



Budget Committee Meeting  
Town of Gorham  
Town Hall Public Meeting Room

MINUTES OF JANUARY 31, 2023

Members Present: Patti Stolte, Mary White, Lee Carroll, Marie Duguay, Greg O'Neil, Adam White, and Paul Bousquet

Absent: Abby Evankow and Judy LeBlanc

Town Staff Present: Denise Vallee, Town Manager; Bronson Paradis, Finance Director; Peter Gagnon; Christina Zornio

Minutes Taker: Shelli Fortin

AGENDA ITEMS & DISCUSSION

1. Call to order: 5:31 PM by Patti Stolte

2. Review Minutes of January 24, 2023

**On a motion by Adam White, seconded by Lee Carroll, the Committee voted to approve the minutes of January 24, 2023 as presented.**

3. Old Business

There was no old business.

4. New Business

a. Non-Profit Agency Reviews

**AV Home Care \$14,000**

Denise Vallee advised that although AV Home Care was set up to be billed each month for services, they are asking for a lump sum this year the same as other agencies. Marie Duguay noted the number of residents served in Gorham versus Berlin, as Gorham has 10% of the clients and Berlin 50%, and they are asking for more from Gorham than they do from Berlin. Christina Zornio stated that she used to work for AV Home Care and that not many of the clients were from Gorham. Zornio shared concerns over the request to receive the lump sum this year instead of billing per service. Mary White reminded the Committee that they can either vote to recommend or not recommend, but cannot change the amount. Lee Carroll pointed out that the letter sent from AV Home Care requests to discuss the issue of billing or a lump sum payment. Denise Vallee stated the letter had not been given to the Selectmen yet, but could be added to the agenda for February 13. Lee Carroll stated that the amount could be amended on the floor to keep costs in line with the actual work in Gorham. Denise Vallee advised that they used \$5,469 this past year. It was suggested that the agency be contacted to discuss concerns before the deadline of February 7. Patti Stolte agreed to contact Margo Sullivan.

**Gorham Historical Society \$4,000**

Adam White noted that the Historical Society is the only non-profit that is strictly for Gorham and our town history. Patti Stolte commented that she would like to see them do more fundraising and grants. Mary White noted that it is hard to find volunteers, and would like to see something done through the town to help support them. It was noted that it would be nice to see the trains painted, and Denise Vallee advised there were plans for a historical mural to be painted on one of the trains. Peter Gagnon agreed that there is a lot of value for our community in the Historical Society.

#### **Androscoggin Valley Chamber of Commerce \$3,000**

Denise Vallee advised that the Chamber of Commerce uses these funds as a match for a JPP grant for marketing for the area. Mary White noted that businesses pay a fee to the Chamber for membership. Mary White commented that she sees the same businesses on the Chamber Facebook page, but not all businesses. Vallee stated that they most likely only share items from members. Vallee advised that JPP funds are for the area as a whole and the activities here, not individual businesses. Mary White asked what tools they use for advertising and was advised Facebook is one, and that the Chamber has to go to the state with a grant proposal and a marketing plan. Patti Stolte noted that funds are critical in promoting the Androscoggin Valley as a destination. Marie Duguay noted that she has seen the Chamber promoting events in Gorham as well, and Stolte noted that they are collaborative and that Gorham also benefits from events in Berlin with our hotels and restaurants. Mary White noted that there is plenty of information available on social media without marketing from the Chamber.

#### **CASA \$500**

Patti Stolte noted that the director of CASA really wants to make the statement that every community supports the work they do. Mary White stated that the CASA workers volunteer as advocates for abused or neglected children and only get reimbursed for mileage. Bronson Paradis commented that they are requesting funding from many other communities, and the amounts vary.

#### **Northern Human Services \$2895**

Denise Vallee advised that the amount requested is a per capita number. Patti Stolte advised that they do good work, and have a hard time keeping up with the work. Mary White asked what the funding was being used for. Patti Stolte suggested that like other organizations, they may use this as a match for grants, or to fill holes where they have deficits. Stolte suggested that this question should be asked at the public hearing. It was noted that mental health needs have exploded since Covid, and it is not getting easier or less expensive to provide services.

#### **Family Resource Center \$10,000**

Patti Stolte advised that Marie Demers will be at the public hearing with a fact sheet to answer questions raised. Stolte stated that they provide seven programs at this time, including family support services from preventive to DCYF involved supervised visits, recovery peer support, and parent education. They recently help to fund a lead testing device for the Coos Family Health Services Gorham office. They provide programs and education throughout the North Country.

Adam White stated that the FRC already gets a building free of charge from the Town, of which they pay maintenance and utilities, and they are asking for an additional \$10,000 on top of that. Patti Stolte advised that they do not get the building free, as they pay rent the

same as the SAU and GCLC. The rent paid is used for maintenance and utilities. Paul Bousquet noted that this was the original agreement in order for the building to be renovated. Adam White noted that he did not think the Town should be a landlord. Stolte questioned what the alternative would be, as they have been involved in this management agreement for over 20 years. In relation to the funding request, Stolte advised that the grants they apply for need to demonstrate community support. Mary White noted that the form asks for a list of in-kind services, which was checked off as them receiving them, but it had statements of the work with the town. Mary White noted that in past years the FRC had also asked for money from the SAU, and Stolte advised that was when they had the after school programs. Denise Vallee noted that what is important is the services provided to the community. Stolte noted that there should be more pride and value in the building, as it was part of a community collaboration to improve a blighted space. Marie Duguay noted that the building should be a separate conversation. Stolte noted that the \$10,000 requested is for programs, not the building. A question was asked about charges for the use of the building, and Stolte advised they do not charge unless it is a business entity. Vallee advised the MOH does not charge non-profits either. Mary White asked how many Gorham residents participate in only the programs offered. Mary White also asked for the net worth of the FRC, and Stolte advised that she will provide a copy of the financial audit.

#### **Tri-County CAP \$6,525**

It was noted that funds for Tri-County CAP are used for matching funds for state and federal grants. The amount requested this year dropped from the \$7,125 requested last year. Mary White shared a personal story in which she did not qualify for help when needed, and stated that she would not be in support of this article due to that. Adam White stated that assistance should be based on what is needed, not what you make. Paul Bousquet noted that CAP has guidelines that they need to follow.

#### **Gorham Community Learning Center \$10,000**

The request for GCLC is up from \$4,500 last year. Paul Bousquet noted that based on the childcare situation in the area, if this will help keep the doors open, it is worthwhile. Bousquet noted that children are experiencing a lot of deficits due to Covid and that the center provides programs to prepare children for school. Mary White noted that the employees do not get paid much, but are there because they love children. Adam White asked about the number of children from Gorham in the program and was advised it is the majority. Marie Duguay noted that they have been cautious about what they have asked for in the past, and Denise Vallee advised that the amount has steadily increased over the years. Vallee noted that a daycare on Cascade Hill recently received a CDBG grant.

#### **Androscoggin River Athletes Special Olympics \$2,000**

It was noted that Special Olympics did not request funding last year. This year they do have a need. They have 7 athletes and 12 volunteers from Gorham. Mary White noted that a lot of their events are not local, so travel is required.

#### **North Country Home Health and Hospice \$5,000**

Paul Bousquet stated that he has had relatives who have had hospice and that they know their business. It was noted that the office used to be local but has moved to Littleton. A list of towns served was included with the application and it was noted that they also apply for funds from Grafton County.

#### **5. Other**

Paul Bousquet noted that it may be helpful to ask department heads to prepare budgets that are flat or 1-2% less than the previous year before coming to the budget committee, and if they cannot decrease the budget to explain why. Bousquet also noted that they could ask to reduce each warrant article by 1%. Adam White stated that he would not want to cut Capital Reserve Funds. It was noted that the Water and Sewer Department and the School come as a courtesy, as they do not have to come to the Budget Committee. Greg O'Neil noted that although some expenses can't be controlled, others such as overtime, could be. It was noted that Overtime in Dispatch could be avoided.

Mary White read an email that she sent to Denise Vallee apologizing for not remembering the conversation at the Selectmen's Meeting about "carving the budget" correctly.

**6. Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting date is the Public Budget Hearing on Thursday, February 16, 2023 at 6:30 pm in the Medallion Opera House.

**7. Adjournment**

**On a motion by Greg O'Neil, seconded by Paul Bousquet, the meeting was adjourned at 7:21 pm.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Shelli Fortin