

Minutes of the

Weare Finance Committee

Wednesday, 6 November 2019

The meeting was called to order at 7:02pm.

In attendance were (from right to left as seen by the audience): James Drury, Matt Whitlock (secretary), Christine Hague, Megan Thellen, Tammi Hagman, Nicole Herbst, Tom Clow, Neal Kurk (acting chair), Tom Downing, Dennis Aubin, Gary Evans. Keith Erf was seated in the audience. Lori Davis was absent.

Jack Dearborn, chairman of the Capital Improvement Plan subcommittee of the Planning Board, presented the CIP proposals for the 2020 tax year.

Benji Knapp fielded questions regarding the Department of Public Works' capital improvement proposals. He stated that the town's plow trucks are best disposed of at 10,000 engine hours, although they start having problems at around 8,000 hours. Currently the town needs about four new ten-wheelers, but Benji is only requesting one so as to avoid agitating the taxpayers. At the rate of replacing one truck per year, the town will be caught up on its fleet after eight years.

Jack revealed that DPW spent \$126,000 in the past year on parts to maintain its fleet of eleven trucks. Furthermore, vehicle downtime saps the department's productivity, as employees must attend to truck repairs and thus cannot do more productive work.

The town faces three bridge replacements that must be built to state specifications in order for the state to cover 80% of the costs. It is not possible for the town to rebuild these bridges to its own standards for less than 20% of the cost of rebuilding them to the state's standards. Therefore, going with the state designs is the more economical option.

Tom Clow commented that although this is to be the last of the four planned payments of \$105,000 into the bridge reconstruction capital reserve fund, we should not discontinue paying into the fund in future years, as more bridges will need rebuilding. However, we might reduce the annual rate at which the town replenishes the fund.

Regarding Parks & Rec's proposal for an engineering survey, Tom Downing clarified that the proposal is for work that would be done 5-10 years in the future after DPW has removed and utilized the gravel currently situated on the proposed site. Chris clarified that much of the proposed engineering work could be done by any engineering firm.

The police chief plans to repurpose the department's 2013 Ford Explorer interceptor as an animal control vehicle. The vehicle would then need to be replaced in the fleet. The chief is requesting Chevy Tahoe interceptors going forward because the cargo capacity of the Dodge Chargers is insufficient to carry the equipment that officers need and the Chargers do not have adequate ground clearance to traverse many of the town's Class VI and private roads. Also, the Tahoes have better ergonomics, as they are higher off the ground, and the seats better accommodate the officers and their gear.

Neal requested confirmation that the police budget will reflect reduced maintenance costs in future years if the cruisers are approved. The police chief did confirm this.

Matt moved to approve the last meeting's minutes. Chris seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Tom Clow gave a report from the town subcommittee. He reported that the first draft of the town's default budget had been presented, with the amount of the default budget being \$6.7M, versus the current year's approved budget of \$6.3M. The increase is mostly due to approved wage increases and debt service. The police department presented the first draft of their proposed budget: bottom line was a 3.75% increase, excluding whatever increase the union contract calls for. The budget includes a new line for radios and computers.

Megan gave a report from the Weare Schools subcommittee. A first draft of the Center Woods budget is completed. Any proposed budget item over \$100k will be presented with a justification sheet. With the current kindergarten schedule, busing costs will increase by \$97k. If the town converts to full-day kindergarten, the town will avoid an increase in busing costs but overall costs will increase by \$60k instead. It is likely that the board will submit a warrant article for full-day kindergarten. Neal will look into the constitutionality of the state's mandating that towns provide transportation for kindergarteners without paying for it.

Neal suggested that the Finance Committee will need to weigh the alternatives arising from the state's increasing adequacy aid to the school districts: whether to increase services and keep the tax rate the same or to maintain services at current levels and decrease the tax rate. Tom Clow suggested that the proposed technology upgrades that were eschewed last year in favor of the union contract could now be funded with the anticipated one-time revenue from the state. Dennis noted that the school board in closed session spent \$100k on technology even despite the concession they had made to the Finance Committee last year. Neal requested that Dennis request from Kathleen a report of all expenditures taken from surplus for the past few years.

Matt and Chris reported from the John Stark subcommittee. The Stark school board wants a dedicated school resource officer. Tom Clow noted that an SRO would become a regular town officer when school is not in session, so there would be a budgetary impact to the town.

Neal pointed out that the police budget continues to appropriate funds for positions that cannot possibly all be filled in the coming tax year.

The next meeting of the Finance Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, December 4, 2019, at 7:00pm.

Neal adjourned the meeting at 9:04pm.