



Town of Warner

Budget Committee – Public Hearing

APPROVED - Meeting Minutes

December 15, 2022 7:00 PM

At 7:04 p.m., Chairman Michael Cutting called the meeting to order and took the roll.

1 – Roll Call

Mike Cutting (Chairman); Dave Minton (via Zoom), Christine Frost (Select Board Representative), Ray Martin (arr. 7:30pm), Robert Blake, Richard Bixby, Harold Blanchette

Absent: Michelle Kendrick

In attendance: Diane Ricciardelli (Town Administrator), Clyde Carson (Director of Finance), Michelle Courser, Ed Mical, Sam Bower (Selectman), Fire Chief France, Police Chief Chandler, Varick Proper

2 – Review of Minutes

December 1, 2022

It was moved by Robert Blake and seconded by Richard Bixby to approve the minutes of December 1, 2022 as circulated. The motion was approved unanimously.

December 8, 2022

It was moved by Robert Blake and seconded by Richard Bixby to approve the minutes of December 8, 2022, as circulated. The motion was approved.

Christine Frost abstained as she had not yet read the minutes.

3 – Budget Review

Chair Cutting wanted to go through the budgets, department by department to make recommendations.

Selectmen’s Budget

Diane noted that the telephone charges were updated in the current spreadsheets. The cost will be 35% of what was spent in the last year. All the phone lines have been updated in the spreadsheets for the different departments where the phone systems had changed.

Elections – Diane said stipends have not been adjusted yet.

Finance and Audit – Sam said that the Selectmen have discussed “shopping” for another auditor to see if they can get a better deal. Chair Cutting said it is good practice to change firms every

five years. They have a tendency to focus on specific categories so it is good to get a better rounded picture of the auditing process. The RFP will be sent out in January.

Tax Collector – No changes or comments.

Treasurer – No changes or comments.

Town Clerk – No changes or comments.

Assessing – The percentage has changed from the last spreadsheet. Robert Blake thought the increase was driven by the tax map. Elizabeth ____ confirmed this to be true. This project is specifically to get the maps up to the standard they should be. It cannot be split into a two-year project. Christine said the Town has never done a whole overhaul with the maps to fix the issues; they have piecemealed it, bit by bit. This creates a lack of consistency. Robert asked why this wouldn't be a warrant article since it isn't a regularly occurring project? Christine said that it is just a cost incurred to do business and it isn't that expensive. Christine said she understood this was a stand-alone project.

Maryanne said she thought the \$16,000 was to digitize the maps; that is what she recalled Elizabeth's previous presentation to say. Janice agreed and said it is also to get new printed copies of the maps for the office.

Dave Minton asked if this was a fixed contract price. Christine said it is an estimate.

Benefits – Social Security is a set fee. Health Insurance was an 11.7% increase. The Town added dental insurance this year for employees. Both of these insurances are paid at 100% for full-time employees. Diane said that the reason social security went down was because the police officers are not included in the line. She said she based this line off of what the salaries are projected for next year. There was a decrease of about \$1,300 over 2022.

Legal – Robert said the line was a lot higher in years past. This past year seemed low (it was a good year) and he thought maybe the line should have more funding to bring it back to where it had been in "typical" years. Chair Cutting said this line is hit or miss; they never know what will come up with legal issues. It is currently at \$12,000. There were no suggestions for changes in this.

Land Use – Chair Cutting wondered why they ended up with \$3,500 for meeting minutes. Diane said it is because of very long meetings, and more meetings are scheduled than in the past. Janice said the Planning Board has two meetings a month now and it will be like this for the foreseeable future. She said she does the Zoning Board minutes.

Town Hall Expenses:

Electricity – Christine said it would seem logical to have some consistency with the electricity expenses in the sheets (for example the Old Graded School building and the Town Hall had different price increases listed). Sam suggested marking them at 70% each to split the difference. \$8,100 for the Old Graded School and \$6,090 for the Town Hall were the new numbers for electricity in these two sheets.

Water and Sewer – Chair Cutting said the amount seemed high. Diane said she got the numbers for this line from Ray. He would be attending the meeting late and they could discuss the rationale then.

Fire Alarm – Chair Cutting asked if this was a quote from a company? Diane said there are several things that are alarmed. Chair Cutting thought this line seemed high. Diane said that the number came from conversations she had with Tim Allen and what they thought would be reasonable. They need to find another company and are currently looking.

Maintenance and Repairs – Chair Cutting asked what the \$5,000 would cover for Town Hall. Ray thought it was for a backflow mechanism for when they sprinkle the building. Chair Cutting asked when this would be completed, as it seems like this has been on the docket for years. Diane said it was promised that this would be done by the end of the year but she didn't think

that was a deadline that could be met. She offered that the Town gets what they pay for; they went with the lowest bid and the company doing the work is very slow.

Chair Cutting asked Ray Martin about the Town Hall water and sewer line. Ray said he just got another payment that day which was another \$450. The total in the sheet was not up to date. Diane said that she and Ray met in September and this was the amount they agreed on. Ray said he would check it out and see if the amount was too high. It depends on how many events are happening in the town hall, upcoming. He has all the records from as far back as 1999 and can figure it out.

Inspections – Dave asked why the big jump? Diane said she has a \$3,000 inspection coming up at the Town Hall. Some things aren't inspected every year, which is why it looks like there was a big jump from last year.

Diane said they had Chief France and Varick Proper there and she asked to get through their budgets so they didn't have to sit through the rest of the discussion.

Fire Department Budget:

\$19,000 Stipend

\$77,000 Wages

\$2,800 Telephone

\$12,000 Electricity

\$600 Water and Sewer

\$6,165 Equipment Maintenance – Chief France said that was for testing their breathing apparatus, rescue tools, and hand-held equipment. \$7,000 was spent in 2022. He was comfortable with the \$6165.

\$4,000 Medical Supplies – This correlates to the number of calls they get. They have had to spend more on gloves and masks, the use of which is dictated by the State.

\$1,200 Supplies – This is for office supplies.

\$2,000 Vehicle Fuel – There have been troubles with the billing from the State. They are trying to get this system fixed.

Truck Maintenance – There are outstanding bills yet to come. Rust is an issue with their trucks.

\$25,000 Equipment Replacement – This is for boots, helmets and other equipment. It is hard to get some of the equipment due to backups from Covid. This year will probably be \$22,000 that they will have spent. In the past they have spent the full \$25,000.

\$3,500 Propane – Chief France said a bill for 800 gallons just came in, which does not appear on the sheets.

Training – The price for training has come down. It was \$750 and it is now \$250. This covers books and classes. In the past couple years this has been used for medical training which is not subsidized by the State.

\$30,009 Dispatch – This is set by the dispatch company. It is based on the town valuation.

Ed Mical noticed the ambulance price (\$83,000) hadn't changed from last year. Will it? Diane said she has asked several times and they said there wasn't going to be a change. Chief France said he has also asked and hasn't gotten an answer regarding a change.

There were no recommendations or changes for the Fire Department budget.

Transfer Station Budget:

\$133 Telephone

\$10,000 Disposal Costs – Varick said he is showing \$9,799 through the present day, so he feels \$10,000 is sufficient. There is a \$300 outstanding bill coming.

\$3,000 Building Maintenance – Varick said which projects that are done will depend on what they end up doing with their building. He just had a meeting with the engineering company the past week with questions about their earlier proposals. They are waiting for the Town to solidify some of their questions about the facility. Sam said that Varick had a layout suggestion and has shared this with the engineers. They have offered to come back and walk the facility with the town. This is ongoing and will require a lot of thinking.

Chair Cutting asked if there was any scheduled maintenance on the equipment. Varick said they did. He said that they get assessments and quotes from those who do their maintenance. They were very optimistic and upbeat about the condition of the horizontal bailer. The urgency to repair one of their pieces of equipment may not be present.

Varick said he would ideally like to get a new Bobcat to replace the two skid steers. Accessibility and visibility is better with the Bobcat. They could trade in what they have now and get a compact motor using the funds in the capital reserve.

Fuel – \$0. Varick said they have been using fuel but wasn't sure why it wasn't showing up. Diane said that at the last meeting, Tim said he pays for all the fuel and keeps track of what is spent between the two departments.

Transportation projected to year end is about \$35,000

Wheelabrator has to be budgeted for \$43,000 for 2023 because all the rates are going up.

Hazardous Waste \$3,000. This is to help pay to dispose of hazardous waste people may ask to dispose of outside of the collection years. State regulates that these materials need to be removed off-site within 90 days.

There were no questions or recommendations regarding the Transfer Station budget.

Emergency Management – Ed Mical

There were no recommendations for Emergency Management

Police Department Budget – Chief Bill Chandler

Overtime, benefits, retirement, phone were all discussed last time he was present.

Contract Services – This is dispatch services (\$10,398), the County Attorney (\$2,070), alarm monitoring, copy machine (\$685 annual maintenance fee), IMC (criminal software data \$3,869), RSA updates (\$110), Woodlawn Kennel (\$500). The whole line increased \$477 from last year.

Chief Chandler said there is a \$25,000 grant that they have applied for to pay for radar electronic signs. It would also pay for repeaters for two of their cruisers. This will enhance officer safety so their calls will be boosted when outside the cruiser. This isn't something that is in their budget and they applied for it last month. It is a 100% grant; no match needed. A public hearing would need to be held to accept the funding. Chief Chandler said if they get the grant, they will send the money to pay the vendor for what they purchase. This will be in 2023. Christine thought this should be added to the grant line if funds will be paid to the Town directly. Chair Cutting said if the grant is being paid directly to the vendor, they won't need to put these funds into the budget. Chief Chandler said he would clarify where the funds will be sent.

The Grant line is for vests and they will be reimbursed for half of the cost after they have paid it.

\$3,515 Building Maintenance – this is for general maintenance they would like to do. Fire alarm inspections, carpet cleaning, generator service, miscellaneous (\$560), irrigation, backflow device.

Dave asked what happened with Special Details as the revenue increased. Chief Chandler said that was due to Eversource; they did some work with tree cutting and placing poles and hooking up the new transformers and lines. They required police detail for that. This should be concluded at the end of December.

There were no recommendations or comments about the Police budget.

Building Inspector – No recommendations or changes.

EMS – No recommendations or changes.

Highway Department – Someone commented that the paving line could be cut down by \$100,000. An attendee at the meeting said some people thought that once the loan was attained this past year, the paving line would go down. Christine said the loan took the place of the Capital Reserve. The funds for the loan could only be used on the specific projects described in the warrant article. Sam said that Tim is trying to get the Town on a schedule to pave 3 miles of pavement each year. There are about 30 miles of paved roads in the town.

Christine said that the warrant article won't be proposed for road construction for \$300,000, as usual, but debt service will be \$300,000.

Chair Cutting understood that the recommendation was to reduce the paving budget by \$100,000.

Lake Sunapee Health Officer – This is a set amount.

Welfare – Sam said that there were a couple challenging cases that Elizabeth had to deal with this year, but they are past them now, he believes. He didn't think it would be up at the \$30,000 mark again. Chair Cutting wondered if this \$16,000 for the welfare officer should be paid as a part time position instead of as a stipend. Diane said this is paid monthly.

Parks and Recreation

Maintenance Wages – Chair Cutting wondered if these costs will be operated from the highway department and charged back to the Parks and Rec budget? Diane said currently, that is how it is being handled.

Conservation Commission - There were no recommendations or changes.

There was discussion about the solar array and how the revenue and expenses work. Clyde said their principal and interest is about \$24,000/year. When Eversource's rates go up, the Town gets reimbursed at a higher rate than they were getting before. This year they have had income from the array of just over \$33,000. Going into 2023 they will start budgeting the revenue for the array and start using the revenue to offset the cost of the solar array directly, on a month to month basis.

Chair Cutting wondered where the revenue has migrated to as it has come in. Clyde said it goes into the revolving account, they haven't been spending it. The auditor tells them to move it into the general fund and mark it as revenue. Chair Cutting said that is not what they had agreed upon when they proposed the solar array to begin with. Clyde said that from the general fund, they were paying the loan payments for the array. Chair Cutting wondered what they would do with the excess funds that come in from the revenue. Clyde said they have to go back and review the warrant article for the establishment of the revolving fund. If the principal, and other expenses are paid for, the funds may be used to pay for the other electrical expenses for the town. He has to review this. Christine said they should pay down the principal for the array with this extra revenue. Ray recalled that the loan is about 2.5%. Clyde said they have not determined how the revenue could be applied to each department.

It was asked where the American Rescue Funds were being used. Christine said this will be reviewed on Tuesday evening. She would provide a recap to the Budget Committee.

The next meeting will be January 12, 2023.

It was moved by Ray Martin and seconded by Harold Blanchette to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:39pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Budget Committee Minutes APPROVED December 15, 2022

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of Warner