

Fryeburg Budget Committee Minutes
March 6, 2023 – 6:00 p.m.
David & Doris Hastings Community Center

Budget Committee Members Present: Ed Price, Patrick Emery, Chiye Harper, Stephen Chase

Town Staff Present: Katie Haley, Ruth Antonucci, Rick Buzzell, Maryann Eastman

Select Board Present: Tom Kingsbury, Tom Klinepeter, Kimberly Clarke, Jim Tyrrell

Price called the meeting to order and declared a quorum.

Chase made a motion to approve the February 27, 2023 meeting minutes, which was seconded by Harper and passed unanimously.

Haley reviewed a couple of follow-up items from last meeting and presented the revised spreadsheets.

Nels Liljedahl presented the Conservation Committee budget request. He noted that \$4,500 will be used for a 15'x15' post and beam roof structure to be located at the Town Forest trail outdoor learning classroom. The remaining funds will be used for a memorial to Gena Spencer, an active committee who recently passed away. Liljedahl commented about efforts to keep costs down by using both student and adult volunteers for projects. He also provided an overview of the chestnut tree planting efforts. Price suggested that the building project might be a good Eagle Scout project.

Haley reviewed the Parks, Open Space Beautification Committee budget request of \$3,000 to complete improvements at Peary Park to include a hedge planting and benches. Tyrrell asked about the potential of removing the "no parking" sign in front of the park so that it makes it more accessible.

Rick Buzzell presented the Recreation Dept budget request. He began by providing an overview of the history of the various recreation programs and their growth, by season. He also noted that various community events (4th of July Fireworks, Easter Egg Hunt, etc.) have been added, along with the Teen Center. He also commented on the field maintenance that is largely done in-house to save funds. Buzzell relayed the plans to move the summer rec staff to be paid out of the revolving fund, with the exception of \$10,000 to ensure that there are adequate funds for adequate staffing. The recreation programmer salary will transition to coming from revolving fund to being specifically budgeted for. There will be a creation of a new Community Initiatives Coordinator position that will also be budgeted for.

Price asked if Buzzell envisions future growth of program enrollment or if it will plateau; Buzzell responded that the numbers are very high in the lower age groups so that will likely lead to steady enrollment over the next few years.

Harper asked about out-of-town involvement in programs; Buzzell noted that fees are charged in those cases. Clarke expressed support of the plans to grow the rec department. She commented on it being a good, low cost activity(s) for residents to take advantage of and noted the need to

expand adult/senior programming. There was discussion about summer rec costs, fees, and the number of counselors needed.

Harper asked about the plans to get the Town to support the new position and subsequent budget increase. Buzzell noted that having full Budget Committee and Select Board support will be key. Clarke said now is the best time to propose this given recent mil rate decreases. Haley commented that she hopes people are seeing some positive changes in town and have a sense of community pride and spirit; Buzzell said that recreation can be a focal point of the Town. Haley also relayed that surveys show a desire to increase adult programming opportunities.

Buzzell commented about the reduction in the field maintenance budget since fertilizer was pre-bought. It was pointed out that the newly added vehicle and equipment maintenance line did not get added in the R&M total budget; Haley will correct the spreadsheet. There was a discussion about the workers compensation figures, given the new position.

Maryann Eastman presented the Library Budget. She started by conveying that there were 64 check-outs and 33 patrons at the library today. She outlined her plans to increase special programs to 1 per week and wanted to make sure that people are aware that the library is about more than books; she highlighted computer and wifi usage as examples. Eastman provided some salary statistics for librarians and aides. The budget includes an increase in the hours of one of the library aides. The need for additional office furniture was discussed. Price asked about the decrease in the computer tech budget line; Haley explained that the purchase of 2 computers was included in that last year.

Haley presented the Select Board budget and noted a suggestion to increase the Select Board pay to \$3,000 annually. Clarke supports this and believes that it might attract more people to running for the position. She noted the amount of time it takes to serve as a board member. There was a discussion about future increases. Clarke suggested leaving the pay at \$3000 for the foreseeable future. Chase questioned that. Kingsbury said that Select Board members are not typically doing the job for the money and would question someone who was. There was general consensus to support the increase to \$3,000 per Select Board member.

Haley reviewed the other Boards/Committees budgets proposals including Planning Board, Appeals Board, Bicycles Walkways Trails Committee, and Broadband Committee.

Haley presented the Professional Services budgets. Price asked for details on the contract assessor position. Haley is working with Atlantic Valuation Services to finalize the contract and there is ongoing discussion about the yearly fees. AVS will serve as the assessors agent, rather than this being combined with the Code Enforcement Officer position.

Clarke questioned whether the engineering for Pine Street should be included in professional services or in the public works budget. This was discussed. There was consensus to leave it in professional services for now.

Tyrrell questioned the increase in legal fees, since it also increased last year with the comment that the new counsel will need to catch up on local issues. Haley stated that this years budgeted amount is close to being expended. She commented that efforts are made to use MMA legal

service when appropriate but that there has been certain issues, including ordinance review and foreclosed properties that have necessitated contacting the town attorney.

Price opened up the discussion about General Assistance. Tyrrell asked for confirmation that the town gets reimbursed by the State for 70% of the amount paid out. This was confirmed.

Antonucci said that there is proposed legislation to increase the reimbursement. Clarke said that the \$10,000 should be left and that it is good to have if needed. Klinepeter provided examples of it being needed in other towns when major businesses close. Tyrrell pointed out that there is state statute that allows the town to over-expend the budget line. The reimbursement was discussed further, including the timing of getting reimbursements and that it goes into the general revenues, rather than getting applied as a credit to the budget line. Harper asked to see more detail on the reimbursements in the budget proposal. After continued discussion there was consensus to leave the budget at \$10,000.

Chase made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Harper and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:44.