



Budget Committee Meeting
Town of Gorham
Medallion Opera House

Minutes of JANUARY 12, 2021

Members Present: Douglas Gralenski, Diane Bouthot, Abby Evankow, Greg O'Neil, Patti Stolte, Lee Carroll, Reuben Rajala, and Adam White, Selectmen's Representative

Absent: None

Town Staff Present: Denise Vallee, Town Manager; Kathy Frenette, Finance Director; Judy LeBlanc, Selectmen; Phil Cloutier, Fire Chief; Adam Marsh, Police Chief

Minutes Taker: Shelli Fortin

1. Call to order: 6:03 PM by Douglas Gralenski

2. Minutes of October January 7, 2021

Motion to approve minutes of January 7, 2021 from Diane Bouthot, with a second from Patti Stolte. Voted by roll call vote in the affirmative. Stolte, Bouthot- yes, Rajala - abstain, White - yes, Evankow - yes, O'Neil - yes, Gralenski - yes

3. Old Business

Diane Bouthot asked when the \$50 stipend was implemented and Denise Vallee advised it was passed the first week of November and took effect on November 15. Vallee advised there is no contract with the Highway Department, it is a policy adopted by the Board of Selectmen. Adam White advised that the State of Vermont pays \$100 per week and NHDOT pays \$35 per week, or \$40 if you have a CDL medical card. White advised there are written protocols as to what they can and cannot do, and it is an official policy. Vallee will send the policy to the Committee. Bouthot stated she contacted other towns to see if they also have this policy, and had only heard back from one so far. Vallee advised that each employee receives the stipend from November 15 through April 15. If they are not available for the call out, they would not receive the stipend, such as if they were on vacation. Abby Evankow asked if other towns were offering this and Adam White advised that Whitefield gave \$75 per week the last he knew. Evankow asked if this was taken from last year's budget and Vallee advised it was taken from last year's budget from November 15 until December 31, and is currently coming out of this year's budget. Greg O'Neil advised that the beverage industry also pays an on-call stipend, which was \$35 per week.

4. New Business

a. Review of Fire and EMS Proposed Budget

Chief Cloutier reviewed the proposed EMS budget. Cloutier advised that the salary line has increased due to an increase in wages to be competitive. Paramedics now make \$22 per hour, EMT's \$18.50, and part-time at \$14.50. The total increase in permanent positions is \$14,130. On-call positions are the same. Overtime is up \$1,471 and training is down \$1,000. Health

insurance increased \$3,310, and Social Security, Medicare, and NHRS all saw increases. Telephone and internet have increased \$270, but there were reductions in the Medical Services budget of \$250 and the Maintenance and Repair line by \$325. Gasoline and Diesel are both down, \$918 and \$120 respectively. Medical Supply is up due to the rise in prices, however Equipment and Machinery is down \$500. Licenses has gone up by \$1000, and utilities remained flat. The total increase in the EMS Department budget is \$27,920. A Committee member asked about wages and Cloutier advised that they are right in the middle of other communities. Cloutier advised that revenues are down from last year, but still better than expected at about \$180,000. Cloutier advised that ambulance service contracts have been signed with surrounding communities through 2024, which work in everyone's favor. Reuben Rajala asked how many ambulances they currently have, and Cloutier advised they have two. Diane Bouthot asked about the number of calls this year and Cloutier advised they had 640, but usually have 800. Bouthot asked who pays for transfers and Cloutier advised that the insurance pays for hospital-to-hospital transfers, which is added to the revenue line. Rajala asked if there have been problems collecting fees and Cloutier advised that they do send some bills to collections, but they are doing pretty well.

In reviewing the Fire Department budget, Cloutier advised that the Permanent position is up 2% for COLA.. The Volunteer Position line is up \$5,000. There is no overtime. Internet and telephone have increased, but repairs are down \$1,000 since the SCBA's include the first-year certification. Gas is up \$802, but Diesel and Vehicle Expense are down. Uniforms have been reduced by \$7,500 as he was able to get a grant for \$10,000 for turnout gear. Unemployment is up, but Workmen's Compensation is down. IT Support increased by \$240, and Training and Electricity are flat. Heating Oil is down \$921 based on a 3-year average. The total Fire Department budget is down \$1,854. Cloutier advised firefighters are not paid to be on-call, just paid by the hour when they are called out. EMS is paid to be on-call. Patti Stolte asked about the reduction in Workmen's Compensation, which is due to a premium holiday from Primex. Diane Bouthot asked if we would be in the same predicament in several years, with all of the SCBA's needing to be replaced at once. Cloutier advised we will have to save money in the CRF to plan ahead for this. Bouthot asked how many were currently on the Fire Department roster and Cloutier advised there are 48 between Fire and EMS. Reuben Rajala asked about river rescue equipment or training. Cloutier advised there are a few members who are trained in water rescue, but they do not have equipment, which can be expensive. Cloutier advised Berlin FD does have a boat and Doug Gralenski pointed out that NH Fish and Game could also respond. A Committee member asked about the average number of fires per year and Cloutier advised there are usually a couple, but less is best, and prevention is part of their jobs.

Cloutier advised that the Emergency Management budget is basically flat, with the only increase being \$58 for NHRS.

b. Review of Police and Dispatch Proposed Budget

Chief Marsh reviewed the Police Department budget. Marsh pointed out that the permanent positions increased by \$63,672 with the addition of Lt. Wilhoitte, to assist with administrative tasks, and another officer which brings them to seven. Part-time officers are used to overlap hours when busy or to help cover any available shifts. The Overtime line did go down by \$5,456, and Training was increased to \$3,000, which is important for retention purposes. Phone and Internet are up \$608. Prosecution Services is flat, and they are still using Attorney Wendy Roberts to assist, which is working well. Printing costs are up, along with Office Supplies, which includes toner for the new copier. IT services is up, but gas is down. Field Supplies is down, but there are still items that need to be replaced annually.

Ballistic Vests need to be replaced every 5 years. Uniforms increased, as they now have 7 permanent positions, and need to replace older items. Health benefits increased by \$43,775, and Medicare and NHRS are also up. Special Detail was increased by \$2,000 due to anticipated road work this year. The total increase in the Police Department budget is \$147,704. Diane Bouthot asked about the Police contract, which Marsh advised was ratified in late December. Bouthot asked about Calls for Service, which Marsh advised was just under 9,000. Marsh stated they had a more reactive approach this year due to COVID in the spring, but increased patrol activity this summer. A Committee Member Evankow asked about OHRV patrols, which Marsh advised would be a combination of enforcement on the trails and on the roadways. Bouthot asked how many Calls for Service were for OHRV complaints and Marsh advised he did not have that number available at this time. OHRV were mostly minor accidents that they responded to. Fish and Game and the Coos County Sheriff's Office handle the majority of accidents on the trails. Doug Gralenski asked if OHRV's are bringing revenue into the town, such as donations from Polaris. Marsh advised he is not aware of any donations like this. Gralenski asked about the additional rooms and meals tax that the town can charge. Vallee advised that although they can charge an additional percent, they have not figured out how this would be collected, as the tax now goes directly to the state. Marsh advised that there is definitely an uptick of OHRV activity in the summer months. Bouthot asked if a fee could be charged when someone is issued a summons. Marsh advised the state has an administrative fine schedule. Marsh advised they did have an OHRV ticket book for town ordinances that is in the works that they are hoping to adopt this year. Marsh advised that they do receive a grant from the state for OHRV enforcement. Abby Evankow asked about the OHRV patrols and if there were dedicated officers. Marsh advised that he is not sure what the Sheriff's office has planned, but Gorham's patrols will depend on availability of a part-time officer. Evankow also had a policy question, as the budget committee had approved a budget last year for six officers and a seventh officer has been added without any say from the Budget Committee. Adam White advised it was approved by the Selectmen with a split vote. White advised that the Budget Committee does put forward the budget to the town each year, but does not have a say on staffing or how the money is spent. Bouthot asked when the 7th officer was hired and Marsh advised he started in September. Marsh stated the officer is already certified, and will just have to do the law package for the state.

For the Dispatch budget, Marsh advised that there is an increase in the full-time budget of \$4,803. They were able to reduce other lines, including OT, Leave Coverage, and Holidays. Training was increased by \$3,000. Benefits have gone up, including Social Security, Medicare, and NHRS. Office supplies is up, and there is a small increase in IT Maintenance. Equipment is up \$2,000, which includes a new shredder. Doug Gralenski asked about the increases in retirement and Denise Vallee advised this was a mandated increase from the state. Diane Bouthot asked about the increase in insurance, as she thought the cost was supposed to go down. Vallee advised that they changed to a site-of-service plan, which brought the original increase that was planned back to about the same as what they were paying. Increases in insurance line items are mostly due to changes in demographics. Gralenski asked about the dispatch contracts and was advised this is now rolled into the EMS contracts. Bouthot asked about body cameras for officers, and Marsh advised they are costly, but he would like to see them implemented at some point. Marsh advised he would have to research to see if grants are available. Evankow noted that the balance remaining in the budget from last year is about \$91,000, and answered Bouthot's question about OHRV calls, stating that there were 400-500 calls.

5. Other

6. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held Thursday, January 14, 2021 at 6:00 pm.

8. Adjournment – Diane Bouthot made a motion to adjourn at 6:39 PM, seconded by Lee Carroll. Voted by roll call vote in the affirmative. Stolte – yes, White – yes, Rajala-yes, Bouthot- yes, Evankow – yes, Carroll – yes, O’Neil – yes, Gralenski – yes

Respectfully Submitted
Shelli Fortin