



TOWN OF WARNER

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SELECT BOARD WORK SESSION DRAFT Minutes

Monday, 5:00 pm October 24, 2022
Lower Meeting Room Warner Town Hall 5 E Main St

I. 5:00 pm Open the Meeting/Roll Call

Chair Sam Bower opened the meeting at 5:01 p.m. and recognized the presence of Board member Christine Frost. (Board member Lois Shea was absent.)

Also present: Emergency Management Director Ed Mical; Police Chief Bill Chandler; Fire Chief Jonathan France; Library Treasurer Nathan Kendrick; Administrative Assistant to the Select Board Judith Newman-Rogers; and Recording Secretary Ray Carbone.

II. Review and Discuss Proposed 2023 Department Budgets

a. Emergency Management – Ed Mical

Emergency Management Director Ed Mical began by addressing a financial issue in this current fiscal year. He said the grant line in the department's 2022 budget has not been spent, but he's recently received notice from the State's office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management that a grant the Town applied for has been approved and is a 50/50 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant. The grant has a three-year window so the Town has until the end of 2024 to meet its \$22,000 obligation.

Mical explained he didn't foresee any problem with meeting that goal because normal expenditures of the department (including stipends paid to both Mical and Assistant Director Ron Piroso) can be part of the Town's contribution. (In addition, last year the Fire Department spent approximately \$10,000 to purchase new portable radios, and that can also be included.)

Mical also said he has recently checked in with the vendor who is working with his department regarding the costs of security cameras and a new door system; he's hoping that work can be finished by March 2023.

Regarding the 2023 proposed budget, Mical said he's requesting a \$200 increase in the annual stipends for both his own and the assistant director's positions.

Mical noted a decrease in the projected costs of “outside services,” but he also said the department is looking at increases in the grant income line for items like computers. “We have three laptops,” he told the Board, and Town Webmaster Dan Watts has already told Mical those will no longer be usable after the new Window 11 Microsoft system is instituted. (The current ones were purchased with funds from a previous Emergency Management grant, he said.) “Computer expenses have bumped that up a little bit,” Mical said, and again, it’s due to some units getting older and having issues that Watts needs to work on.

The Department is also asking for funds for a new cell telephone line.

Looking forward, the Town will probably have to update its Hazardous Mitigation Plan in the next few years, Mical said. To do that, the Department will work with the Capital Area Mutual Aid Fire Compact in Concord. (An exercise event will be part of the program.)

The Department is slated to do a functional exercise at the end of this November but Mical said he would like to do an additional one in 2022; he’s hoping that both the Police and Fire Departments can be a part of the latter one, which should be more involved than the ‘tabletop’ exercises Emergency Services usually does.

Finally, Mical told the Board the State is planning to update its Hazardous Mitigation Plan and that, working with the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC), the Town will be able to keep abreast of that.

Chair Bower said the Department’s proposed budget appeared to be reasonable and noted a decrease of roughly \$11,500 over this year’s budget. Mical pointed to the pending grant funds as the primary reason for the decrease.

Select Person Frost asked Mical about the plans to develop an Emergency Access Road for Mount Kearsarge Road. Mical said the request is in the Department’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and there are funds for the project. He said he is working on finalizing a Request for Quote (RFQ) to begin seeking bids within the next two weeks.

Frost reminded Mical the voters at the annual Town Meeting in March had requested this project’s proposal be evaluated by the Road Committee before it moves forward. Mical said he would submit his information to the Road Committee and, then bring that group’s recommendation to the Select Board for consideration.

Frost noted time is running short to get an item on the warrant for the upcoming annual Town Meeting in March 2023. She suggested Mical prepare a presentation for voters to consider at that meeting, even if it’s not a fully developed plan. That would allow the voters to consider the overall project and approve a warrant article to “put some money aside” for the work. Mical agreed, noting that the project could then be worked on sometime in 2024.

b. Police Department

Police Chief Bill Chandler began his review of his Department’s proposed 2023 budget by noting an increase in the Wages line. He said the last two employees hired (during 2022) are being paid at a slightly higher rate than previous new hires due to the labor shortage and the

difficulty in finding qualified applicants for law enforcement positions at this time. In addition, since they both began working this year, they will reach their scheduled \$1-per-hour pay increase due at the end of the 12 month probation, sometime in 2023. Other pay-related figures are probably inaccurate at this time because of expected increases, such as health insurance.

Chief Chandler told the Board while estimated telephone costs have not changed, some contracted services have risen, including dispatch services and criminal records software.

The budget also includes funds that will be set aside for an eventual replacement/update to the Department's Tasers. The current ones "are not going to be supported legally or technically," in a few years, he explained. "But we've had them for 10 years." New Tasers, with a complete coverage plan, will likely be needed in 2024.

Regarding cruisers, Chandler said he's added \$2,000 to the estimated costs of fuel, but he's been able to set back the purchase of a new vehicle one year, to 2024.

The Department should raise the rate it pays officers for Special Details, the Chief said, such as coverage for the Warner Fall Foliage Festival. He's proposing an increase to \$52 per hour - area rates is \$55) because the current rate is below what other towns in the region are paying for similar work.

III. Fire Department

[I was not able to hear enough of Chief France's remarks. - RC]

IV. Library – Nathan Kendricks

Library Treasurer Nathan Kendricks reviewed the proposed 2023 annual budget for the Pillsbury Free Library with the Select Board. He began by saying that, based on current projections provided to the Library Board of Trustees, there should be a small increase in the amount of income from local property taxes.

Other income items are roughly the same although the current year's income has included a large donation from Carol Pletcher and grant money that has still not been spent (e.g., purchases of computers for public use).

Expenses include the Collections, which are remaining roughly the same, and the ongoing work on the facility building. The new HVAC system is being installed and its "mini-splits" should reduce heating oil usage by as much as two-thirds. Electric rates are rising and it's unclear right now whether those costs will remain the same or fall when a new rate is negotiated later in the year.

Personnel costs are another major cost item. At this time, the budget includes an estimated 8.7% Cost Of Living increase, although the Trustees have not yet given its final approval. In addition, one employee will now be taking the retirement.

Kendricks said, based on his review of Personnel costs in recent years, the projected budget usually sets asides several thousands of dollars more than is needed.

If that pattern holds true in 2023, it will mean both of the Library's largest line items are over-budgeted for 2023. "Our plan is to ride out this year, see what happens with energy costs, see what happens with inflation, and we'll see if we need to make adjustments to (employee) hours or something like that in 2024," he told the Board.

Kendricks noted that, as the Select Board was previously notified, the building's HVAC project is coming in well below early estimates; that work is already underway and should be completed in the next few weeks. Librarian Nancy Ladd asked Kendricks to notify the Board that there may be a need to withdraw \$44,000 from the Library's Capital Reserve Fund to make the second and final payment to the contractor when the work is completed, probably before Dec. 15.

The only other major expenditure on the horizon is the restoration/replacement of the building's carpeting. Kendricks said there is enough money left in the Capital Reserve Fund so that the Trustees will not need to ask for any more funds from the Town.

Select Person Frost suggested that the Library funding request that Kendrick's noted earlier be put on the Select Board's agenda for Nov. 22. Administrator Newman-Rogers asked Kendricks whether he knew if the withdrawal required action by the Select Board. He replied that he wasn't sure, he would have to check with Librarian Ladd.

Chair Bower asked Kendricks to get back to the Board regarding the issue but Newman-Rogers added the item to the Nov. 22 agenda for the time being.

III. Adjourn

Without further business to come before the Board, Chair Bower asked Frost to make a motion to adjourn. She did and he seconded; in a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously. The meeting officially adjourned at 6:51 p.m.