



Budget Committee Meeting
Town of Gorham
Gorham Town Hall
Public Meeting Room

Minutes of January 11, 2018

Members Present: Diane Bouthot, Chairman; Doug Gralenski, Vice-Chairman, Robert Demers; Lee Carroll; Dan McCrum; Abby Evankow; Judy LeBlanc; Todd Lamarque; Terry Oliver, Selectmen's Rep

Town Staff Present: Robin Frost, Town Manager; Denise Vallee, Director of Finance & Administration; James Watkins, Fire and EMS Director

Others present:

Minutes Taker: Shelli Fortin

AGENDA ITEMS & DISCUSSION

1. Call to order: 6:00 PM

2. Approve Minutes 10/17/2017: **Motion to approve from Judy Leblanc with a second from Doug Gralenski. Voted in the affirmative. Todd Lamarque abstained.**

3. Review of Revenue and Expenses Report to Date

Judy Leblanc made a motion to table this discussion until January 16, as it is on the schedule for that meeting. Motion was seconded by Abby Evankow. Voted in the affirmative.

4. Review Selectmans Proposed Recommended Budget

The total proposed budget for 2018 is \$4,590,510, which is down \$196,632. TM Frost advised that the warrant article for the roads is not included in that, which is an additional \$272,000. Bob Demers mentioned the huge tax increase this year and TM Frost explained that it was due to about \$1 million in deferred revenue in the audit. Frost stated that now that the Munce properties have been taken care of and the mill has been paying, this number will be reduced in the 2017 audit. Frost stated that there was almost \$300,000 in the fund balance, but none of this was used to reduce taxes. Dan McCrum asked about the property taxes and the increase in that amount. He was advised that this is the amount of the warrant, and not the amount collected. TM Frost advised that 80-90% has been collected. Oliver mentioned to the committee that although the tax rate is high, we pay for things that other towns do not pay for, such as garbage pickup. Whether you pay for this as part of your taxes, or as a payment for a private service, the amount equals out.

5. Review of Budget Requests from Fire and EMS

Chief Watkins presented the EMS budget first. Watkins advised the full-time positions were up a little in the budget, but the overtime and part-time were down. He advised there were three full-time positions in the EMS department, however a resignation was received from one of the paramedics and they are unsure if they are going to fill the position. They still have the same

number of part-time employees, and have seven people in the orientation process. The department has been trying to figure out a new schedule with him filling in some of the shifts. Watkins advised that the problem with this is that it takes him away from his other duties, and if he fills in on 12-hour shifts, it makes it difficult to be here 5 days per week as per his agreement with the town. Watkins is currently serving as both the Ambulance Director and Fire Chief, in addition to being the Emergency Management Director and the Health Officer. Watkins is concerned that with the FEMA declaration for the October 30 storm, there will be more work to do coordinating those repairs in the near future. Bob Demers asked about reimbursement for calls at Wildcat and was advised it is covered by the contract with the county. Judy Leblanc mentioned that they may be running at a loss when transporting to Memorial Hospital in Conway. Watkins advised that it was the policy when he arrived here that if they transport to Conway a duty crew is called in to cover town. Watkins advised that the patient is billed under their insurance for the miles they are transported. Bob Demers asked about the overtime line and why it exceeded what was budgeted. Watkins advised that some is for when full-time personnel cover 911 calls at night, or for transfers that they do. Watkins advised that he is hopeful that some of the new part-time personnel will cover some of these calls. Dan McCrum pointed out that whether or not the full-time position is filled, the \$235,000 budgeted can be shifted between full-time, part-time and overtime, and Watkins stated he is comfortable with that amount. Denise Vallee advised that the health insurance increase in the EMS budget is due to splitting Watkins insurance cost with the fire department. Leblanc asked about the billing line and was advised it is an old line item. The billing is now done in-house by a part-time employee. Watkins gave the committee several copies of bills as examples of why the revenues are down, as many insurance companies do not pay as well as they used to, and many are non-negotiable. Watkins also advised that their contract with Medicare had expired and has been renewed. Todd Lamarque asked about the vehicles for the department. Watkins advised that they removed Ambulance 1 from service, but received no bids. Watkins advised the committee that one suggestion was to wait and put it out to bid again in the spring. Gralenski asked what the blue book value was and Watkins advised that the problem with the ambulance is the motor, and no other ambulance service would purchase it. Terry Oliver advised they are also looking into scrap value for both the ambulance and fire truck. Leblanc asked about the drop in the gas line and Watkins confirmed that it was due to the drop in calls. Lamarque asked what the cost per gallon used for the budget was and Vallee advised it is \$2.60 for gas and \$2.75 for diesel. Diane Bouthot asked about the building and if it was fine. Watkins advised there are several issues that will need to be addressed at some point, including replacing windows on the EMS side, fixing the floor drains, and upgrading the lighting to be more efficient. Watkins advised that a quote was received for the drains, which was \$25,600, as the concrete needs to be cut back and replaced. Bob Demers asked about the heating costs and suggested that with the price of pellets being so high, they may be better off to only burn oil. Bouthot asked about the condition of the two ambulances that they have and Watkins advised Ambulance 2 may need to be replaced in 3-4 years. Watkins would like to purchase chains for both next fall. Lamarque asked about the balance in the Ambulance CRF and was advised it would be \$126,812 after this year's addition. Watkins advised this should be good when needed.

Watkins advised the Fire Department budget saw the greatest drop in the training and physicals line items. Bouthot asked why the training was down and Watkins advised he had nobody sign up for classes. Watkins is hoping to offer some guest speakers for training this year. Leblanc asked if other departments were included when training was offered and Watkins advised that it is open to others. Watkins advised that the dues and subscriptions line was down \$1,000, but after further review it was decided that it needed to stay at the original \$3,000, since almost all of it was spent last year. Bob Demers asked about the Cascade Fire Station and what the plan was for that. Watkins advised that Engine 2 has been moved to central and the tanker to Cascade. Demers asked if there was room at the central station for the tanker. Watkins advised that part of the problem with the drains in the station is that the tanker is so heavy, he also advised that space is tight. Demers advised that we cannot continue to pump money into the Cascade station and it will need to be eliminated at some point. Evankow asked who would decide this question and was advised the Board of Selectman. Oliver added that it would be at the recommendation of the fire department. TM Frost advised that the Cascade station is an emotional issue for the fire department and that this station also houses the Federal. Gralenski suggested that finding a way

to display both antique fire trucks that the department has would be a good senior project for a high school student. Bouthot suggested that the department needs to prioritize and that the central station should also be a concern. Lee Carroll suggested that Watkins discuss the issue of the Cascade station with his men and Oliver added that they should try to come up with a plan within the year. Bouthot asked about the cost for hydrants and was advised that this is money paid to the water and sewer department to maintain and shovel out the hydrants. Bouthot asked about the SCBA bottles that were outdated last year and Watkins advised they have purchased new ones and are in compliance. Watkins stated that he is working on a grant to replace the air packs and on a grant for portable radios. They have hired a grant writing company to assist with this. Watkins also advised that the USDA has grant money available that he will be applying for. Demers asked about the 1983 fire truck and Watkins advised that this engine is the one that was put out to bid. They are hoping to replace this and the tanker with a combination tanker/pumper truck. The current tanker is a manual transmission and not many of the firefighters are able to drive it. Watkins advised that dealers will not take the tanker in trade, and suggested selling it outright, possibly to a logging company. Gralenski suggested checking with the hatchery to see if they would be interested. Leblanc pointed out that the operating cost for both department was \$543,000, but when you apply the revenues, the cost is about \$277,000 for both departments, or only about \$1 on the tax rate.

6. New Business

There was no new business.

7. Date of Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 16 at 6:00 pm.

8. Dan McCrum made a motion to adjourn at 8:04 PM, seconded by Doug Gralenski. Voted in the affirmative.

Respectfully Submitted
Shelli Fortin

Approved