

**Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting
March 5, 2019**

MINUTES

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Eric Claman, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Board of Finance Chairman Regina Wexler; Member of the Public David Rosengren; Member of the Press Kathryn Boughton (Republican-American); Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

2019-2020 Budget Workshop:

First Selectman Jerram stated that this meeting was a first glance at a proposed budget for 2019-2010. The Selectmen reviewed several line items and reviewed the history of some of the line items; comparing costs from different years.

Jerram commented that there is an opportunity for savings in the line items of liability insurance and workers compensation due to a reduction in the rates being charged to the Town. The insurance company has indicated that due to good practices resulting in a low claim history, they would decrease the rates by 5%.

Highway Wages will only see a slight increase due to changes in personnel in the department.

Replacements for seasoned workers are hired at a lower trainee rate which offers some temporary relief in wages. (Jerram noted that when the probationary period is complete, the trainees get a bump in pay which brings them equal to other highway employees).

The Highway Superintendent would like to see an increase in the pavement (new/preservation) line item of \$60,000. He feels this is necessary in order to keep up with what needs to be done.

The First Selectman noted that there will be a 25% increase in the wage line item for the Resident Trooper. This is an assessment to the town. Jerram informed the Board that the Town pays 115% of fringe benefits for the trooper; a practice that Jerram has an issue with but cannot do anything about. The Resident Trooper's salary is \$88,000; but the town gets charged \$175, 476.95.

Mr. Jerram commented that the tree removal line item in the highway department needs to be increased due to the amount of trees that need to be removed. He stated that the Emerald Ash Borer has destroyed many trees and they need to be taken down. These trees are a hazard and present a liability to the town if not addressed. Selectman Claman asked who determines which trees are removed. Mr. Jerram replied that the town has 3 tree wardens (himself, Brenda Schaufler, and George Phillips). These tree wardens can assess trees to determine course of action.

The Recreation Commission has asked for the reinstatement of funding for 'sports allocations.' These are funds used by the Recreation Commission to help offset costs of youth programs.

Selectman Claman questioned the Tax Office funding. He stated that he was under the impression that there would not be an assistant, but noticed that there is a line item for Tax Office/Consultant. Mr. Jerram replied that the line item reflects funds for hiring the former Tax Collector to be available for training and assistance to the new Tax Collector for a limited timeframe. Jerram stated that there is a temporary need for some assistance during the first year of transition from an Assistant Tax Collector to being the individual responsible for the operations of the office. Claman agreed that this is necessary.

The Pension line item needs to include costs of “extras” that the town pays for – i.e. valuation and employee benefit statements. This line item is not just for the actual contribution to the pension fund. Retirement benefits will slowly increase each year as employee turnover occurs. New employees are no longer eligible for a pension, but there is a defined contribution plan in place. The town funds 5% of salary and the employee must contribute 1%.

Zoning legal and professional fees has been on the high side for this year; however the rolling average supports keeping the line item flat.

The Bakerville library has not submitted a request yet; but Beekley Library has requested a 2.2% increase.

Foothills Visiting Nurse line item has remained flat. Mr. Claman asked if the town goes out to bid for visiting nurse services. Mr. Jerram replied that New Hartford has not done so in the past, but he is willing to consider doing that if the Board would like to go that route.

The Selectmen reviewed the revenues and discussed that there are still unknowns with what may happen at the State level, but they need to create a budget based on the information that is given to them. The issue of teacher pensions and the possibility of Municipalities having to pay a portion of the costs is still pending.

The Selectmen agreed to meet again to continue work on the budget on March 11, 2019. Mr. Jerram stated that he would most likely have line item transfer requests to bring before the Board for consideration at that meeting.

MOTION: by Kennerson to adjourn at 7:55 PM; seconded by Claman.

Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant

No attachments – budget in draft form; changes will occur with each discussion