

**BUDGET COMMITTEE
TOWN OF PEMBROKE, NH
December 9, 2021 at 6:30 PM**

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

I. Attendance:

Budget Committee Present:

Clint Hanson, Joe Devuono, Sue Whitbeck, Mike Connor, Richard Bean, Brian Seaworth, Mark LePage, Gerry Fleury, Paul Hanson, Gene Gauss

Absent: Andy Camidge, Dave Doherty

Staff: Jillian McNeil Recording Secretary, David Jodoin

II. Approval of Minutes: December 2, 2021:

Gerry Fleury moved to approve the minutes as amended of December 2, 2021. Clint Hanson seconded the motion. Motion passed 10-0. Richard Bean and Gene Gauss abstained.

III. 2022 Fire Department Budget Presentation

Fire Chief Paul Gagnon and Assistant Chief Erik Paulsen presented the 2022 Fire Department Budget. Overall, the total budget increase is 3.53%. 1.25% of that is from the operating budget while the rest is compensation based.

The wages budget line has a 4.25% increase that is inclusive of a cost-of-living adjustment and an additional \$5,000 for a new Fire Inspector. The position will now include Life Safety Inspections. There was a significant decrease to the Forest Fires Payroll budget line from \$1,500 to \$250. That line has not been expended from in recent years due to reduced forest fires.

The budget line for Safety Equipment Purchases has the largest increase. The price of personal equipment has skyrocketed. These are items such as fire coats and pants, forestry gloves, Class B Uniforms, structural helmets, goggles, and vehicle identification plates. The turnout gear that every fire fighter needs has a 10-year life and increased by \$2,500 per set. Chief Gagnon tried to buffer the increase in the other lines for new and replacement equipment lines.

Computer/Software Maintenance lines are another large increase. The software company increased their rates. They are looking at other vendors but there have been some challenges finding a good software vendor. The software is critical to the Fire Department's operations.

Paul Hanson asked how many employees the Department is they looking for. Chief Gagnon answered 1 full-time firefighter that can run the pumps, drive trucks, and do inspections.

Gerry Fleury asked why gas and fuel was budgeted at a flat amount when it appears costs are increasing. Chief Gagnon explained last year was a mild winter and he is new to the budgeting process. If the Committee feels like lines need to be increase, he is open to discuss it.

Mark LePage asked what the biggest concern for the Department is. Assistant Chief Erik Paulsen stated filling the open full-time position with the right candidate. Gene Gauss asked if they will do employee training until they find the right candidate. Chief Gagnon explained what they need is a firefighter with a CDL so they can drive the truck. There was a time when the CDL was really difficult to get, however, right now there are people in the training program that currently work for the fire department. There are some recent retirees who drive trucks and can come in on calls. This has made it so they never miss a call.

Richard Bean asked how they are notified when a call comes in. Chief Gagnon explained that when an alarm goes out, there is an app on the phone that activates. They can hit a button saying they are responding and dispatch can see who is responding and they are also tagged with their role. Meaning it shows up that they are a driver, medic, or firefighter.

Gerry Fleury asked if they still plan to spend \$110,000 in 2022 for portable radios out of the small equipment capital reserve fund. Chief Gagnon stated he just had the quote refreshed and they are within \$1,000 of the original quote and they will order them right after the appropriation is approved at Town Meeting.

Mike Connor asked if the new radios they are purchasing will integrate with the new state program. Chief Gagnon answered the old radios are from 2006 and are integrated into the state system and the new ones will be as well. The newer style radios have a Bluetooth feature that connects to air packs. The air packs they currently have do not have that technology but the new ones they will be purchasing in the next 5 years will.

Gerry Fleury shared concerns that in order for them to make the expenditure out of the Small Equipment Capital Reserve in 2022 there needs to be a \$70,000 appropriation at Town Meeting. It will be critical for them to get that allocation approved.

IV. 2022 Public Works Budget Presentation

VJ Ranfos, Director of Public Works, Bob Fanny, Solid Waste Foreman, and Adam Mendoza, Highway and Cemetery Foreman, present the 2022 Department of Public Works budget.

In the General Government Buildings budget, the wages line saw an increase due to the hiring of a cleaning company to come in twice a week. They were trying to find a part time custodian for the Library, Town Hall, and Safety Center but were unsuccessful. There was a concern that the buildings were not being cleaned properly and with COVID and short staffing at DPW, there just wasn't enough time to handle the job.

There is an increase in the Cemeteries line because of a new 3-year mowing contract that was just approved by the Selectman. The bid went to the current company doing the work and there were additional properties added.

Uniform lines show an increase as there were 3 new hires and a new contract for the uniforms.

There was some staff turnover in the Public Works Department. There was a reduction in payroll even though there were 3 new hires. The newer hires came in at a lower pay rate than the tenured employees who left.

Striping contract is with a new provider for a three-year contract. The original company had issues getting paint and were unable to provide services. Here too we requested proposals and received two and one did not comply so they were eliminated.

The price of salt went up from \$49/ton to \$72/ton. The price of sand also increased by \$2/ton. The estimated overall increase for this year is \$30,000.

Computer/software and maintenance lines increased. This year they will need a new server installed to replace an 8 year old server.

A union contract was approved last year and that was added to the budget for \$7,310.

Solid Waste Department supply line was increased to purchase new trash and recycle carts. With all the houses being sold there was a larger than normal demand this year. They have had to put people on waiting lists twice this year.

Solid Waste Committee put together an RFP for a new solid waste and recycling contract. The increase was much less than they were expecting but there is still a significant increase. The current contract with Casella will expire in 2022 but they

won the bid so a new contract with them will begin in September 2022. The overall increase is \$18,000.

The recycling market has been really good with a large need for cardboard so that line was reduced by \$5,000. The last 3-4 months Pembroke has been getting paid for the single stream recycling.

Hazardous Waste Day is every other year so there was a \$10,000 reduction this year and it will be placed back into the budget next year.

Container removal at the Transfer Station is currently \$147 per trip plus \$67/ton. Those costs have increased to \$250 a trip plus \$99/ton.

David Jodoin shared the capital items for next year are a 10-wheel dump truck/plow, boom flail mower for the trackless, and a new sander. The sander may come out of this year's budget if sufficient funding remains.

Richard Bean asked for the status of the new trash truck. Bob Fanny explained it was just delivered to Canada and the body is being put on. They should be getting a delivery date soon. The current truck is being traded in for this truck.

Gerry Fleury asked if data is backed up and kept off site in case of a server crash. VJ Ranfos answered he is unsure if the data is stored off-site but will check. It is backed up every day.

Mark LePage asked if there is enough participation in Hazardous Waste Day that would warrant making it yearly or is every other year still working. VJ Ranfos and Bob Fanny agree that every other year works well. At the last one there were 75 residents who showed up.

Brian Seaworth asked for the rationale in over the budgeting the line item for the road maintenance line. VJ Ranfos explained that earlier this year on Terrie Drive a culvert pipe failed and it cost \$18,000. They were about to take the funds out of a capital reserve but it doesn't take much to spend that amount of money anymore. The line is typically not spent but going forward, they would like to plan projects.

Mike Connor asked for more information about the Main Street Project. David Jodoin summarized the discussion between the Roads Committee and the Board of Selectmen. If there are specific questions for the engineers, he can get answers for the next meeting. Questions regarding the water and sewer pipes can be asked to the Water and Sewer Departments when they come in to discuss their budgets next week. Brian Seaworth gave a brief description from the standpoint of the Roads Committee.

V. School Update

Gene Gauss stated the new bottom line number is \$28,822,861. There may be further reductions if they can fund more items from surplus at the end of the year or from ESSER 3 grants. Every student now has a Chromebook and that Chromebooks are on a 5-year replacement schedule. That item will be moved to a capital improvement item and a planned expenditure. The District would like to build the trust up before starting the replacement cycle. The increase to the tax is currently at \$2.99.

VI. Other Business

Next week the Committee is meeting with Sewer Department, Water Department, and the School District.

VII. Adjourn

Clint Hanson made a motion to adjourn at 8:01 PM. Sue Whitbeck seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Mark LePage, Chairman