with the budget earlier next year, and the Trustees stated that committee members are welcome to attend their meetings, which are held once per month. Bousquet stated that he met a patron of the Library recently who takes out 13 books every week, and noted the cost savings in not having to purchase those books. Judy LeBlanc mentioned that she recently spoke with a parent, who stated they cannot afford preschool for their children, and they utilize

the free programs at the Library in its place. Vallee noted that the extended hours that our Library is open may be due to the number of programs offered, and suggested comparing it to the programming available at other libraries.

c. Androscoggin River Athletes

Terry Letarte and Pamela Couture advised they are requesting the same funding as in previous years, \$2,000. This money goes into their general budget to provide year-round sporting events to 45 athletes, ages 8-70. There is no cost to athletes for the program, and everyone else involved volunteers. There are no paid employees. The Berlin school system provides bus transportation to games, and volunteers transport athletes to practices. Money received from Berlin is through the Recreation Department, and is minimal, but they do provide in-kind services. Jessie McCreedy asked about the Corporate/Municipalities Donation line and was advised the money received from Gorham is included. The expenses in the budget total \$16,118, and the revenues are only \$13,150. Couture advised that Special Olympics of NH helps to cover the difference. Letarte advised they do try to fundraise, and did work with Northwoods Casino one year. Proceeds from fundraisers such as the Torch Run go to the state organization.

d. Androscoggin Valley Chamber of Commerce

Paula Kinney and Mark Belanger advised they are requesting \$3,000 again this year, which is the same as the last two years. Money is used for matching funds for a Joint Promotion Program Grant from the State of NH Travel and Tourism. Money spent on marketing includes brochures, radio, and social media, which is live and can be adjusted as needed. Belanger pointed out that the rooms and meals tax in Coos County has grown significantly, which is due in part to marketing. The increase in tourism is benefitting both Berlin and Gorham. Belanger advised that they also request \$3,000 from Berlin, but do not request from the towns of Randolph, Shelburne, Milan, and Dummer, as they do not have as many businesses and it is a business membership organization. Kinney advised that they currently have 259 members, and will sort this by town for the Committee. Bob Demers asked about campgrounds and Kinney advised both Timberland and White Birches in Shelburne are members, along with a new campground in Milan. Kinney advised some AirBNB's have also joined, and Denise Vallee advised Gorham currently has 9 or 10 AirBNB's in town. The current marketing contract for 2019-20 is \$33,235. This year funds were also used to build a new website. Abby Evankow asked about the current balance on their financials and was advised that each event has its own budget and all the money is grouped together. Some of the balance of their funds is money for Heritage Park, some for gift certificates, and some for the ATV Festival or Riverfire. Operating costs come from memberships and profits from events. Jesse McCreedy noted that most events are held in Berlin, and asked if the benefit to Gorham is through the rooms and meals commerce, which the Chamber confirmed.

e. Tri-County Community Action Program

The total request from Tri-County CAP has increased by \$1,400 due to the new Homeless Outreach program, for a total of \$14,800. Lyla Villeneuve advised that Senior Meals is requesting \$2,700, which is the same as last year. In 2019, they

served 1,845 meals in Gorham, and delivered 4,058 meals to homes. This delivery also serves as a wellness check. They have a kitchen in Berlin to serve the surrounding areas, and cover all of Coos County. Brenda Gagne, Director of Transportation, stated that they are requesting level funding again this year in the amount of \$4,500. This will help with the cost of door-to-door and flex-route transportation services. They also provide long distance transportation to medical appointments outside of the local area, and have been working with the Vet Center to provide free transportation to the VA in St. Johnsbury at no cost to veterans. They operate through some donations and state reimbursements. Volunteer drivers are reimbursed \$0.54 per mile, and do need to have a record check, a mechanical inspection of their vehicle, 40 hours of training, and insurance. They are bonded through Tri-County CAP. Kathy Wiles advised that the Energy, Fuel Assistance, and Weatherization program is also requesting level funding in the amount of \$3,000. This past year, they provided fuel assistance to 155 households in Gorham, electricity assistance to 130 households, and weatherization to 14 homes. They served a total of 2,227 households in Coos County. Commodity foods are also distributed through this program. Diane Bouthot asked about denied applications and was advised it is most likely due to missing documents. Aid is based on monthly gross income. They also provide emergency assistance to those in need. Cheryl O'Malley stated that ServiceLink had 4,770 contacts in Coos County in 2019, of which 404 were with Gorham residents. Assistance is provided with Medicare and Medicaid enrollment and they helped to save residents over \$45,000 with their expertise in enrolling in and comparing plans. They also provide a caregiver program, providing respite to those caring for loved ones, allowing residents to stay in their homes. They will also be starting a VA program for veteran suicide in the next couple of years. McCreedy asked if their services were duplicated elsewhere and was advised they are not. ServiceLink is requesting \$3,700, level funding for this year. They received \$1,200 from Berlin. It was pointed out that Berlin has a larger percentage than Gorham residents that are provided services, but they contribute less. O'Malley stated that they requested more, but it was not received. Kristy Letendre provided an overview of the Homeless Prevention and Intervention Program. This program is designed to quickly end the immediacy of a housing crisis, along with providing case management to maintain shelter. They are requesting \$0.50 per resident in each town to help fund the program and match federal grants. The Tyler Blaine House in Lancaster is the only area shelter, with 14 beds and 2 emergency couch beds. The director advised that the shelter is almost always full, but not always with local people, as some may come from downstate in need of a place to stay. Doug Gralenski pointed out the cost for Gorham in relation to other towns is not equitable. This year they are asking Gorham for a total of \$14,800, and are only asking Berlin for \$13,000. Judy LeBlanc advised that if a lesser amount is voted on at Town Meeting, it will be up to the organization to decide how it is broken out to the different departments.

Bob Demers asked what the total amount requested for the petitioned warrant articles was, and Vallee advised it is \$80,950, or about \$0.30 on the tax rate.

Abby Evankow asked about the 4th of July Committee and why they did not provide an application. Vallee advised this is a warrant article by the Selectmen and their report is included in the Annual Report each year.

The Committee reviewed that they can recommend or not recommend each petitioned article, and the amount can be adjusted on the floor at Town Meeting. Doug Gralenski asked if restrictions could be placed on an increase in funding for the Historical Society if they were to be awarded the grant. This will be researched and discussed after the Public Hearing. Recommended amounts for petitioned warrant articles will also be discussed after the hearing, along with deciding who will present those recommendations at the Town Meeting.

Dan McCrum asked about the Fund Balance retained and Vallee advised this will not be decided until October, when the tax rate is set.

Bob Demers asked about contracts with the surrounding communities for dispatch and ambulance services. Vallee advised that they are still negotiating, and have a tentative agreement with Randolph. Dispatch contracts were billed at \$500 for the first quarter of this year, and will be included with the ambulance contracts starting April 1. The amount will go up incrementally over the first three years.

Doug Gralenski provided the Committee with a draft for the Budget Committee report for the Annual Report. The Committee agreed to submit it as presented to be included.

Lee Carroll asked if a motion was needed for the Library or Water and Sewer budgets and was advised this will be done at the Public Hearing.

5. Review dates for upcoming public meetings:

Public Budget Hearing: February 12, 2020 at 6:30 pm at the Medallion Opera House (snow date February 13th)

Denise Vallee will get the slide show ready and make copies for everyone. Jessie McCreedy requested that items be voted on separately rather than grouped together.

GRS Cooperative School District Meeting: March 5, 2020 at 7:00 pm at GMHS Gym

Town Meeting: March 10, 2020 at 7:00 pm at GMHS Gym

6. Adjournment – Diane Bouthot made a motion to adjourn at 8:31 PM, seconded by Judy LeBlanc. Voted in the affirmative.

Respectfully Submitted
Shelli Fortin