



Warner Budget Committee

Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 15, 2018
APPROVED

Mike Cutting opened the meeting at 7:02 pm.

Committee members in attendance: Mike Cutting, Martha Mical, David Minton, Alfred Hanson, John Dabuliewicz - Selectman's Rep.

Absent: John Leavitt, Martha Bodnarik and Ray Martin -Water District Rep.

Others present: Jim Bingham, Michele Courser, Marianne Howlett, Chris Perkins, Deb Moody, Ed Mical

1. Meeting Minutes

A. David made a motion to approve meeting minutes dated October 25, 2018. Martha M. seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

B. Martha M. made a motion to approve meeting minutes dated November 1, 2018. David seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

C. Martha M. made a motion to postpone approving meeting minutes dated November 8, 2018. Alfred seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

2. 2019 Town Clerk Budget Highlights

- Town Clerk, Michele Courser presented.
- Computer expenses decreased overall.
- Part-time hours decreased because of only one election in 2019.
- Town Clerk salary decreased because of staff changes.
- Rest of the budget stayed flat.

3. 2019 Elections Budget Highlights

- Supervisor of the Checklist, Chris Perkins presented.
- Moderator's stipend was increased to \$150 for each election and Town Meeting. Currently the stipend is for \$75. During an election the Moderator is there from 6:30 am to as late as 10:00 pm or later. State required reports need to be done in a timely manner as well. There has been no stipend increase in many years.
- A wage increase was provided for the Supervisor's of the Checklist (\$11.12 per hour). Chris used the wage scale provided with the Wage Study. John noted for the record that the Selectmen have not adopted that wage scale yet. John suggested to Chris to use the existing wage scale. Chris said she was not aware there was one.
- There is one election in 2019 and the budget reflects such.
- 3 training sessions have been included in the budget because of election law changes.

4. 2019 Salaries

A. Jim explained the salary lines are the same as last year and have not been adjusted yet. All other aspects of the budgets presented so far have been reviewed by the Selectmen. Mike asked for the reason why salaries cannot be decided upon first and included in the presented budgets instead of waiting until December. Mike said this has happened year after year. Jim said in the past, wage adjustments were done with a cost of living adjustment. The Board this year is dealing with a challenge regarding the Wage Study and the cost impact of the study. The Selectman's goal is to have wages in the middle range of the best paying towns and towns not paying as well. David asked if the town is losing employees to other towns with higher wages. Jim said yes, we are, a police officer and a Public Works Department employee both left Warner for higher wages in another town. Jim said there are a number of employees that have worked for the town for a number of years that fall on step 1 or step 2 on the wage scale that has not been adopted yet. The town has to catch up without a strong financial impact. Mike asked when was the Wage Study completed. Jim said in 2017. Mike asked if the data is from 2016 and Jim said the data was collected over the summer in 2017. Mike said by the time the study is implemented in 2019 the information will be 2 years old.

B. Alfred asked if salary caps are being considered for the Department Heads. Alfred said at the end of last years budget process it was his understanding the Selectmen would be taking a better look at caps for the Department Heads, he said can't keep elevating Department Heads. John said each position, not just Department Heads has a number of steps in their labor grade. Jim said each position has a cap. Alfred said when everyone is near their cap all of a sudden the Budget Committee hears that another study needs to done. Martha Mical said if the town doesn't adjust wages then the town could lose employees to other towns that are paying more. Alfred told Martha M. if she ran a business that way she would go broke. Martha M. said you need to stay competitive. Mike said every job has a value, you can't afford to keep escalating that value to the point you can no longer afford it. However, Mike does agree you cannot not pay the employees because you're going to lose some of them. David said when he read the Wage Study he didn't see a wide discrepancy, Warner is in the middle. Jim said Warner is in the lower quarter, a third of the employees did not reach step 1 on the new wage scale. Jim said the people recently hired came in at a higher pay rate than the employees that left when they started.

5. 2019 Assessing Budget Highlights

- Assessing Clerk, Deb Moody presented.
- A quote is forthcoming for digital mapping.
- The Selectmen need to decide about GIS [Geographic Information System] for the town website which the Economic Development Advisory Committee is in favor of. That cost will probably be presented in a warrant article. Mike feels someone needs to be very proficient at presenting the warrant article.
- 100 hours was added to the assessing salary because of the upcoming revaluation which will be paid from the Revaluation Capital Reserve.
- The Town Forester was increased to \$400.

6. 2019 Tax Collector Budget Highlights

- Tax Collector, Marianne Howlett presented.
- The cost for an interface between Proval and Business Management [software bridge] is included and is hoped to be purchased in 2018. Data entry time for Assessing will be saved with this purchase.
- \$995 has been added for Business Management software update.

7. 2019 Landuse Budget Highlights

- Town Administrator, Jim Bingham presented.
- Professional Services has increased for a Planner because of the increased and somewhat complex activity in the Landuse office. The Chair has been assisting with applications, but feels as the Chair, he should remain neutral regarding the submitted applications. The Chair recommended hiring someone to review site-plans and answer questions before the application is before the Planning Board. Jim is looking at different options such as shared services.
- Legal Expenses increased to \$4,000. The free legal advice from the NH Municipal Association is confined to interpretation of statutes, not advice on specific cases.
- Alfred asked by increasing Professional Services, does that mean Landuse will never spend \$21,000 [last year] on legal expenses ever again? The answer was no. Jim said the idea is to avoid errors so a case doesn't end up in litigation.

8. 2019 Board of Selectman's Budget Highlights

- Town Administrator, Jim Bingham presented.
- The Selectman's stipend has not increased in several years. Mike feels the Budget Committee should reconsider their stipend in January. Jim said he will contact other towns to see what the Selectman's stipends are.
- Mike asked where is the money coming from to update the website. Jim said there is \$5,000 under Public Communications budgeted in 2018 which covers the contract for the redesign and will be spent or encumbered this year. Another \$4,000 is budgeted in 2019 anticipating an additional development of a linked website for Economic Development.
- Alfred said in regards to the Economic Development Advisory Committee, he does not feel the town should be spending money on something he has a hard time believing the town will reap any rewards from and how much money will be spent in the future. Marianne spoke about having information on the town website [GIS], the history of properties can only be found at the Town Hall. Ed Mical said he just came from the EDAC meeting upstairs. The survey results were presented to the community and will soon be on the website.

9. 2019 Finance Office Budget Highlights

- Town Administrator, Jim Bingham presented.
- Insurance costs are being generated. The current provider cost has increased a little over 10%.
- The auditor's expense increased by \$1,800, there is additional work required for the next audit [a change in auditing standards]. Plus there is a separate major project fund, the new fire station, which will need to be audited separately.
- Martha said the Finance salary shows an increase in 2018. Jim explained the Bookkeeper was provided a step increase after completing several courses in finance.

10. Wage Adjustments

- Stipend positions were not included in the Wage Study.
- Martha asked if the Selectmen are going to look at every position that gets paid and decide? Jim said the Board does that every year. Martha said there are some positions, such as the Supervisor's of the Checklist, who shouldn't have to ask for a raise. John asked Martha if she thinks everyone that serves as basically a volunteer, should get paid more? Martha thinks the Selectmen are well aware of how much time people are putting in. She feels if the Selectmen are looking at wages, stipends should be included. Jim said the Wage Study focused on full-time and part-time regular employees.
- Alfred made a suggestion to not talk about wages at all, he feels it sets a tone for the rest of the year.
- Martha would like to see the wages completed in the beginning of the budget process so the budgets presented are complete.
- Alfred said he didn't see anything in the Wage Study about the contributions of health insurance. Jim said the Wage Study compares the benefits with other towns.

11. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:47 pm

Recorder of the minutes: Mary Whalen