

Weare Finance Committee Meeting  
January 3, 2018 @ 7 PM

1. The Weare Finance Committee met on Wednesday 3 Jan at 7pm at the Town Offices. Members present were Lori Davis, Bill Anderson, Neal Kurk, Keith Erf, Ellen Dokton, Gregg McDowell, and John Vanloendersloot. Also present were Town Administrator Naomi Bolton, Finance Administrator Beth Rouse, Police Chief Sean Kelly, and Selectmen Clow, Hippler, Snyder, and Osborne.
2. The purpose of the meeting was to have Selectmen present the draft warrant articles for 2018 including proposed and default operating budgets. Proposed budgets and warrant articles remain under development and this meeting allowed the finance committee and selectmen to share information and concerns with the proposals as follows:
  - a. Budget. The 2017 approved town budget was \$5.7M; the 2018 proposed budget is \$6.08M, the default \$6.06M. The proposed represents a 6.56% increase over 2017; the default a 6.26% increase over 2017. Increases to both proposed and default budgets were driven primarily by police (9.6%proposed/12.2% default), fire (11.7% proposed/ 10.1% default), and highway (4.9% proposed/ 4.4% default). The increase in fire budget is almost entirely due to a full year of expanded EMT coverage approved as part of the 2017 approved budget. Highway increases are almost entirely due to health insurance premium increases and town approved wage hikes in 2017. Police budget drivers were health insurance costs, salary increases approved by voters last year, NHRS contributions, and an increase in the prosecutor contract. Finance members noted some inconsistencies in the budgets and requested selectmen further review these. Examples were - inconsistent budget impacts for secretary job description changes in highway and selectmen's office; part time PD costs not only listed but sharply increased when we have no part time officers; police salary totals which reflect full staffing when we have been down 2 officer positions for over a year (note: last year's proposed budget was amended lower to reflect this). General concern of the finance committee is that voters have little to choose from when the difference between proposed and default budgets is marginal. While the preparation of a default budget is fixed by state law, it is the desire of the finance committee that the proposed budget be reviewed to more accurately reflect expected costs. Chairman Clow noted that unexpended 2017 funds would be used to reduce the 6 plus % budget impact to taxpayers. It was noted that we still have substantial unexpended funds (over \$250K) despite last years operating budget being reduced by vote at deliberative session.

- b. Raise . Non Union Personnel (\$40.3K). Average of 3% wage increases to be distributed to non union town and library personnel in consideration of department head evaluations. This article has appeared annually on the town warrant; no further discussion.
- c. Capital Reserve Fund . Govt Bldg and Maintenance. (\$ TBD). Funding would be added to supplement the fund to offset emergency repairs to the town's structures. CRF currently has approximately \$60K.
- d. Police Cruisers . Purchase 2 (\$89.1K). Phase 2 of the planned replacement program to fix an aging fleet. Chief Kelly stated neither car would be used for work to home use by the chief or his LT. Finance questioned whether these two cruisers were needed to support current operations or whether they were needed to support the proposed 24 hour coverage with an additional police position.
- e. Additional Police Officer (\$41.5K). Police department is currently staffed with the Chief and 11 officer positions. There are currently 2 positions vacant for over a year. Two candidates are in the application process; unknown if they will be hired. The additional position would bring the department to a complement whereby Chief Kelly would expect to provide 24 hour patrol coverage. State Police now provide backup between 3am and 7am. If approved the cost of this position would be annualized and added to the police operating budget.
- f. Fire Department . Ambulance Billing Fund. In 2016 voters approved moving EMT costs into the recurring operating budget and using ambulance reimbursements to provide a capital reserve fund for fire/ambulance vehicles. It is being used to fund last year's approved ambulance. This article would expand use of this fund for fire equipment (e.g. air packs, jaws of life etc). These would be major equipment purchases. Voters would still have to approve withdrawal of such funds to purchase via warrant. Finance expressed some concern that voters would be more likely to approve such equipment purchases which will reflect zero tax impact (drawing from the ambulance fund). Fiscal discipline and foresight will be required to ensure the fund is not depleted in the short term leaving insufficient funds available when a major purchase for a fire truck or ambulance is needed. A need for a fire truck is not anticipated until 2023.
- g. Plow Truck 10 Wheeler. (\$215K). Highway as a number of plow trucks approaching or exceeding useful life. A planned replacement of 1 truck per year is needed to meet town needs. There is approximately \$30K available in a vehicle reserve fund that can be used to offset part of the cost.

- h. Backhoe (\$95K). Town has been leasing a new unit because our old one is not suitable for other than crushing at the transfer station. Approval would allow us to purchase outright the unit we are leasing with 80% of last year's lease fees being applied to the purchase price. There are no issues with this article.
- i. Road Reconstruction (\$480K). Annual warrant article to support road reconstruction and maintenance. Expect State funding of \$274K with the balance raised from taxation. The town also has over \$200K from last year's one time State supplemental funding to do more highway work in 2018.
- j. Part Time Truck Driver . Highway (\$6.3K). Position would allow Highway to hire part time or per diem a driver during peak periods. Currently the highway mechanic is assigned a plow route, so when breakdowns occur he is taken off the route. With an aging fleet this happens frequently. Approval would give highway the flexibility to meet peak demands.
- k. Bridge Improvement (\$105K). Second year (of 4) of raising funds for 3 projects in town . River Road Bridge, Lull Road culvert, and Francetown Rd culvert. Funding in increments will avoid large 1 year cost and ensure funds are available to supplement State funds when they are offered for each project.
- l. Bolton Field Pavilions (\$60K). Article would provide two covered pavilions at Bolton Park. There was some discussion of how we have seen various proposals for Bolton Park in recent years (parking, expanding soccer field, pavilions). It may be beneficial if we had a development plan for the park which could then be attacked year by year.
- m. Bell Tower (\$49.6K). Project would provide necessary repairs to the bell tower in the old town hall. Funds would be added to the government bldg. maintenance CRF (in addition to the proposed funds in para c above). We do not have a plan of what total repairs are needed to keep the old town hall in good repair. Concern had previously been expressed that perhaps repairs should be started from the ground up. Selectmen Clow reiterated that the roofing repairs are needed now to prevent further water damage to the overall structure.
- n. DPW Garage Fire Suppression (\$262K). Selectman Clow stated this article will likely be removed from warrant consideration. Garage as constructed has a fire wall between vehicle storage and work/admin spaces and meets state codes.

- o. Library Planning (\$25K). First of multiple phase funding proposals for developing planning and engineering needs for future library space needs. Committee has addressed concerns over this proposal earlier this year. This type of proposal was unsuccessful for the highway garage. Additionally the library trustees have access to additional funding sources to determine what the residents desire in a future library.
  - p. Cemetery Construction (\$10K). Article would require tax funding to maintain perimeter walls around cemeteries. Cemetery trust funds can only be used for improvements inside the boundaries.
  - q. Cemetery Interior Improvements (\$20K). Article would withdraw said amount from trust funds to maintain interior sections.
  - r. Fireworks (\$6.5K). Annual article would fund fireworks icw Weare Patriotic Celebration.
  - s. Conservation Commission . Forest Management (\$30K). Provides contracted services with town licensed forester for management of town forests. No tax impact; funds to be withdrawn from the Town Forest Account.
  - t. Conservation Commission . New Forest Land Purchases (\$150K) . Allows the conservation commission to use up to \$150K to purchase new forest land should it become available. No tax impact; funds would be withdrawn from the Town Forest Account.
3. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 1045pm. Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 17 Jan at 7pm at the Town Offices.

Bill Anderson  
Secretary