

**BUDGET COMMITTEE
TOWN OF PEMBROKE, NH
NOVEMBER 21, 2019 at 6:30 PM**

Karen Yeaton, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm

I. Attendance:

Present:

Karen Yeaton, Michael Connor, Gerry Fleury, Marie Chouinard, Brian Seaworth, Daniel Crean, Tina Courtemanche, Peter Gagy, Paul Hanson

Staff: Recording Secretary Jillian McNeil, Town Administrator David Jodoin

Excused: Andy Camidge, Sandy Goulet

II. Approval of Minutes: November 14, 2019:

Dan Crean moved to approve the minutes of November 14, 2019. Gerry Fleury seconded the motion. Motion approved 7-0. Armand Soucy, Tina Courtemanche, and Paul Hanson abstained.

III. Rose Galligan – Brief Discussion about Erosion at Memorial Field

Rose Galligan, Chair of the Recreation Commission, stated that she spoke to the Amoskeag Rowing Club and they are going to bring the erosion concerns up at the next Board of Directors meeting. Gerry Fleury stated that he has been watching the Suncook River ever since the erosion problem occurred in Epsom. In the spring time when the water flows through, it is eating away at the banking. Someone has planted small trees along the river and the brush was recently cleared. Rose stated that she was the one who planted the small trees down by the point. Gerry asked when the Army Corp of Engineers came and gave their recommendations. Rose stated that it was in 1995 and she has given a copy of the report to the Amoskeag Rowing Club and has a copy available if anyone would like to read it. Gerry stated that he believes that the report recommended not having trees along the shoreline because when the large trees are eroded and fall into the river, they are taking a lot of dirt with them. He remembered the recommendation being to cut the trees down but leave the stumps. Gerry shared concerns that if attention is not brought to the eroded fields, that it may end up with a much larger price tag down the road. Rose stated that the person the Amoskeag Rowing Club is using to do the brush work brush work has another piece of equipment that could remove certain trees. The Rowing Club would like the trees gone too for better viewing of the annual regatta. Gerry stated that another area of concern is the storm drain on the north end of the field. There is a large portion of that drainage pipe that is now gone.

Brian Seaworth stated that the Planning Board has been discussing whether or not new recreational fields may be needed with all of the developments being proposed and built in town. Brian asked what would hypothetically happen to the recreation budget if they were asked to put in and maintain more fields in another part of Town. Rose stated that it would depend on how big the property is and what it is primarily used for. If property was donated, it could be donated to a particular sport like soccer and that organization would maintain it.

IV. 2020 Ambulance Budget Presentation

Chris Gamache, Director Tri-Town Ambulance, presented the 2020 ambulance budget. Director Gamache discussed the structure and functions of the Tri-Town Board and when and how the budget is built. The Ambulance budget was passed in September by the Board of Directors and has already been presented to the Allenstown Budget Committee. This year, there were a lot of unexpected ambulance repairs. The newer ambulance had air conditioning problems and last year the backup ambulance had a lot of engine problems. There were also oil and coolant leaks. The repairs did not affect the 2020 budget but it was something that happened and needed to be a part of the discussion. In July, the service had to get an emergency waiver from the State to operate a loaner ambulance because they did not have an operating ambulance.

Director Gamache stated that the next major item that happened last year was the purchase of a portable ventilator and the training that was completed. In the capital area, Tri-Town was the first service to put this type of portable ventilator on their ambulance. This year, it has stopped 15 people from needing to be put on a ventilator at the hospital and going into the ICU. The next step after the portable ventilator is being certified for rapid sequence intubation. This will allow them to sedate and paralyze patients in order to put an airway in. Patients who need this would be in respiratory failure or cardiac arrest. Once they have all their final medications and certifications, they will be one of three services in the capital area permitted to do this type of care.

Director Gamache stated that the budget was adversely affected by the service being named in a lawsuit that was a carryover from the prior service and although they were deemed not liable, the legal fees were over \$40,000.

Director Gamache stated that it took a few years after getting the service going to figure out how to most accurately predict ambulance billing. This created a large unspecified fund balance which was used to offset each town's obligation in 2019. There were also funds moving through the accounts that were used for projects in the Capital Improvement Plan. In 2018, there was not extra money moving through the accounts so when comparing 2018 to 2020, there is a 2.5% increase. Last year when the Town had the MRI pay study conducted, Tri-Town Board of Directors looked at the study, made it more applicable to EMS, and adopted the same pay scale. The

increases were not budgeted for and they are reflected in the 2020 budget. Most other budget lines remained the same or decreased.

Gerry Fleury asked what the line Ambulance and Life Packs Leases is for. There were expenditures of \$192,817.84 in 2017 and then zero for 2018 and 2019 and now \$10,000 is budgeted for 2020. Director Gamache stated that the \$197,817.84 was for the purchase of newest ambulance. The \$10,000 for next year is for a CIP item which is taking a retired police vehicle and turning it into a service vehicle. This way if a paramedic is needed, just a paramedic can be dispatched without needing to send the whole ambulance when it isn't warranted.

Director Gamache shared that the demographics of the service are four full time staff and a number of per-diem and part-time personnel. System wide, there are around 1,300 runs called in a year. The service is typically able to respond to around 1,200 of those calls. Of those 1,200, around 850 require transports. On average it takes about 45 to 50 seconds to be dispatched and they are on scene in 3-4 minutes. The bulk of the calls are 2-3 miles from the station.

Gerry Fleury asked how they are doing with retaining staff and obtaining staff. Director Gamache stated that a year ago the numbers were down and they were averaging 4-5 applicants a year. This year, the service advertised through the State and they received over 30 applicants. The service largely relies on per-diems. EMS is often a stepping stone which can lead to a lot of movement. Right now, they are almost at full staff and are currently looking at a few applicants. Gerry asked if they have systems in place so new people who are unfamiliar with the area can find the calls easily. Director Gamache stated that they subscribe to an app that is on a phone in the ambulance. When a call comes through, they can hit map it. That is their primary means of getting directions to calls. New staff are expected to drive around Town regularly to familiarize themselves with the area.

Karen Yeaton asked if there are still the same concerns that there were last year regarding billing challenges and the amount billed versus the amount received. Director Gamache stated that it will always be a challenge. The issue with Medicare and Medicaid is that there is such a large reduction in rates. To break even on a transport the ambulance needs to bill \$900 and they will typically receive \$520 which leaves the service with a significant deficit. Medicaid is an 80% reduction in rates and Medicare is a 50% reduction in rates. Private insurance will typically pay whatever they want and then the service can appeal the decision and then ultimately pass the balance on to the patient. Taxpayers of Pembroke and Allenstown have the benefit of not getting that balance bill because they are paying either directly through billing or indirectly through taxes. If a call comes in that is for mutual aid in another town, that benefit cannot be extended to those patients.

Gerry Fleury asked if the mutual aid with other towns is even between what is coming in and what is going out. Director Gamache stated that since he has been with the service, they have never provided more mutual aid than received. However,

in the last few years it has evened out more. Concord uses Tri-Town more than Pembroke uses Concord, Epsom comes in more than Tri-Town goes out, and Hooksett varies.

V. 2020 Fire Budget Presentation

Chief Harold Paulsen presented the Fire Department's 2020 budget. Chief Paulsen stated that overall the budget is down 4.00%. The personnel lines remained largely the same. Fire and EMS training was brought down this year due to difficulty getting outside instructors. An outside instructor brings more validity to what is being taught rather than internal training. Telephone is up and dispatch is up a little bit. Testing done by outside agencies that are required by law and/or standard is up 4.57%. Safety Equipment purchases are down 29.66% and it went down because they normally request to outfit five people a year and this year, they are requesting to outfit three. Equipment Maintenance Repairs vary depending on what needs maintenance that year. New equipment is also up from last year. They need emergency road signs, personal CO monitors, a short throw projector, and a small parts cleaner system. Vehicle Maintenance and Repair is also up from last year. Engine One has a \$10,000 pump repair that needs to be done. That will be done once the truck that was purchased last year is delivered. The rescue truck also needs new tires.

Brian Seaworth stated that the current year expenditure is zero in both the new equipment and replacement equipment lines. Is that because there are outstanding expenditures or is that money that was frozen. Chief Paulsen stated that it is because he doesn't have more money in the budget until the end of the year. Expenditures for vehicles maintenance were over budget by \$6,000 and those two lines can absorb over expenditures from elsewhere in the budget.

Gerry Fleury asked what fire alarm maintenance refers to. Chief Paulsen stated that the call boxes for that system are all gone and that is why there is nothing budgeted in that line. The wires are still there to reserve the spots on the pole. There is thought of wiring all of the schools and municipal buildings into a fiber optic system but that is still in discussions.

Karen Yeaton stated that she has no concerns with the budget but out of curiosity would like to know why wages are down 1.11%. Chief Paulsen stated that they have one full-time person and that is tracked in a separate line because there are retirement and social security involved. That line is for on-call personnel. Five-year averages are used to create the budget number and this year it was down. Karen also asked about the note of buyout under the health insurance line. David Jodoin answered that last year they budgeted for a full-time family plan and an individual came in that did not need insurance so he receives a buyout. Karen asked why the actual for this year for the hydrant rental is low. Chief Paulsen stated that that is the rental of the hydrant paid to the Water Works. David stated that the last bill for the year hasn't been paid.

David Jodoin and Chief Paulsen reviewed the Emergency Management Budget. Chief Paulsen stated that Larry Young retired and now that budget is down 73.21%. He was the Assistant Emergency Management Director. There was also a large amount of money for the active shooter training drill that happened last summer that is not in this budget. The river gauge is still in the budget but Allenstown was told that Pembroke is not paying for that anymore. It was a five-year deal and the five years are over.

Chief Paulsen wanted to mention the software cost of \$650 which is for a yearly subscription to a service that allows anyone on their way to a fire to communicate. There are six people on the line from Pembroke and all of the 22 towns in the capital area fire compact use the software which allows dispatch to see who is responding.

David stated that there are no capital expenditure requests except for the yearly request of funds to go into the capital reserve funds.

VI. Other Business

David Jodoin reviewed the meeting calendar. Right now, the public hearing is scheduled for Thursday, February 6, 2020.

Gerry Fleury stated that he would like to start working on the summary of tax rate sheet as soon as possible. David stated that he has his numbers in and it has been sent to the School District but he has not received it back yet. The utility assessment adjustments will be key to the reduction in the assessed valuation. All of those are needed in order to have the most accurate projection. Eversource is still in court litigating with the communities that did not settle and also for the year of 2018. David has requested a copy of the final settlement and the final settlement numbers. Brian Seaworth asked where the pre-2017 money for the settlement shows up in the budget. David stated that when the money was refunded it was recorded as an overlay which is a reduction in the Town's revenue but it isn't shown in the budget.

Gerry Fleury stated that the town does not sell TAN's because they do not have to and that saves TAN interest and that is all predicated on the assumption that the receipt of property taxes twice a year is sufficient to meet the capital needs of the town. Gerry asked David if that is still the case. David stated that it is.

Karen Yeaton had submitted a question to the School District from Gerry regarding the difference in some values in the fund one budget. Gerry stated that in the bottom line of fund one they added a column that was called "voted" and they were hundreds of thousands of dollars off from what was actually voted.

Karen Yeaton stated that Andy Camidge sent the latest budget information in a link to everyone.

The next meeting on December 5th will be for the Library and Police Department budgets.

VII. Adjourn

Gerry Fleury made a motion to adjourn at 7:35 PM. Armand Soucy Crean seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Karen Yeaton, Chairman

For more detailed information, the meetings are now taped and can be seen on www.townhallstreams.com click on Pembroke NH and look for the day of the meeting under the month.