

Fryeburg Budget Committee Minutes
March 20, 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, Andy Dufresne, Aaron Mick, Dale Stout
Select Board Present: Tom Kingsbury, Tom Klinepeter, Jim Tyrrell

Price called the meeting to order and declared a quorum.

Chase made a motion to approve the March 6, 2023 meeting minutes, which was seconded by Harper and passed unanimously.

Price asked if the committee had questions from last meeting. Haley reviewed changes made, including a correction of an addition error in the Rec Budget and an additional note in the General Assistance budget.

Rescue Chief Stephen Goldsmith presented the Rescue budget. He began by providing a history of Fryeburg Rescue, noting past building locations, historical call volumes, operational models and the shift from being quasi-municipal to an entirely separate entity. He noted that the mission has remained unchanged, which is to provide emergency services to towns. Goldsmith also commented on the impacts of COVID and the ever-present issue to find staff. He noted the pay range of \$18-26/hour compared to United, which offers \$26-34/hour. He is taking steps to attract employees.

He reviewed that the budget request is up 11% to \$142,536. There was discussion about call volume and associated billing. Goldsmith noted that they can only bill for transports and not for just showing up to render assistance. Harper asked about the number of transports in Fryeburg vs the number of calls and indicated that is how the contributions of the towns should be calculated; Goldsmith did not have that statistic. Price noted that we should support rescue based on the calls for service, rather than transport. Goldsmith reviewed the rates for service based on medical services rendered and mileage. He commented that if someone has Medicare, then rescue only gets \$300 paid to them, rather than the \$1,000 that the bill might be.

Goldsmith commented that Fryeburg's effort to grow and improve our economy has a direct impact on public safety and that needs to also grow accordingly. Goldsmith noted increases in other departments budgets over the last couple of years. Harper commented that it is not an apples-to-apples comparison since the town departments add in other factors such as insurances and retirement.

Harper asked to see actuals from rescue, noting that they have that information from all departments, and asked what happens if there is a surplus. Goldsmith responded that it gets put towards the next year to reduce the budget. Harper again requested to see the actuals.

There was a discussion about a subscription service for rescue services. The details on the aging report and collections were asked about and discussed. It was confirmed that the other area towns do pay the requested percentage. Klinepeter noted that he needed rescue recently and that Medicare was billed but that his supplemental insurance paid some and then he was also billed, contradicting Goldsmiths previous comments that rescue only recoups \$300.

There was discussion about the number of calls resulting from the Fryeburg Fair. It was confirmed that rescue is currently fully-staffed. Tyrrell asked if rescue could charge for calls and not just for transports. Goldsmith said it is a philosophical question and wondered whether it is the best way to proceed. There was discussion about different potential circumstances (for example, a son calls on behalf of his mother- would rescue charge the mother?). Goldsmith did comment that they charge \$100 if they take someone's vitals. Harper noted that there is a billing/medical code for non-transports.

Tyrrell asked Goldsmith if there would be jokes within rescue about not responding to peoples houses that vote to not support the budget. Goldsmith responded he wasn't sure what that meant but they would respond.

Kingsbury asked about billing of patients from Bella Point and noted the good job that Fryeburg Rescue does.

Fire Chief Andrew Dufresne presented the Fire Department budget. He detailed an increase in the uniform budget line which includes the addition of turn-out gear. He noted that a grant was received in 2016 to purchase turnout gear but that it is time to start the process of replacement, which will take place over a 3-year period.

There was a discussion about propane vendors and options to ensure the lowest possible pricing.

Harper inquired about the total cost of replacing all turnout gear; Dufresne said approximately \$80,000. There was discussion about creating a rotating cycle of purchasing gear vs. purchasing it all at once. Dufresne noted that a cycle of rotation allows for more specificity based on employee status and minimizes the cost impact, but does result in needing to deal with rising costs of gear each year. This led to a discussion about making this a capital line to allow for continual planning, even after the gear is purchased over the next 3 years. Dufresne explained the rationale for not making it capital; it is typical necessary gear and while not cheap, it is not at the level of traditional capital items such as vehicles or large equipment. Harper asked about the potential of getting another grant to purchase turnout gear. Dufresne said it was unlikely based on the relatively recently received grant and that it is likely better to try to receive grants for other items.

Harper asked about the potential of combining Fire and Rescue as a town department. Dufresne briefly reviewed some pros and cons but said it is ultimately a town decision.

Price inquired about the plan for purchasing fire apparatus, specifically a ladder truck, noting the potential for a new fire station. It was discussed that the door height at the existing fire station is a limiting factor in the purchase of any fire truck. However, the ultimately the next type of truck purchased next will be based on many different factors including the condition of the current fleet, the trucks held by mutual aid departments, grant availability, etc.

Haley presented the Administration budget. Propane suppliers were discussed.

Chase made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Harper. The meeting adjourned at 8:01 pm.