



Budget Committee Meeting
Town of Gorham
Medallion Opera House

MINUTES OF JANUARY 27, 2021

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

Absent: None

Town Staff Present: Denise Vallee, Town Manager; Kathy Frenette, Finance Director; Judy LeBlanc, Selectmen;

Minutes Taker: Shelli Fortin

AGENDA ITEMS & DISCUSSION

1. Call to order: 6:02 PM by Diane Bouthot

2. Minutes of January 26, 2021

Motion to approve minutes of January 26, 2021 from Lee Carroll, with a second from Abby Evankow. Minutes were amended to include the number of Berlin businesses that are members of the AV Chamber of Commerce, and updated for the FRC. Voted by roll call vote in the affirmative as amended. Evankow - yes, White - yes, Gralenski - yes, Rajala - yes, Stolte - yes, Bouthot - yes, Carroll - yes, O'Neil - yes

3. Old Business

Diane Bouthot asked how much the GCLC pays for rent at the FRC. Patti Stolte advised they pay \$1,900. Diane Bouthot stated that the GCLC received a substantial amount of money from the state, and were given money last year by the town, and they were closed from March to September and have less children. Patti Stolte advised that they still have the same fixed expenses, such as rent and electricity, and the money they received was used to do what they needed to meet the new restrictions from the state to re-open. Denise Vallee reminded the committee that it was also used for the extra employee they needed. Abby Evankow stated that she would like to see the money used for a specific line item or project. Reuben Rajala stated it was a small amount, but important. Adam White confirmed the amount the GCLC was requesting is \$4,000, down \$2,000 from last year.

4. New Business - Non-profit Agency Reviews

a. North Country Home Health and Hospice

Maryann Aldrich was present to discuss the request from North Country Home Health and Hospice. Aldrich advised the number of Gorham residents was down this year due to Covid, as were all towns, but the percentage was the same at 6%. They provide home health, hospice, and long-term care services. They have requested level funding this year at \$5,000, which is used to offset Medicare shortfalls for home health. They also try to find other funding sources, such as private donors, grants, and endowments. They did try to get Covid funding this year, but were unable to take advantage of it. Aldrich advised they have requested funding from Berlin in the

amount of \$10,000, and did receive funding last year from them. Aldrich stated the cost of PPE has risen, and the increase in costs has been devastating to them. Committee members expressed their thanks for the work they do and noted they were pleased that Aldrich has also sought funding from other communities.

b. Northern Human Services

Kassie Eafrazi was in attendance to present the request from Northern Human Services. Eafrazi advised they serve the communities of Berlin, Gorham, Randolph, Shelburne, Dummer, and Milan. The funding request is the same as last year, and they do request funds from all of the towns they serve. Eafrazi stated that community support is important when applying for grants, as they do ask about local funding. Eafrazi advised they serve 90 Gorham residents. They assist with therapy and psychiatric services, case management, and community outreach services. They have continued to provide services through Covid, with some services being telehealth and some in person. They do ask for financial information before providing assistance, and do offer a pay scale. However, nobody is refused services if they cannot afford it. In 2020, they had \$14,500 that was billed and did not get paid for Gorham residents. Diane Bouthot asked how many employees they have, and Eafrazi advised about 70. They were able to keep most employed through the pandemic. Eafrazi advised that she was part of a meeting with Annie Kuster this week and there is now a large focus on mental health. Greg O'Neil thanked them for the work they do for the community. Denise Vallee also noted her appreciation for the work their clients do with Will O'Brien on the beautification program, maintaining flowers and gardens in the area.

Kathy Frenette noted that she has some changes in the budget that she will send to the Committee, which include the reductions from the agency funding, and \$50,000 less in the Road Resurfacing CRF. Abby Evankow shared concerns about reducing the Road CRF by \$50,000. Adam White agreed with her concerns, but stated it was a Selectboard decision to try to save on the tax rate this year due to increases in general. White advised it will not affect any projects this year. Evankow noted that they also reduced the amount by \$50,000 last year as well. Denise Vallee advised that they are applying for a TAP grant, which would match town funds, for a sidewalk project. This would continue the sidewalk on Route 16 to Libby Pool and on Route 2 to the multi-modal path and add handicap accessible curbing. Vallee advised the Letter of Intent must be submitted by February 5.

Frenette also advised that she attempted to email Michael Hogan concerning his funding request for services for Veterans, but he did not respond to any of her attempts to contact him. There was no petitioned warrant article received from Hogan either.

Diane Bouthot asked about the reduction in the Library budget that Adam White had discussed last Thursday. White advised that he will stay with what the Board wants, as it was presented.

c. Special Olympics

Pamela Couture was in attendance to discuss the funding request from Special Olympics. Couture advised that they were able to get through the Winter Games last year, but were not able to participate in the Summer Games or bowling this fall. They are not having the Winter Games this year, but are hoping to hold the Summer Games. Couture advised they are requesting \$1,000 this year, which is one-half of the usual request, as the budget is smaller. Couture advised they do request funds from Berlin, but it is done through Terry Letarte in the Recreation Department Budget. They have requested \$1,000 from Berlin as well. Couture advised they currently have 46 athletes in the program.

d. Tri-County CAP

Jeanne Robillard and Amy Goyette were present to discuss the request from Tri-County CAP. Robillard advised that the budget hearing with Gorham last year led to an overhaul of how the agency requests funding from communities. Robillard stated that they have come up with a formula that is fair and equitable, and are requesting funds per capita based on population, which will help to fund all of the programs that they provide. Robillard stated that they rely on funding from communities to fill in gaps and to assist with Federal and State funding. Diane Bouthot asked if Covid has had a big impact on the services they provide and Robillard advised the Committee that they have not shut down a single program for a single day. Robillard stated that employees have worked remotely in turns, but someone was always in every office to answer phones and greet clients. They have seen an increase in clients, especially with Senior Meals, and have provided buses to the NH Food Bank deliveries, so those without transportation can still get groceries. The Head Start program can do remote if needed, and they made sure that the Head Start families had meals. Patti Stolte noted how hard Tri-County CAP has worked to become financially strong, and stated they have done an amazing job of getting help to people. Robillard stated that she wanted the Committee to know that they were heard and understood last year during the budget review. Robillard also noted how deeply proud she is of the staff at CAP who make sure that services are delivered to those in need.

5. Other

Abby Evankow shared her concerns again about reducing the Road Resurfacing CRF two years in a row. Evankow also stated that money was spent on a UTV for the Fire Department and that money could have been used elsewhere. Adam White advised that the Fire Department needs a UTV for rescues, as much as they need a fire truck, as they need to be able to respond to accidents.

Lee Carroll made a motion to approve the budget as presented to be brought to the Public Hearing. The motion was seconded by Reuben Rajala.

Doug Gralenski noted the concerns about the Library budget and the 7th officer at the Police Department.

Reuben Rajala spoke against cutting the Library budget, as the expenses from 2020 are tied to a difficult year. Rajala noted that some departments keep additional funds, such as the Recreation Revolving Fund, and others do not. Rajala stated that he feels the library should keep the additional amount for their Capital projects. Denise Vallee advised that the Library has made significant improvements every year for the last 8 years, which have helped to reduce their operating costs. A new boiler will continue to improve on this. Gralenski stated that he would like a commitment from the Trustees that the money will be used for this purpose.

Lee Carroll made a motion to move the question, which was seconded by Doug Gralenski.

Doug Gralenski spoke concerning the 7th officer at the Police Department. Gralenski noted that in any other town of 3,000, a police force this size would not be needed, but we are the crossroads for several trail systems and have many businesses. Adam White stated that the 7th officer was a split vote with the Selectboard, with him voting against due to the cost.

Diane Bouthot asked about gifts for Robert Demers and Dan McCrum for their service to the Budget Committee and Denise Vallee advised she would take care of this. Vallee advised that she has pen and ink drawings of the town hall, which she will have framed with their dates of service.

Abby Evankow noted that if there was not so much motorized recreation in town, we would not need so many services for enforcement or rescues. Denise Vallee noted that snowmachines have been on the sidewalks in town for 30 years. Reuben Rajala noted that there is a large mosaic of activities available in town, and one should not preclude the other. Adam White mentioned that rescues are not just for motorized recreation, but for hikers as well. Patti Stolte agreed that there is a big conundrum as to who we are as a town, and the Master Plan is a roadmap but the economy comes into play as well. Rajala stated that if gaps were filled in for the sidewalk on the north side of Main Street, one side might be used for pedestrians and the other for snowmachines.

The Committee voted by roll call vote on the motion to bring the budget to the Public Hearing. Carroll – yes, O’Neil – yes, Stolte – yes, Evankow – yes, Gralenski – yes, White – yes, Rajala – yes, Bouthot – yes

6. Next Meeting Date

The Public Hearing will be held on February 10, 2021 at 6:30 pm at GMHS.

8. Adjournment – Patti Stolte made a motion to adjourn at 7:53 PM, seconded by Adam White. Voted by roll call vote in the affirmative. Stolte – yes, Gralenski – yes, Rajala-yes, White – yes, Bouthot- yes, Evankow – yes, Carroll – yes, O’Neil - yes

Respectfully Submitted
Shelli Fortin