

**BUDGET COMMITTEE  
TOWN OF PEMBROKE, NH  
DECEMBER 3, 2020 at 6:30 PM**

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Mark LePage, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

**I. Attendance:**

Budget Committee Present:

Peter Gagy, Michael Connor, Gerry Fleury, Mark LePage, Paul Hanson, Andy Camidge, Brian Seaworth, Clint Hanson, David Doherty, Richard Bean, Karen Yeaton, Armand Soucy

Excused: Gene Gauss, Sandy Goulet,

Staff: David Jodoin, Town Administrator, and Jillian McNeil, Recording Secretary

**II. Approval of Minutes: November 19, 2020:**

Andy Camidge moved to approve the minutes of November 19, 2020 as amended; Gerry Fleury seconded the motion. David Doherty abstained. Motion passed 9-0.

**III. 2021 Library Budget**

Sue Whitbeck and Judy Mitchell, Co-Chairs of the Library Trustees, presented the 2021 Library Budget. The operating budget is remaining relatively flat with increases due to salary and benefits. Several libraries in New Hampshire have been going back to curbside deliveries only due to the increase in COVID-19 numbers but at this point, the Pembroke library staff feel comfortable to stay open. There were some savings in FY20 in lines such as electrical and heat due to the spring library closure and those funds will be returned to the Town.

Gerry Fleury asked about current library utilization. Tim Sheehan, Library Director, explained that they tried to remain helpful during the closure and beyond. The staff is doing what they can to assist students and parents with any technology questions. Judy Mitchell shared that November 2020 utilization is up over November 2019. The downloadable utilization is also up 7-10% over last year.

David Jodoin reiterated that last year the Library Trustees stated that they would return any unused funds for salary and benefits and they did. Judy Mitchell shared they always return anything left over in the personnel line back to the town.

Clint Hanson asked if there are specific plans for new activities. Judy Mitchell shared they transitioned to the new catalog system this year and that was a large undertaking. They are trying to expand the children's and adolescents' programs. Tim Sheehan

shared they are trying to implement more teen programs when they can after the COVID-19 pandemic winds down a little.

#### **IV. 2021 Police Budget**

Police Chief Dwayne Gilman and Lieutenant Gary Gaskell presented the 2021 Police Budget.

Lt. Gaskell stated the rates for dispatch may increase due to a new Sheriff being elected and prosecution rates may also increase due to a new County Attorney being elected in November. There is not a lot of change in the operating budget this year, however, they are looking to encumber funds for computer software and are still looking to go live for a greater contact with dispatch. Out of the 19 towns in the county, only 6 are on the live program and it is receiving mixed reviews. The Department is not planning to purchase any new cruisers next year. The Department is at full staff and has been for a little over a year. Next year, they will be looking to increase staffing. They have had a force of 12 for 15 years and with the increase in housing and businesses in town, they are looking to add a few positions.

David Jodoin explained that increases in the budget are tied to salaries and benefits. There is an increase in retirement rates and that will affect all departments. Health insurance is also seeing an increase and there are normal wage increases. There is also an increase in the telephone budget line. David explained that if the increases for salaries and benefits were removed, the budget is mostly level funded and flat. Chief Gilman and Lt. Gaskell will be discussing body cameras with the Selectmen on Monday. Lt. Gaskell explained that several cruisers have maintenance tracking software and also air cards. They are a service through Verizon which is what causes the increase in the telephone line.

Richard Bean shared that the Selectman are in favor of the purchase for body cams. Chief Gilman explained that the original quotes for body cams was approved by the Selectmen. The company came back and said there was a clerical error on the quote so the Chief then went back to Selectman and they approved the increased amount. When he went to purchase them, they found out the company won't support the devices after a year because there will be a new model out. Chief Gilman stated he told the company that he will not to do anything unless there is a two-year warranty for general upkeep and basic functions. They are currently still in negotiations. The increase was from about \$5,000/unit to \$6,500-7,000/unit for a total of 12 cameras.

David Doherty asked how they handled the decline in training due to pandemic and what kind of activity they have seen since the pandemic began last March. Lt. Gaskell explained that the Police Academy changed to full remote. They are following a hybrid model doing have the class one day and then half the other. They are

beginning to limit numbers. There are webinars the Officers have been able to attend. All Officers are meeting training guidelines. Chief Gilman explained that they tried to limit interaction with the public while keeping everyone safe. For example, they may have issued a court summons or citation if possible, rather than arrested people. Activity was starting to increase while everyone was home. Crimes against children was reduced during COVID which was bothersome because the crimes weren't down, the reporting was. With schools closed and doctors' offices closed, the kids didn't have anyone to make reports too. With everything beginning to open back up, they are getting a large increase of reports. They pulled an officer off the road and they now have two people working 80-100 hours a week on investigations. The lack of trainings and the spending freeze has also put them behind. They discussed last year the need to more personnel and while they again have not put it in this budget, it will be in the next.

Andy Camidge asked if they have received the vehicles purchased during the last year. Lt. Gaskell explained they did receive the cruiser that was approved in March 2019 in April 2020. The two that were purchased this year came in this September. They now have a full fleet

## **V. School Update**

Andy Camidge, Chair of the Pembroke School Board, stated the budget is now on its third draft and the percentage increase has gone down due to roster changes. This reduced the salaries and benefits lines. The overall budget is up 2.25% over last year. As expected, health insurance and retirement are the large increases. More students are planning to attend PACE Academy next year so there is a small increase in those lines. The School Board is currently in negotiations with the Paraprofessional union and they will likely have a contract up for a vote as a warrant article. Last year, the warrant articles put up for vote totaled between \$90-100,000 and this year the total is north of \$300,000. \$197,000 of it is mostly CIP items for the year. There is also a warrant article to create a trust fund for vehicles and some funding for that reserve. They will talk with Josh Coughlin at the meeting to see if they can use any of the capital reserves to fund projects this year to make the tax rate hit a little less next year. The revenue influx of \$800,000 from the State will not be there this year. Currently, the school is fully remote until January 15<sup>th</sup>. New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services reached out the SAU and informed them that Pembroke Academy is at the point of being consider a cluster. Meaning there is a large rate of infections that they may be able to tie together.

Mark LePage asked if there are any new COVID related expenses. Andy answered that they are not expecting anything. Andy explained that Amber Wheeler, Business Administrator, explained to him that she is not counting the revenue dollars from the CARES Act into the budget until the funds actually hit the account. The Principals from each school presented the SAU with a list of items that they would prefer to buy this year. The budget is frozen so Patty Sherman, Superintendent, is approving all

purchases. The list totaled around \$118,000. The current anticipated surplus is around \$798,000. The items presented by the Principals are items that are in the FY21 budget so if they were purchased this year, it would reduce the surplus but also reduce the budget next year.

Gerry Fleury shared concerns the warrant articles as presented are three times the amount they have ever seen in the past. Gerry explained that there are issues with articles 6, 7 and 8. Article 6 creates and moves money to a capital reserve. Article 7 adds additional money to the reserve. Then article 8 spends the money from the reserve but it spends more than article 6 sets aside. Andy stated that Josh Coughlin the Facilities Director put the numbers together and they saw them for the first time on Tuesday. They are still running the articles by their lawyer. Andy will address the timing issue with Josh

Paul Hanson asked out of the nearly \$800,000 surplus, how much is COVID related operational savings. Andy explained that it hard to say but some of the savings is due to running half the buses they normally would. There is a shortage of drivers and they are only paying for the buses used. They have not seen any of the funds from the CARES Act. The budget is still frozen and they are limiting purchases and that is adding to the surplus. Every year, The School District returns a couple hundred thousand so part of the \$800,000 is a normal/expected return.

Karen Yeaton asked the increase of 2.25% includes warrant articles. Andy answered it does not. Karen asked for the increase with warrant articles. Andy answered that he has not seen that yet but will ask for it before the next meeting.

Andy Camidge responded to a previously made comment/question about what the School District considers fixed costs. Fixed costs are either contracts that end after the fiscal year or required services that are not optional to provide. Gerry questioned electricity costs being considered a fixed cost. Concerned that if electricity is considered a fixed cost and it is not, it can cast suspicion on other fixed costs. Electricity costs would vary month to month depending on usage unless there was a contract in place with a true fixed cost attached. Clint Hanson explained that during the Honeywell projects, electricity was considered a fixed cost because they had a contract and that may be left over from that era. Mark LePage suggested using the term required costs rather than fixed costs since items like electricity or special education can vary in the amounts but are required to be provided and funded.

## **VI. Other Business**

The Budget Committee will be meeting with the Fire Department and Tri-Town Ambulance on the December 10. They will meet with the Water, Sewer, and Public Works Department on December 17. The Committee will begin reviewing the School District budget on January 7. The Public Hearing is scheduled for February 4, 2021 and will likely to be remote.

The next remote meeting will be held December 10<sup>th</sup>.

**VII. Adjourn**

Gerry Fleury made a motion to adjourn at 7:41 PM. Brian Seaworth seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

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Mark LePage, Chairman