



Budget Committee Meeting
Town of Gorham
Medallion Opera House

MINUTES OF JANUARY 14, 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; Carol Porter, Town Clerk and Tax Collector; Jeff Stewart, Recreation Director

Minutes Taker: Shelli Fortin

1. Call to order: 6:08 PM by Diane Bouthot
2. Minutes of January 12, 2021

Motion to approve minutes of January 12, 2021 from Adam White, with a second from Reuben Rajala. Voted by roll call vote in the affirmative. Gralenski – yes Rajala – yes, Evankow – yes, O-Neil – yes, Stolte – yes, Carroll – abstain, White – yes, Bouthot - yes

3. Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

4. New Business

a. Review of Recreation Proposed Budget

Jeff Stewart advised that the proposed budget is the same as last year. Diane Bouthot asked if there was a reduction in expenses this year due to COVID and Stewart advised there were, mainly with summer help for park programs and the Information Booth. Stewart advised they did not offer Moose Tours this year. Patti Stolte asked if the 2021 budget is based on a normal year or COVID year, and Stewart advised a normal year. Doug Gralenski noted that \$42,000 was unspent from last year's budget, which will go back to the general fund. Gralenski asked if there were any mandates or directives from the Governor that would restrict the Moose Tours and Denise Vallee advised it was not safe to put people on a bus together, as it is too confined. Doug Gralenski asked how the unexpended money would be used, and Adam White advised that they used \$271,000 out of the unrestricted fund balance this year to reduce taxes by \$1. A decision will be made on the fund balance from 2020 when the tax rate is set in October of 2021. Denise Vallee advised that the DRA recommends having 5-18% of your operating budget in the fund balance, and Gorham currently has 11.83%. Vallee advised if they decided to use it on a special project, it would have to be in the town warrant the following year. Abby Evankow asked if the fund balance was how they funded the 7th position at the police department, and was advised that this money was left in the line item last year, and is included in the budget this year. Bouthot asked about maintenance at the Veteran's Memorial Wall and Stewart advised the memorial and the pavers were pressure washed one or two years ago. Bouthot asked about the seasonal banners and was advised this is for the welcome banners on the telephone poles. Bouthot asked if this

could also be put toward something else, such as lights in the trees. Vallee advised there are lights for the holiday season, which do come out of the recreation revolving fund. Stewart advised that the truck Fred Corrigan uses will not pass inspection this year, so they are hoping to use \$10,000 from public works, and \$10,000 from the recreation revolving fund to cover the cost of a replacement. Doug Gralenski asked about health benefits and differences are usually due to changes in demographics. Gralenski asked about Patriotic Purposes and was advised this is under the PD. Bouthot asked about the all-inclusive playground and Stewart advised they have raised just over \$48,000. The cost of the project will be between \$70-80,000. Bouthot asked about fundraising and was advised there were personal donations, a softball tournament, and the Festival of Tress which contributed. They were hoping to do the project this year, but have not been fundraising due to COVID. Vallee advised that the new owner of the mill may give a donation and also advised they could apply for a Tillotson grant to finish the project. Bouthot asked about the fountain, which Stewart advised that advertisements on the kiosk will help fund. The cost when looked into several years ago was about \$30,000, of which they have raised between \$5-6,000.

b. Review of Town Clerk and Tax Collector Proposed Budget

Carol Porter advised the salary has increased, but most everything is the same as last year. Software support is up, as is postage due to mailing more motor vehicle registrations as people are not coming in person. Abby Evankow asked how many elections are budgeted for, and Porter advised they had 4 last year, and there is one this year, but she always budgets for an extra just in case one is needed. A Committee member asked about the part-time position in the office, and Adam White advised that Porter had agreed to the position being 28 hours a week this year, as there are fewer elections.

In reviewing the tax collector budget, Porter advised the increase again was in the salary due to the COLA increase. Diane Bouthot asked about equipment and Porter stated they have budgeted for new computers, as the ones they currently have do not have speakers and they cannot attend Zoom meetings. Porter advised they have 2 printers for printing registrations, which were bought last year and began using this year. They also have a small copier that is used occasionally, and they use the printer in the main office for tax bills. Bouthot asked if there was a decline in revenues from registrations and Porter advised they have more registrations from a local business, which has helped to offset any loss. Porter advised the revenues have been fairly steady, but it is hard to tell what people will do in the future. Gralenski stated that he wanted to be sure they were not overestimating, and Porter advised she was comfortable with the number proposed. Patti Stolte asked about the software costs and Denise Vallee advised it is a yearly cost for support, and is not cloud-based. The current software is used for assessment and taxes, and can be transferred to the general ledger so that employees do not have to keep entering the same information. Porter advised that they are doing better than expected with taxes given the circumstances, and that it is mostly the same people as usual that are behind. Porter advised taxpayers are welcome to make weekly or monthly payments. Bouthot asked about liens, and Porter advised they have about 100, which is average. The recent sale of the mill helped with property tax revenues as their tax bill was paid at the closing and received on January 7.

c. Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Review

Kathy Frenette reviewed the 2020 budget. She advised there were not too many changes in revenue. Payments in Lieu of Taxes was up a bit. Boat taxes were up, as people were unable to register boats at the DMV. Interest and Costs were lower than budgeted, as were business filing fees. Motor Vehicle Registrations are on target. Building permits were lower than

budgeted, and have been budgeted for less next year as well. Dog licenses and marriage licenses were down. Municipal Aid will not be funded next year, and there is no control over the Rooms and Meals Tax. Department revenues are down a little, partly due to COVID. Refuse charges were down, and they had one item in Sale of Town Property. Interest is down significantly due to COVID. Frenette advised that they asked the Bank of NH to not charge the monthly fees, as they were not making enough in interest. They refunded the fees charged and have not been charging them since. They received money back in the Insurance Reimbursement, which was also refunded to employees and retirees. There is also money received for the cruiser equipment and cruiser from Primex in that line item. Gralenski asked about the difference in the revenue from the budget proposal, and Vallee advised the budget proposal does not include property taxes, which are recorded at the end of the year. Vallee pointed out that all but \$11,000 of the difference in the budget variance in revenues is due to the loss of the Municipal Aid.

In reviewing Expenditures, Frenette advised the overall bottom line is down. Frenette noted that there will be a few more payables to be entered, and some Capital Reserve Funds will be transferred, which will make a difference. Money was not needed for Conferences and Travel this year, and gas costs were down due to less patrol time because of COVID. Election was pretty much flat, although there were increased wages for the part-time position due to more hours needed. The Assessing amount that is over budget will be covered by a transfer from the CRF. Legal expenses were lower than budgeted, but Gralenski pointed out that the courts were closed for much of the year due to COVID. Nothing was spent in the benefits section. Planning and Zoning were down due to no trainings being held. They are doing well with Town Hall Maintenance, as Lisa is very conscientious of what she is using. Cemeteries is down, but not by much. Total insurance is down due to a premium holiday. Frenette advised money for North Country Council was well spent with the assistance they receive, especially for the parking study that was done. Frenette advised that they should see a big difference in the PD Overtime line now that they are fully staffed. EMS was down due to less calls. Workmen's Compensation is high for the Fire Department due to the nature of the job. Building Inspection and Emergency Management were both down. Dispatch saw a decrease, and there were lots of changes in the Highway Department with employees, so there was a change in demographics. Street Lighting may have one more bill in December to be charged. There was a big reduction in Solid Waste, again due to a change in staff demographics. Welfare was down. Park Maintenance was about the same, as they still have to maintain the parks, but did not have some events such as the Fourth of July. Frenette advised they did not need a TAN this year, as the school spread out the apportioned payments so that they did not have to borrow money. Agencies received their funding, except the Fourth of July celebration, which was encumbered and will be used this summer if they have it. Gralenski asked if there are any other legal liabilities for the town and Vallee advised they have 11 BTLA cases which DTC Lawyers will handle. Bouthot asked if the Chamber was ever approached about taking on the Fourth of July festivities. Frenette advised that the Chamber has a just a Director and relies on volunteers for help. Frenette also advised that we are lucky to still have a Chamber of Commerce, as they were not allowed to use COVID money for payroll or rent, just for marketing and PPE. Frenette advised she did not believe the Chamber would be able to take on another event. Bouthot asked if all the phones have been changed and Vallee advised they have been. They also have their own LAN network, which allows for remote access for department heads to get budget numbers in real time, which is more efficient.

5. Other

Doug Gralenski asked about the school budget and when they were scheduled to meet with the Budget Committee. This will be on Thursday, January 21.

6. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 6:00 pm.

8. Adjournment – Patti Stolte made a motion to adjourn at 7:32 PM, seconded by Doug Gralenski. Voted by roll call vote in the affirmative. Stolte – yes, Gralenski – yes, Rajala- yes, White – yes, Bouthot- yes, Evankow – yes, O’Neil – yes, Carroll – yes

Respectfully Submitted
Shelli Fortin