



Town Council FY2026 Budget Work Session

October 26, 2024 at 9:00 AM

Town Council Chambers

MINUTES

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Conley convened the meeting at 9:00 AM followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call

Present: Council Chair Katanna Conley, Council Vice-chair Brian Ward, Councilor Scott Blackstone, Councilor Joe LaMattina, Councilor Sonke Dornblut, Councilor Justin Glazebrook.

Absent: Councilor Colin White

Staff Present: Town Manager Steve Fournier, Finance Director William Tappan and Wendy Chase, Recording Secretary

3. Budget Review by Department

a. Public Works Department

Public Works Director Rick Malasky and Town Engineer Lindsay Butler were present to answer questions. The overall budget increased by 3%.

There are 12 employees and 1 open position.

- Salaries increased by 4%
- Training and staff development increased by \$2,000 due to sending employees to school to gain their CDL license. They can no longer be trained on the job due to federal regulations.
- 40% reduction in advertisements because ads are normally run online instead of in the newspaper. Town Manager Fournier commented that there are some notices we need to be advertise in the newspaper by law.
- 25% increase in uniforms - uniforms are sent out to be cleaned.

Councilor Blackstone commented that uniforms are a valuable thing and the Rec Department employees should wear some type of uniform so that they are easily recognized as a Rec Department employee. Town Manager Fournier agreed and will discuss that with the Rec Director.

Roadways & Sidewalks -

- 8% increase due to an increase in material products, curbing and salt

Streetlight -

- 13% increase. Newmarket Community Power was not available at the time we signed a contract with Eversource.

Bridges and Guardrails -

- There are no budget increases. Councilor Dornblut asked about putting planters in the guardrails. Town Manager Fournier said that it is possible, and he is in favor of it. He will look into the installation of guardrail planters in the spring.

Buildings and Grounds -

- 3% increase mainly due to salaries and maintenance costs.

Councilor Glazebrook questioned the increase in the Beech St. former senior center's budget increase. DPW Director Malasky explained that it is an older building and now that the town owns it there is no HUD funds coming in to help defray the costs.

Cemetery -

- 1% increase due to salary increases.

Vehicles -

- 4% increase
- \$4,000 increase for Fire Department due to annual testing of apparatus.

Solid Waste -

- 6% increase
- \$565,200 increase due to contracts with recycling.

DPW Director Malasky stated that recycling continues to be a high ticket item that increases every year.

DPW Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)

DPW Malasky requested \$123,765 and Town Manager Fournier level-funded it to \$75,000

Building Improvement Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)

No increase.

Roadway Improvements Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)

Level-funded \$250,000

Stormwater Management Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)

Engineer Lindsay Butler requested \$110,000 (\$8,500 more than last year) to set aside for asset management planning.

Town Manager Fournier added \$25,000, totaling \$50,000.

Sidewalk Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)

DPW Director Malasky proposed \$125,000.

Town Manager Fournier level-funded it to \$20,000.

Councilor Blackstone suggested reinstating the proposed amount of \$125,000. He said that a lot of people like to walk and adding more sidewalks on town roads is one of the Town Council's goals.

A straw poll was taken, and the Council agreed to reinstate the amount in the sidewalk CRF to \$125,000 (6-0-0).

Town Manager Fournier explained that a formal vote will be taken at the November 6, 2024, Council meeting amending Resolution #2024/2025-19 - Approval FY2026 Budget to reflect the change.

b. Recreation Department

Recreation Director Aimee Gigandet was present to answer questions about the Recreation Department's budget. The overall increase of 11% was mainly due to salaries.

There are 5 full-time employees (one of the full-time employees is paid from the recreation revolving fund).

- Salaries increased by 8% after salary survey revealed employee's salaries were below surrounding areas.
- \$2,000 increase in employee training
- \$366.00 increase due to website update
- \$2,000 increase for new furniture in foyer
- \$7,000 increase to cover fireworks for the "Backyard Bash"
- \$9,000 increase in the Arts, Culture & Tourism Commission's budget line

Decreases to the budget were due to the elimination of 2 part-time positions and reduction in summer camp field trips now that we have the splash pad.

Recreation Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)-

Rec Director Gigandet requested \$85,000 be added to that CRF towards potential/future replacement of the playground equipment at Leo Landroche field. Town Manager Fournier reduced the amount to \$25,000 to keep the overall budget down.

c. **Police Department**

Chief Greg Jordan was present to answer any question about the Police Department's budget. The budget increased by 5%, mainly due to salary increases. There are increases in the overtime rates and there are more officers with degrees. There are reductions in books and publications because there is more information online.

There are 29 full-time employees and 7 part-time employees. There are 2 vacant part-time positions unfilled.

Police Department Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) -

Chief Jordan requested \$29,220.00 to be added to the Police Department's CRF. Town Manager Fournier level-funded it to \$15,000 and explained that we are receiving a grant.

d. **CIP/Planning**

Community Development Director Bart McDonough was present to answer any questions:

Code Enforcement

The budget increased \$50.00 for lab testing.

The Land Use Administrator's salary is split between Code Enforcement and Planning.

Planning

The budget increased \$271.00.

e. **Library**

Librarian Candace Cousins was present to answer any questions. The overall budget increase of 8% was mainly due to healthcare coverage changes.

Town Manager Fournier explained that the Town Council only has the authority to reduce or increase the Library's bottom line budget figure. If they choose to do either, it is the Library Trustee's responsibility which individual budget line to amend.

There are 3 full-time and 7 part-time employees. There are 3,000 library cardholders.

f. Fire Department

Fire Chief Malasky was present to answer any questions on the Fire & Rescue Department Budget. The budget increased 10% mainly due to salaries.

- Ambulance Expenses are down 33% because we employ our own paramedics.

Chief Malasky proposed to budget \$480,796 for part-time salaries. The town is hiring paramedics from other towns to cover shifts, making it cost-effective because the town doesn't have to pay benefits. Town Manager Fournier reduced the line to \$350,000, because the reduction in full-time salaries offsets the part-time salary line. Councilor Dornblut suggested making an amendment to increase the part-time salary line. Town Manager Fournier explained that a year ago he requested a proposal from Municipal Resources to do a study of the Fire Department regarding transitioning it from a volunteer department to a full-time department. The proposed study at the time would cost \$60,000. The Council, by straw poll, decided to increase the budget by \$60,000 to have the study done. A formal vote will be taken at the November 6th Council Meeting.

Councilor Blackstone commented that it would be useful to have a line within the budget showing the revenue of each department.

Fire Department Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) - \$51,000

g. Environmental Services

Environmental Services Director Sean Greig was present to answer any questions.

Water Department - 4% increase mainly due to salaries. There are 8 employees for both water and sewer and the departments pay a portion of the Town Manager, Finance Director and Town Clerk's salaries. Chemical usage declined creating a 13% budget decrease and electricity decreased by 4%.

Wastewater Department - 1% increase mainly due to health insurance. Chemicals decreased by 18% and electricity decreased by 12%.

Councilor LaMattina asked who determined the septage dumping fee. Environmental Services Director Greig explained that he suggests the amount and the Council approves it. He said that the fee is comparable to other septage dumping establishments. He also explained that the Master plan regarding the water tower will be done next month. There is not enough storage. The tower will not be replaced; renovations will be made, and additional tanks will be added to it.

4. Town Manager Remaining Budget Lines

Capital Reserve Funds

Veterans War Memorial Trust - \$2,000

300th Anniversary - requested \$2,000; Town Manager Fournier increased it to \$5,000

Master Plan - \$10,000

Cell Tower - \$20,000

Compensated Absence Expendable Trust - \$20,000

Total proposed by Departments \$827,985

Total proposed by Town Manager Fournier is \$543,000. (If amendments recommended by the Town Council for sidewalks and Fire Department survey pass November 6th the new total will be \$70,300.

Town Council

\$12,150 - No increase

Town Manager

There is a 6% increase due to salaries and training.

Finance

There is a 3% increase due to salaries

Human Resources

There is an 8% increase mainly due to insurance costs and retirement.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector

There is an 8% decrease due to reduction in elections in 2026.

Welfare/Direct Assistance

There is a 15% increase due to higher demand for direct assistance needs.

Assessing

There is a 16% increase mainly due to computer software upgrades.

Legal

There is a 15% increase. Town Manager Fournier explained that there would have been more of an increase if our law firm was not on retainer.

Conservation Commission

There is no increase.

Economic Development

The name will be changed to communications. There is no increase.

Debt Service

There is a \$700,000 increase. The town's overall debt is \$2.3M.

Information Technology

There is an increase of 3% due to software licenses and software costs and maintenance.

Channel 8

The name will change to Communications. There is a 9% increase due to salaries and equipment purchases.

Property & Liability Insurance

There is a 5% increase.

Emergency Management

No increase.

Social Services Grants

There was an increase of \$13% due to the Visiting Nurses Association applying for \$7,544.00, and an increase in Rockingham Community Action. Each group is required to fill out a detailed application and submit how many residents they serve as part of the approval process. The town will no longer contribute to the Fire Hose Handtub organization. It is unclear if the organization still exists.

Patriotic Purposes

There was no increase. The total amount of \$2,500.00 is used toward the Memorial Day Parade.

Town Manager Fournier said that the amendments of \$100,000 increase in sidewalks capital reserve fund and \$60,000 for the Fire Department Study will be voted on at the Council's November 6, 2024 meeting. He said that they should consider using money from the fund balance if the amendments pass, so the tax rate will not be affected. We are required to have 5% to 10% in the fund balance. We currently have 8%.

5. Adjournment

Chair Conley adjourned the meeting at 11:21 AM without objection.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy V. Chase
Recording Secretary