



# Town of Weare NEW HAMPSHIRE

Town of Weare Finance Committee

December 20th, 2023, 6:00pm

Members			
X	Tom Clow (Chair)		John Merva
X	Elizabeth Evans	X	Maria Fossiano (Secretary)
X	Neal Kurk	X	Bill Anderson
	James Drury	X	Tom Flaherty
X	Karie Tepper (Vice Chair)	X	Lori Davis
		X	Jessica Kallipolites
Guests/Speakers			
X	Jon Morton (Town Moderator)	X	Naomi Bolton (Town Administrator)
X	Steven Roberts (Board of Fire Wards)	X	Beth Rouse (Finance Administrator)

	Agenda Topic	Discussion
1.	<b>Fire Department Budget:</b> Emergency Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committee said the Pledge of Allegiance</li> <li>Chief Roarick passed out budget</li> <li>He will start with Emergency Management</li> <li>Neal Kurk asked, "What is EOC?" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emergency Operation Center</li> </ul> </li> <li>Changes in EOC were upgrading and technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Putting in upgraded WIFI and added phone lines</li> </ul> </li> <li>Elizabeth Evan asked "Is line 301 (A) the NH retirement system, contribution of 1120? If so what trigger this line?" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes, after last chief left there has not been an EOC Director and now Chief Roarick has been appointed</li> </ul> </li> <li>Neal Kurk asked, "Why do we need to do this now if we didn't do it with the left Chief?" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beth Rouse responded - The Chief was part time; he was not NH retirement system eligible</li> </ul> </li> <li>Lori Davis asked- "On the column where it says proposed 2023, \$4,574 in the 2023 budget then you have the proposed \$8,693 and then the difference is \$4,019 (line 307) but when you run the tallies money is missing- why?" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beth Rouse responded- Line 302(a) and 301(b) were added later and did not carry over</li> </ul> </li> <li>Tom Clow asked, "Does part of the proposed include upgrades to technology?"</li> </ul>

- Chief Roarick responded Yes
- Neal Kurk asked- *“Why can’t we get along with what we have now?”*
  - Chief Roarick responded- The room is insufficient if anything was to ever happen, there is not enough bandwidth or phone lines to the building to support additional staff
- Neal Kurk asked- *“Why would we want to support more than the staff we have right now?”*
  - Chief Roarick responded - Because if there is a disaster that room is the Emergency Operation Center for the town and all of the Department Heads would be convened in the room
- Neal Kurk asked – *“So we lucked out for the past 7 years?”*
  - Chief Roarick responded - Correct
- Neal Kurk asked – *“Would we save money if you didn’t take this position?”*
  - Chief Roarick responded – Someone has to take the position
- Neal Kurk asked – *“What if we hired someone who was part time, that is not taking retirement benefits?”*
  - Chief Roarick responded - Can’t answer the question, unsure if the person has to be a member of the of the Fire Department. In every other town it is either the Police Chief or the Fire Chief, predominately the Fire Chief
- Neal Kurk asked – *“The former Chief did this, so if we had a part time Chief, we wouldn’t have this expense correct?”*
  - Chief Roarick responded - Chief was the Emergency Manager while he was here, he was not a part of the retirement system
  - Steven Roberts Responded- He doesn’t believe as an appointed employee of the town the Chief should get involved in this discussion. There is a lot to look at for EOC, yes last Chief was part time but had limited in hours. His hours hampered his ability to do the job that the town needed.
- Lori Davis- *“Would you say that the Emergency Manager position is one of significant responsibility?”*
  - Steven Roberts Responded - Consider what Maine is going through right now with the storms, Town will need an Emergency Manager going forward, using an on call or part time person is a possibility but Weare like everyone else is having trouble finding full and part time staff. The more requirements the harder it is to get part time folks because there is so much work. Additionally, there are expenses related to hiring, outfitting, training
- Neal Kurk asked – *“Effective the date of town meeting this year, the Board of Fire Wards disappears, and the Selectmen take over that responsibility, is that correct? So, the Selectmen can make the decision of who should be in charge of this?”*
  - Steven Roberts Responded - They do anyway, the Selectmen appoint the EOC director, the Fire Wards also don’t have anything to do with the budget

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neal Kurk asked – <i>“Is it true that Henniker Fires and Rescue are separate, but they are both operating with call and part time people, and they serve Henniker, Bradford, and Warner and offer 24/365 coverage?”</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Steven Roberts Responded - Doesn’t have all info, can’t speak to that, but he will verify and get back to Neal</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Tom Clow mentioned- If we are comparing towns, the Committee would need to compare to the town the same size.</li> <li>• Elizabeth Evans asked – <i>“In terms of the calls you’ve received relative to your inception, what is that in comparison to when the old Chief was employed?”</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chief Roarick responded- Does not have that information on hand, wouldn’t want to speculate</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.	<b>Fire Department Budget:</b> Fire and Rescue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief Roarick instructed committee to review and ask any questions regarding increases or decreases</li> <li>• Lori Davis asked- <i>“On Line 324, we are going from \$64,780 and the approved \$102,645 what is the \$37,865, are you adding people?”</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chief Roarick - That is the Group 2 Retirement, the Fire Department added people out of Group 1, people moved within the department in the State of NH retirement system</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Neal Kurk asked – <i>“If that is the case, shouldn’t the default budget be different?”</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Beth Rouse responded -Why is that? Line 325 was added for Beth’s purpose because they have Group 1 and Group 2 employees in the Fire Department, easier to break it out</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Group 2, 31.28% Police, Fire and certain Prison Guards, they can retire after 22ish years</li> <li>• Group 1, 14% Employees who are not Police or Fire, they can retire after 30 years</li> <li>• Tom Flaherty asked- <i>“On Line 325, 2023 approved budget states \$47,298, we didn’t send anything this year on that line item?”</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Beth Rouse responded - She is still putting it into Line 324, wasn’t a line in the 2023 budget, they were combined</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Neal Kurk asked – <i>“Would like to talk about overtime, Line 315, 2021 it was 54K, went up to 75K, and this year it is up to 40K to 114k, next year they are purposing it go to \$88,955, of the 114K, there were 8 people who participated, one got 8.8%, one got 16, one got 17%, one got 4%, 9%, 12%, 5% and the Chief got 26.4% of that money, could we have an explanation of why?”</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chief Roarick responded- When Chief Olson was here for 5 months, Chief Roarick was doing his job but was also with Chief Olson on a daily basis for on-the-job training. He shadowed Olson so he could train the Chief for the position he is in now. Overtime continues now because he is doing his position and trying to be in the office and be available to the public the rest of the time.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Neal Kurk asked – <i>“Are you getting paid additional compensation for being Acting Chief?”</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chief Roarick responded - He is getting paid rate of pay, whether he is working his shift or being acting chief, no stipend</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Neal Kurk asked - <i>“Do you get overtime when you act as chief?”</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chief Roarick responded - Yes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Neal Kurk follow up- <i>“So you are getting your rate of pay plus overtime in your Chief duties, does overtime incur the 32% pension fund contribution?”</i></li> </ul>

- Chief Roarick responded - Yes
- Elizabeth Evans asked- *“Can you help define the duties of Capital Area Mutual Aid and where they come into the picture with supporting the town?”*
  - Chief Roarick responded - Capital Area provides an acting liaison, in a structure fire, gathering water supply duties or helping our incident commander. They have added a 2nd person because they are so busy, that is the reason for the increase in that line. Capital Area includes a bunch of towns around concord, contribution is based on population and call volume. Added expense divided amongst the towns, and that was Weare’s contribution
- Neal Kurk asked – *“If you are spending \$114K in 2023 on overtime, why do you think you could go to 88K next year?”*
  - Chief Roarick responded - Out of the 8 employees that we have this year, 6 of them are in class and we have 1 person who is now deployed. He/She was out multiple times for maneuvers prior to being deployed so position had to be covered with overtime. Employees were also in classes which required overtime to cover their shifts, Chief doesn’t anticipate having people out this year like last year
- Neal Kurk asked – *“Are you using the procedure that the Fire Wards approved for shift coverage? That saves the town money in overtime by you can use per diem employees?”*
  - Chief Roarick responded - He is using per diem employees, Chief has 3 of them, hoping one of the call members joins the department
- Neal Kurk asked – *“Would you consider hiring group one employees?”*
  - Chief Roarick responded – No, the Town of Weare is the only Fire Department that hires group 1 employees, this is not the proper procedure. The Group 1 employees they have now are “grandfathered” in and Group 1 people are not certified Fire Fighters (do not go through physical tests)
- Neal Kurk asked - *“Are any pay raises for employees included in 2024 budget?”*
  - Chief Roarick responded - No
- Bill Anderson asked- *“ On Line 334(a), Fire Professional Development hasn’t shown anything in the past, now it is 5000, why?”*
  - Chief Roarick responded - Chief put that in for himself for his professional development, going to school
- Neal Kurk asked – *“Aren’t you the acting Chief, wouldn’t this be more appropriate for a permanent Chief?”*
  - Chief Roarick responded - Will happen in March, any one at that professional level would want funds for professional development
- Tom Flaherty- *“On Line 361, is that not a capital purchase?, Fire Radio Equipment?”*
  - Chief Roarick responded - Buying 2 radios a year but is in CIP for next year (2025), Chief intends not to use the 94k at all because he would rather not purchase 15 radios at the time. He would like to be on a 2 year cycle, 11k, life span of radio 6-8 years before technology needs to be upgraded 5,500 each
- Tom Flaherty- *“On Line 353, Physicals and Immunizations, is going up significantly are we doing something new, or do we have that many more people?”*
  - Chief Roarick responded- We are doing something new that gives the full time fire employees a NFPA physical, which includes a lung function

		<p>test, a hearing test, an EKG with an interpretation by a Cardiologist, and a cancer screening. This is done through Occupational Health in Concord</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Difference between this physical and standard physical is that they do a lot more testing</li> <li>• Lori Davis asked- <i>“ In the line of work as a firefighter, and the things that they run into that they have different health issues that stem from that and that is why companies are promoting this more, is that correct?”</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chief Roarick responded- Yes, they are promoting more on Health &amp; Wellness and encouraging yearly x-rays, so there is a time stamp, 700-800 dollars per employee</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Elizabeth Evans asked- <i>“Do the physicals measure the ability for someone to remain certified? Could a fire fighter be demoted if they don’t meet a physical fitness standard?”</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chief Roarick responded - Yes, but not demoted if there is a major health issue (Blood pressure, or glucose) there are ways to treat those conditions and people will get treatment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Elizabeth Evans followed up- <i>“Would this get covered under their regular insurance or are these claims being billed to overall budget under the physical?”</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chief Roarick responded - Physical would identify the problem and refer the employee to their PCP. Occupational Health doesn’t prescribe medications, they Identify problem, and send employee to PCP</li> <li>○ May ask that they go back to Occupational Health to ensure issue is treated/resolved, this would be covered by town</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Bill Anderson asked- <i>“Fire Equipment Maintenance Required Testing, is all over the map, is now being increased to 11,000 from 1,700, is this annual testing and why is it all over the place?”</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chief Roarick responded- It is all over the place because there has been very limited testing on the fire hose, fire pump, and ladder testing. Hose testing 30,000 feet of hose. There was nothing in the budget for hose testing, the hose testing is roughly \$4,800, and will go up next year. Hose testing should be done annually.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Bill Anderson asked- <i>“Fire Uniforms are almost double in the budget, did the uniform costs actually double?”</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chief Roarick responded - It is around \$970 a year per employee, another 500-600 dollars if it is a new employee because then Fire Department has to outfit employee with raincoats etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Jessica Kallipolites asked- <i>“We spoke about the Professional Development for the Chief prior, is there any training or Professional Development for the rest of the staff? On Line 359 there is a line for paramedic class for interested employees. Is that only for that class? Is there training budgeted anywhere else?”</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chief Roarick responded - The Fire Training is for fire classes or paramedic classes, Paramedic Class is \$1,400</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Jessica Kallipolites followed up- <i>“Do they need classes to maintain certification?”</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chief Roarick responded- He encourages employees to keep up with knowledge</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Neal Kurk asked- <i>“The last chief had a holiday pay policy, which saved the town money compared to the policy we have now. When a holiday occurred the chief gave everyone 10 hours instead of 8 and that solved the overtime problem. The Chief is not continuing that and paying straight overtime which costs more, why?”</i></li> </ul>
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3.	<b>Town Budget</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Naomi provided town budget, 14 pages</li> <li>• First time budget has been compiled together; Naomi Bolton sent board home with homework</li> <li>• Naomi Bolton presented the Town Budget</li> <li>• Town Officers' salary, no increase, remains the same</li> <li>• Town Officers would like to add \$2,000 for computers, monitors, and backups. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ They have no line to purchase those, and they do die</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There is an additional 800 dollars for Office Supplies (Ink and paper) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Paper price has drastically increased</li> <li>○ They supply the entire town with paper</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Elections</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Elections driven by how many elections there are each year</li> <li>○ 2024 has 4 elections and therefore the expenses are related to those elections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cost is for food, computer support and postage</li> <li>▪ Postage has increased</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Tom Flaherty asked- <i>"Is that something that would drop in operating budget?"</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Naomi Bolton Responded- Yes, in a look back you can observe actual changes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There are also poll workers that get paid, some get paid some volunteer their time</li> </ul> <p><b>Tax Collector</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There was restructuring in the town office</li> <li>○ Town Administrator and Tax Collector split their administrators time, so budget is split</li> <li>○ She is a health insurance buy out, and reduction is under Selectmen's Office</li> <li>• Neal Kurk asked- <i>"Have the Selectmen or Town Administrator thought about reconsidering the buy out?"</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Naomi Bolton responded- No, we have no spoke about it</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Neal Kurk asked – <i>"What would the consequences be if the Selectmen changed the buyout policy so there was no healthcare buy out?"</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Naomi Bolton responded - They would jump on the healthcare, there would be no savings. Employees do need to prove that they have healthcare. Employees can have multiple insurances</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Funds were also added so Tax Collector could go to an annual conference as well as funds for certification/education</li> <li>• Cost of printing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Adding \$300 dollars to cover the cost of printing and envelopes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Software support programs have gone up 3-4%, will be a common theme in the budget</li> <li>• Net increase of \$7,628</li> </ul>

### **Assessing**

- Net increase of \$342 for software support and training for administrative assistant to go to annual conference
- Milage is added
  - Yes, there is a town vehicle, but it isn't always available

### **Legal**

- \$2,000 less
- Neal Kurk asked – “*Are you looking for new attorneys?*”
  - Naomi Bolton responded - on the list to put out to bid
- Lori Davis asked- “Does this show how much the town has paid on in legal fees to date?”
  - Naomi Bolton Responded- Yes, if you look far left, 21,22,23 are actual expenses

### **Finance Administrators office**

- Total increase of \$226 dollars
- Reduced phone lines, went to a different plan
- Cost of envelopes, checks, W2s, 1099s caused increase

### **Town Clerk**

- Up \$163 dollars total
- Phone line cost decreased
- Has a new deputy that needs certification
- Software increased 3%

### **Selectmen's Office**

- This is where the restructuring occurred, please review Tax Collector
- Going into year 2/3 of contract in last year's budget for Town Administrator
- Increase for Meetings and Seminars for education
- Webhosting increased by \$1000
- Tom Flaherty asked- “*On Line 139, the difference between the approved and proposed is not 418, why?*”
  - Formula error, Beth and Naomi will fix lines
- Cable, decrease of \$199, largely the equipment, most of the equipment for cable committee is done by the Capital Reserve Fund

### **Trustees of the Trust fund**

- No difference, \$150 dollars for annual conference

### **Land Use**

- Legal notices
  - As long as we can keep notices on website we do not need to go to a newspaper, additional places for are the Post Office and Town Office Lobby

- For right to know requests, trying to get everyone on Town Committees on Town Emails (weare.gov exchange) so we don't have to open up personal computers
- Budget went down \$1,006 dollars

### **Government Buildings**

- This is where electricity and fuel live, will go up and down
- Biggest change here is that the bottom line has increased by \$29,930
- The greatest share of it is wages and maintenance
- Town hired a handyman/ general maintenance person that has been working 30-32 hours a week. He checks every building for heat and flooding every morning. He also works on projects to neaten place up.
- Building maintenance has increased by \$10,000
- Significant decreases in fuel based on usage
- Electricity has gone up and down
- Neal Kurk asked- *"What is the difference between Line 183, wages for maintenance, and Line 190 building maintenance?"*
  - Naomi Bolton Responded - Building Maintenance is the actual supplies, work is done in Line 183
- Neal Kurk asked – *"Do we use default electricity service, or do we go out?"*
  - Naomi Bolton Responded - We currently have a contract with Standard Power, doesn't know rate off the top for her head

### **Cemeteries**

- All Contracts
- Insurances
- Actual costs, general liability/ property has gone up, workers comp has gone up, along with unemployment
- Neal Kurk asked – *"If we have a bad experience, our rates go up, but Henniker's doesn't?"*
  - Naomi Bolton Responded - yes, based on us, we are part of a risk pool together, we do pay for our fair share
- Neal Kurk asked – *"Is there another carrier we could go with?"*
  - Naomi Bolton Responded - Hasn't ventured outside of Primex, just like Health Insurance we stay in a pool to keep costs down

### **Advertising**

- Town trying to find alternative ways to advertise for help
- Dues to NH municipal association have increased, less than 1% increase
- Skipping Police and Fire Department as they have already presented to the committee

### **Code Enforcement**

- \$238-dollar increase
- Increased based on books and updates



- Fuel is decreased

### **Forest Fires**

- no increase
- Highway Department, Street Lighting, Transfer Station, Sewer, Water and Animal Control were already presented

### **Health & Welfare**

#### **• Health**

- Increased for an additional phone line
- 2 semi-annual seminars she attends
- Cut health fair in half because town has held one in a very long time
- Health in increased by \$594

#### **• Welfare**

- Increase of \$4,990 dollars
- A good share of that is the assistance
- Need to take care of Weare Residents

- Neal Kurk asked- *“Did something happen in 2023 that it increased from \$1,000 to \$6,000?”*

- Naomi Bolton Responded - Naomi speculates (personally) increase may be due to covid subsidies stopping

### **Parks and Recreation**

- Up a total of \$153 dollars
- Took 3,000 from Recreational Activity, spread it around because they need to do work on fencing, steps, gate house, Bolton equipment (lots of vandalism), and gate house at chase park Wi-Fi, dead spot
- Neal Kurk asked – *“On line 594, what will not be done if we take 3k out of that account?”*
  - Naomi Bolton Responded - Unclear, Naomi can get Neal a list of what will not be done
- Bill Anderson: *“On maintenance, \$3,000, the parks that we have now, does that line reflect field maintenance? Mowing?”*
  - Naomi Bolton Responded - no, mowing is in a contract with the municipal one, under municipal lawn care

### **Ambulance Billing Services**

- \$9,000, actual cost for the billing company
- Need to put this line in budget in the event that no revenue comes in, still have to pay for them to do the billing

### **Debt Services**

- Exactly what your payments are
- Road bond will be done in 2029

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DPW garage will be done in 2026</li> <li>• 4.24%</li> </ul>
4.	<b>Library</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clay was unable to join committee meeting tonight, Naomi Bolton will present the library budget</li> <li>• Library budget was emailed to committee</li> <li>• Beth Rouse does payroll and the library gets the rest of the budget in 12 monthly installments</li> <li>• Increase is \$8,801, goes to operating budget, payroll is done with the town</li> <li>• Library is looking at increasing downloadable books to 31 to 36</li> <li>• Bump in electricity and fuel</li> <li>• Building maintenance, dividing between building maintenance and landscape/snow removal</li> <li>• Decrease of \$3,190 but increase of \$5,050</li> <li>• Looking to have shelving done</li> <li>• Staff development and training</li> <li>• Increase is \$8,800, but part of the pool for the raise</li> <li>• There will be a warrant article for the library</li> </ul>
5.	<b>Finance Committee House Keeping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee meeting tomorrow for school presentation</li> <li>• Public Hearing night is on 1/15/23, 7pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There could be a revised budget prior to Public Hearing</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Deliberative Session will be 2/3/23</li> <li>• Committee would like to continue meeting on Wednesdays</li> <li>• School deliberative sessions are on Fridays (2/7) and (2/9)</li> <li>• Mailer needs to be to printer before Presidents Day, would like to give the town at least a week with the mailer (ideally by 2/15)</li> <li>• Majority and Minority opinion will be included in mailer</li> <li>• Next meeting will be January 3<sup>rd</sup></li> <li>• DPW did not get VW grant</li> </ul>
6.	<b>Minutes Approval</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Merva requested Weed be changed to Knotweed in the minutes for 12/6</li> <li>• Karie Tepper requested her comment regarding zero-based budgeting on page 10 be updated from “uses” to “does not use” the default budget</li> <li>• Neal moved to approve minutes as corrected be approved, Lori seconded</li> </ul>