



Town Council FY2024 Budget Workshop

October 29, 2022 at 9:00 AM

Town Council Chambers

MINUTES

1. Roll Call

Present: Council Chair Toni Weinstein, via Zoom, Council Vice-chair Katanna Conley, Councilor Megan Brabec, Councilor Scott Blacstone, Councilor Brian Ward, Councilor Joe LaMattina, Councilor Colin White.

Staff Present: Town Manager Stephen Fournier and Finance Director William Tappan

Absent: None

Vice-chair Conley convened the meeting at 9:00 AM.

2. Budget Review by Department

a. FY2024 Proposed Budget

Recreation

Recreation Director Aimee Gigandet presented to answer questions about the Recreation Department's proposed FY2024 Budget. Town Manager Fournier explained that the bottom line budget is \$509,411.00 an increase of 6%. He explained that the department budget is offset by revenues collected by the department.

Recreation Director Gigandet explained that it is a challenge hiring partime seasonal help and they had to offer \$1.00 to \$1.50 more per hour to entice applicants. She explained that the travel expense line was decreased because it was shifted to the Sunrise Sunset budget.

Town Manager Fournier explained that the department requested \$62,333.00 to be placed in the Capital Reserve Fund and he budgeted \$25,000.00. There is currently over \$171,000.00 in the Recreation Facilities Capital Reserve Fund.

Councilor Blackstone asked if they planned to make improvements to the Splash Pad. Director Gigandet said that they are not going to add anything to it right now; they are working with what they currently have.

Chair Weinstein asked what the future plans are for the Rec Department. Director Gigandet said that they are looking into expanding the Community Center by adding an indoor gym which would increase revenues. They are getting a quote to put a new floor in the Beech Street Extension building and rethinking of where to put the skate board park. They are also looking into moving the playground to a different location in the Little League Park on Elm Street.

Councilor Brabec thanked the Director for doing a great job keeping the budget lean with all the programs that are offered.

Police

Chief Greg Jordan was present to answer questions about his department's proposed budget. Town Manager Fournier said that the budget has increased by \$61,892, mainly due to part-time salaries. The proposed budget is \$2,004,995. He also informed the Councilors that he had been approached by the collective bargaining unit to start negotiations on a new contract. The current contract expires December 31, 2022. The Collective Bargaining Agreement would be a separate Warrant Article because the voters approve it.

Councilor LaMattina asked how the hybrid vehicle is working out. Chief Jordan said that it is working well but ordering a new one now is 2 years out. They will be looking to purchase a F150 pickup truck. He explained that the figure he put in for fuel will hopefully cover the costs in 2024. Town Manager Fournier explained that the town departments use the gas pump at the Public Works Department and the fuel is at a discounted price and is tax exempt.

Councilor Conley questioned the decrease in the full-time salary line. Chief Jordan said he has budgeted higher on that line in the past to entice more experienced officers but realized it didn't make a difference. They are hiring less experienced officers and paying lower salaries.

Councilor Blackstone commented that the overtime line is as much as a full-time salaried officer. Chief Jordan explained that they can always use more help but hiring another full-time officer will not eliminate the need for employee overtime.

Town Manager Fournier said the Chief proposed request to the Capital Reserve Fund is 33,666, and the Town Manager budgeted \$15,000. There is \$175,335 in the Police Capital Reserve Fund. The Chief's requested increase was to cover equipment and upgrades to the Dispatch Center. They may be replacing one console in the Dispatch Center next year.

Town Manager Fournier addressed the smaller department budgets:

Town Council

There was no increase to the budget; it remains at \$20,350.

Town Manager

There is an increase of \$9,340 (4%) mainly due to salaries and dues and subscriptions.

Finance

There is an increase of \$451.

Human Resources

There is an increase of \$67,848, mainly due to health insurance increases.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector

There is an increase of \$21,107, due to the number of elections in 2024. No new equipment is planned to be purchased in this budget year.

Code Enforcement Officer

There is an increase of \$16,917, due to salaries.

Welfare

There is an increase of \$821.

Councilor LaMattina asked procedural questions about the department and asked if it would benefit the department to hire a part time employee to help the applicants with the process.

Town Manager Fournier explained that the Town's Welfare Director works with local non-profits in the community and other agencies in the state to help clients. The Town is the last resort for assistance. We are legally obligated to provide assistance to anyone destitute in the community; they do not have to be a resident. We also must follow state guidelines. There is an application process and certain criteria must be met to receive direct assistance from the Town. He said the Welfare Director helps applicants through the process.

Chair Weinstein commented that the reason the welfare budget has been cut in the past is because it wasn't being spent. She said that she has learned that the application process is daunting and many applicants do not have the resources to gather all the documentation that goes along with the application. People are walking away from the process because it is difficult.

Assessing

Assessing is a contracted service and the increase of \$6,247, due to an increase in the contract.

Legal

Legal is a contracted service and there is a \$7,000 increase. Town Manager Fournier said there may be an increase for work on the cable franchise agreement but that will come out of the operating budget. The contract with Donhue, Tucker and Ciandella will be expiring soon. Councilor Blackstone asked if we should go out to bid for legal services. Town Manager Fournier agreed that we should and said we can do that this year.

Town Manager Fournier stated the library budget increased to \$86,602, a 22% increase due to changing the children's librarian from a part-time position to a full-time position.

Mary Mahoney, Chair of the Library Trustees, addressed the issues in the library budget. She said that the last salary survey was done by NHMA in 2008 and the librarian's salary

was in the below average range at that time. The Trustees asked the Librarian to poll area libraries to research librarian salaries and Newmarket came out lower.

Town Manager Fournier said he cut the library budget because the salary survey being conducted had not been completed by the due date of the budget. He said his job is to oversee all departments' budgets. If the Trustees wanted to increase the salary this year they could take the money from another line in their budget. He said one possible way to rectify it is to increase the Human Resource merit pool line in the budget so that when the survey is complete there will be money available to adjust salaries per the survey after July 1st. Town Manager Fournier commented that after reviewing the draft salary survey, it was determined that the current salaries are not too far off. After polling the Council, it was decided to increase the Human Resource line by \$30,000.

Librarian Kerry Cronin presented the Library Budget. She distributed a narrative of the library's activities over the past year to each of the Councilors. Library budget increases are due to the part-time position becoming full-time, upgrade of smoke detectors, a 10 hours per week administrative assistant position, and utility increases.

Councilor Brabec thanked everyone at the Library for all that they do.

Councilor Ward said that he was happy they could address increasing the merit pool line and said the Council will continue to work on it.

Community Development Director Bart McDonough was present to answer questions about his budgets.

Planning Board - the Planning budget increased in the amount of \$2,589., mainly due to salaries.

Economic Development - no increases, remains at \$30,000.

Capital Reserve Fund - Town Manager Fournier said the Capital Improvement Plan Committee did not recommend including the fire truck lease payment in the Fire Department CRF. He suggested increasing the budget by \$50,000 to add to the Fire Department's capital reserve fund.

Director McDonough said the CIP Committee recommended adding a Capital Reserve Fund of \$75,000, for Schanda Park. Town Manager Fournier said he disagreed with the recommended CRF because there is enough money in the recreation revolving fund to address parks. He commented that all the Capital Reserve Funds are healthy; there is \$1.8 million dollars total in the funds and if you add water and sewer it's almost \$4 million.

After a poll of the Council it was decided to add \$50,000 to the Fire Department's Capital Reserve Fund.

Environmental Services

Environmental Services Director Sean Greig was present to answer questions about the water and wastewater budget.

Town Manager Fournier referred to the septage improvement project. The project will cost \$1.2 Million Dollars. He explained to the Council that after doing research, state law allows the Town Council by unanimous vote to authorize withdrawal from the fund balance to transfer into the capital reserve fund to fund the project. This will allow the project to be completed sooner and we won't have

to inflate the budget and inflate the revenues by \$1.2 Million that one time. He said that it does have to pass by a unanimous vote. He polled the Councilors and asked if they had any objections to taking this route. No one objected, so the Town Manager will draft a resolution for the Council to act on.

Director Greig explained that they are getting complaints from residents on Creighton Street because of the truck traffic bringing the septage to the facility. The project, once completed will reroute traffic from Creighton Street, allow us to accept more septage, creating an increase in revenue, reduce nitrogen into the river, and will reduce labor costs.

Water

The water budget increased in the amount of \$1,849,590 (10%) mainly due to chemicals and electricity.

Sewer

The sewer budget increased in the amount of \$266,064 (10%) mainly due to electricity.

Public Works

Public Works Director Rick Malasky was present to answer questions about the Public Works Department Budget.

Town Manager Fournier stated that the Public Works Director increased the budget by \$26,486.96 mainly due to salt and an increase in overtime. Town Manager Fournier reduced the increase in salt and is hoping for the best that the prices don't continue to climb and he did not increase the overtime budget by the requested \$25,000. He explained that if the high salt prices remain they will try to find money in other budget lines to pay for it.

Roadways/Sidewalks

Budget increase of \$46,400. Councilor Blackstone asked what sidewalks would be constructed with this budget. Director Malasky said that they plan to finish the Bennett Way sidewalks in 2024 and maybe put in sidewalks along Grant Road the following year. Councilor LaMattina asked about the Moonlight Brook Study and suggested increasing the budget by \$35,000 to pay for the study. Town Engineer Lyndsay Butler said that they would be applying for grants and Town Manager Fournier said that they can also use money from the Capital Reserve Funds, so there is no need to increase the budget. The Committee will have to draft a plan and submit it to the Town Manager.

Street Lights

No budget increases. The street lights are LED and are dark sky compliant.

Bridges

Budget increase of \$5,000 for guardrails.

Building and Grounds

Budget increase of \$243,235 mainly due to fuel, energy and salaries. They are adding a full-time position and the supervisor was promoted with a pay increase.

Fire Department

Budget increase of \$48,859, mainly due to part-time salaries and fuel. The part-time employees offset coverage over the weekends to improve on response times.

Cemetery

Budget increase of \$849.54 mainly due to salaries.

Motor Vehicles

Budget increase of \$23,000. The maintenance line decreased because most of our vehicles are newer models.

Solid Waste

Budget increase of \$33,347, mainly due to contract increases. We will have a new agreement shortly.

Insurance

Budget increase of \$18,074.

Emergency Management

No increase.

Grants

The Town Manager level-funded the grants budget line.

Councilor Blackstone questioned why all grants are mainly to support athletics and why the arts are not supported. Town Manager Fournier said that he hasn't received requests for support of arts events.

Social Services

Town Manager Fournier level-funded the Social Services budget line. He said that One Sky applied for support, but the application came in after the deadline. The application was filled out but received late and asked if the Council would consider increasing the budget by \$5,000 to include One Sky in the total. One

Sky provides support for individuals with disabilities. The Council had no objection.

Parade

The Town Manager level-funded the Parade budget line. This is used for the Memorial Day Parade, which we didn't have one this year but plan to have them going forward.

Chair Weinstein thanked the Town Manager Steve Fournier, Finance Director Bill Tappan and the Department Heads for preparing the budgets so well and making the Councilor's jobs easier.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy V. Chase
Recording Secretary

3. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:07 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy V. Chase
Recording Secretary