

**TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD
SELECTBOARD HALL – 96 MAIN STREET – THIRD FLOOR
BUDGET WORKSHOP #1
MONDAY, November 14, 2022**

APPROVED MINUTES

A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND ROLL CALL

Chair, Kristi Morris, called the meeting to order at 7:21 pm.

Selectboard Members: Chair Kristi Morris, Vice Chair Michael Martin, Everett Hammond, Walter Martone, and Crissy Webster were present in-person.

Administration: Town Manager Jeff Mobus, Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne, Public Works Director Jeff Strong, and Parks and Rec Director Chris Merrill were present in-person. Finance Director Cathy Sohngen, and Library Director Sue Dowdell joined via Zoom.

School Board Liaison: Steve Karaffa was not in attendance

Budget Advisory Committee: Doug Johnston and Scott Richardson were in-person. Jim Fog, Corky Bond, Tara Chase, and Tre Ayer joined via Zoom.

Library

Library Director Sue Dowdell noted that the narrative she wrote up should be in the binders provided at the time of the meeting. Sue Dowdell discussed the Library Budget proposal starting on page 35. Sue Dowdell summarized that on revenue she discussed with Cathy Sohngen that she would like to see Fines and Fees be brought down \$1,000.00, added that when talking about equity, diversity, and inclusion and one of the barriers that our citizens have is when they have fines on their materials, noting they would still keep fines or lost fees when they have actually not returned things. Sue Dowdell added that throughout Vermont and the United States many libraries are going to fine free to make it more accessible for our citizens. Sue Dowdell further added that keeping the \$500.00 there it would actually cover the lost items and the money that they get adding that if we get rid of our fines looking at the non-resident borrower fee it could bring at least ten more families from out of town and could potentially make that money up. Sue Dowdell further added that she did not believe it should be added to revenue as it should reflect what you are actually going to be getting. Sue Dowdell further discussed that in the Trustee of Public Funds, when looking at past revenue from those funds it has been hovering around \$3,000.00, so they recommended bringing that down from \$5,000.00 budgeted to \$3,000.00 budgeted.

Sue Dowdell discussed the regular pay line item 411 was determined by the Finance Department and the temporary line 419 they have been functioning with that same amount for three years since fiscal year 2021 and they have regularly overexpanded that amount adding that minimum wage has gone up 20%. Sue Dowdell further added they are looking for a 5.9% increase in that line item to bring them in line with what they have been spending for their temporaries. Sue Dowdell noted that one of the things they did was to change the practice of having two union members on a Saturday and using the temporaries instead, which saves the Town money so the amounts in the 411 has not gone up as much as it could have gone up.

Sue Dowdell discussed Materials Book Processing line 523, they are looking for a reduction of \$1,000.00 there, adding that they have been doing more of their processing in-house and it is also used for DVDs and audiobooks. Sue Dowdell added that line 533 Building Maintenance and Service, they are looking for an additional \$500.00 to cover the increases in service contracts, last year it was really overexpanded due to the flooding, but the contracts cost have gone up as well. Sue Dowdell additionally added for Professional Services Cathy Sohngen had put down \$200 for proposed, but it should be

\$2,000.00. Sue Dowdell then discussed line 543 Other Equipment and Maintenance the copier contract is expiring, and they are planning for a little bit of an increase. Sue Dowdell then discussed the Telephone line item the actual costs have been a little bit lower but they are recommending they keep the line item the way it is as she needs to get a cell phone due to a two-factor authentication issues with a lot of the accounts and she does not want a staff members phone number associated with that, adding that she had discussed this with Town Manager Jeff Mobus.

Sue Dowdell discussed that line 555 postage there was no change but wanted to bring it up as when looking at the actuals might indicate a reduction but last year, they received extra funds from the ARPA funds for the courier grant, so it was actually \$2,414.00 when what was spent by the Town and the courier was added and would not recommend any decrease in that. Sue Dowdell added that line 561 they are recommending a reduction of \$250.00, noting that a lot of trainings were online but is hoping that there will be more in-person trainings, additionally noting she is hoping to reduce that further next year. Sue Dowdell further added that travel she could see a 10% decrease there of \$100.00. Sue Dowdell further discussed line 569 Cultural and Special she is looking for an additional \$250.00 because the performers are asking for more and they want to keep level services. Chair Kristi Morris asked to confirm that it was \$250.00. Discussion ensued to correct an error on the document that line item 569 should be \$750.00 with an increase of \$50.00 and the amounts for line item 564 had been flipped with line item 569.

Sue Dowdell discussed no change on the rentals, Office Supplies line item 611 she is asking for \$500.00 additional due to increased costs. Sue Dowdell then discussed line item 614 and line item 615, on line 614 she is looking for a \$500.00 reduction to switch it over to their electronic materials so they are going to be decreasing the number of physical audio CDs that they get and getting more downloadable audios instead, noting they get about three times the circulation in their downloadable then they get in their physical so they are just looking to switch them. Sue Dowdell added that on line 618 she is looking for an additional \$500.00, noting that in the past when they look at what was actual spent in fiscal year 2021 and 2022 there have been budget freezes and that is why numbers were lower and she is trying to bring it up a little bit especially since physical books accounts for 60% of their circulation last year and the cost of print materials went up. Sue Dowdell further added that line item 619 Heating fuel the number was proposed by Cathy Sohngen, noting it was figured out based on past usage and fuel costs causing a significant increase.

Sue Dowdell discussed building maintenance materials they are asking for an additional \$200.00 because the cost in materials rise and they are hoping that covers it. Sue Dowdell added the equipment and building fund she had discussed with Town Manager Jeff Mobus they talked last year about incrementally increasing it so they have enough for the rough, noting the roofing consultant had come last week and is working up a proposal as to what really had to happen, further noting they did have a leak earlier and they are looking to get that all squared away before the end of this particular year so they can get the bid out.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that Finance Director Cathy Sohngen had gone through and done a review for all locations on their actual uses for heating fuel last year and adjusted it based on the increases in price, noting that last year we were under \$3.00 a gallon and this year it is at \$3.63. Cathy Sohngen confirmed she had taken the prior two year's usages and averaged them out and then used the current rate. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that we have a contract each year, so the rates don't change throughout the year. Chair Kristi Morris asked if there were any questions on the Library Budget on pages 36-37. Doug Johnston in-person inquired if they had heard anything regarding possible shortages of fuel oil. Town Manager Jeff Mobus replied that he had not heard that in regard to fuel-oil, noting that our contract is with Irving Oil, and they are a larger company.

Chair Kristi Morris noted that this was a preliminary discussion as to what was discussed with the Town Manager, Finance Manager, and Department Heads and they will be looking at it again and it will not be finalized tonight. Crissy Webster inquired about the reduction of fees and fines if it could change anything regarding accountability. Sue Dowdell responded that they send out three notices by mail and they get very little back so they are spending a lot more in postage, if people are going to return, they will return and vice versa. Sue Dowdell added that with a third of our population being food

insecure if they have a fear of taking out a book and having a fine associated with it, they will not increase their education level because of that, noting that once it goes to lost they will get the letters but worries about our population and making sure that we are accessible for our population to increase their skill, education level, and their use of the library and it is a minor amount and other libraries have not had that issue. Town Manager Jeff Mobus inquired if they go 45 days without returning, they go to lost status and they get a bill for the entire book. Sue Dowdell confirmed that was correct and in the past the previous director had it go to a credit agency and that deterred people from letting it go that far. Sue Dowdell added that in the spirit of the Declaration of Inclusion this is something she is very strongly recommending. Walter Martone asked to clarify the reduction of Trustees of Public Funds and if we had investments that we get proceeds from. Town Manager Jeff Mobus confirmed that when the Town voted to take the library over to become a public entity vs a private entity, it came with an endowment and the dividends and interests come to the library each year to help subsidize the operations, noting that it is not a major part of the operation and we also have an endowed amount for the cemetery so when you do perpetual care it's invested and we get some money back on that as well. Sue Dowdell ended with there being no changes to the Library Trustees.

Parks and Recs

Parks and Recs Director Chris Merrill presented the changes for revenue is down with a \$2,000.00 change on page 30, adding that they lost the rental of The Space that was a \$2,400.00 per year rental as the school district pulled them back. Discussion ensued that they were leaving by December but had already left by the end of October to beat the winter for moving purposes. Chris Merrill added that their copier service contract was also coming up and he had not changed that amount, noting that printing was no change also. Chris Merrill further added that building maintenance services, their total services are almost \$7,000.00 without any current increases to any of their contracts but noted that they are most likely going to go up and added that previous years they have come close to or gone over the services number and is looking for an increase of \$500.00 in that line. Chris Merrill then discussed that for Utilities there was no change.

Chris Merrill discussed that for telephone they are looking at a \$1,200.00 increase for the quoted cost to add internet down at the maintenance garage at Riverside for the addition of a security system to prevent the break ins, noting they have had them twice this past summer. Chris Merrill added for postage they are looking at a \$25.00 decrease as they have historical not spent more than \$3-\$4 annually on postage. Chris Merrill further added that for membership there was no change and for office supplies they are looking to continue the \$1,000.00. Chris Merrill noted that for heating fuel as discussed earlier was based on their usage. Chris Merrill further discussed for building maintenance materials an increase in \$1,000.00 due to increased costs. Chair Kristi Morris inquired if the whole building was heated or if there were zones. Chris Merrill replied the building was run off one system.

Chris Merrill then discussed on page 32 they are looking at an addition of overtime pay for the assistant director of \$1,100.00 which equates to about 25 hours of overtime, noting that with the position there is a significant amount that right now is being taken as comp time since overtime was not budgeted for. Chris Merrill added that for temp pay they are looking at a reduction of \$3,000.00, noting that it is mostly the partial funding of Summer Days Camp and it looks to be going down every three years incrementally and when speaking with Tammy Stagner (the one who runs Summer Days) she did not know why the money was there as they use the pool services for free and some years has not actually taken the money. Chris Merrill further added that printing says to remove \$400.00 but this was a typo and they wanted to keep it the same but looking at changing printing to signage for some of the parks and looking at taking that funds and putting it in maintenance for signage along with the administration printing, noting this was for signage as a lot of our parks are lacking signage as far as keeping dogs off sports fields, no parking, and those types of signage. Chris Merrill then discussed that the training line is the most significant increase, noting that historically it has only accounted for the certified pool operator, assistant director, director, first aid and CPR, adding this would include lifeguard training for up to 12 lifeguards which is what they are usually staffed at for the pool. Chris Merrill then discussed that temp pay as it was told to him at one point, that some of the training was coming from that but when you account out for the cost of wages for all of the

other positions (lifeguards and ice skating rink attendants) it does not come out to having the money to pay for the training which has also been one of the significant hinderances in trying to get lifeguards in Springfield.

Chris Merrill discussed memberships such as their website, the fees have increased so that is the \$150.00 increase there. Chris Merrill added first aid supplies increased to \$600.00 to account for the AED pads and batteries, as they must be replaced every two years as well as after use, noting that they have replaced some of that equipment to come up to date despite not being budgeted for. Chris Merrill further added no change in rec equipment line item. Crissy Webster inquired if the AED pads and batteries should be capital expense because it is something that they anticipate they are going to have to change it out every year. Chair Kristi Morris explained that typically capital expenses are for equipment that will be around longer and much higher costing.

Chair Kristi Morris asked to clarify that the temp pay line 419 was reduced \$3,000.00 and the training was increased because it was not appropriately tracked. Chris Merrill confirmed that there has never been an actual way to track how many lifeguards are getting their pay, noting he spoke with some of the past lifeguards and some of them mentioned getting full pay, some partial, or some non as a reimbursement of their training. Chris Merrill added that within the training line the appropriate funds to field 12 new lifeguards, noting they have 4 with maybe 2 returning this next season and every couple of years they must get a recertification. Chair Kristi Morris asked if it was shifting from temp pay to the training budget. Chris Merrill replied it was kind of shifting, but the temp reduction was for the partial funding of Summer Days (a school run summer program) that was funded for \$4,000.00 a year. Jeff Mobus added that it was just a coincidence that they offset.

Scott Richardson in-person inquired if the facility rental, Park Street school was under a contract. Chris Merrill confirmed it was a lease contract. Scott Richard follow-up to ask if it was yearly which Chris Merrill confirmed. Scott Richardson then inquired if we actually use the gym \$20,000.00 worth. Chris Merrill replied that we do not, but the problem they are having right now is they do need more than one gym and they have been having difficulty trying to get the younger groups (3-4 and K-2) into their schools after hours to use their gyms for the programs specifically basketball. Chris Merrill added that he tried to think of ways that they can increase revenue by subletting during the summertime which is when it sits dormant the most (summer-fall) but has not had luck with that yet.

Jim Fog via Zoom, inquired if there was anything in Chris Merrill's budget particularly in terms of maintenance that he thinks the cost of inflation, fuel, etc. may need to have that line item increased proportionately. Chris Merrill responded that as far as maintenance goes, not at this time, noting that his numbers currently for this year look good and most of the maintenance costs are expected to drop over the next two years some. Chris Merrill added that currently a lot of the spending in the maintenance areas he is only at almost 50% of the budget year. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that one of the things they are very fortunate is having a maintenance guy that can do a lot of stuff very creatively which is keeping the costs down. Discussion ensued regarding how well maintained the Toonerville Trail was and how immaculately groomed compared to a couple of years ago with lots of new trail markers and blazes.

Chris Merrill discussed on page 33 for maintenance there were no changes noted for the first 6 items down to utilities. Chris Merrill added that moving to 616 increase the line for chemicals as pool chemicals have gone up an estimated 40%, and he is asking for an increase of \$2,500.00. Chris Merrill added that gasoline due to cost increases they are requesting an additional \$500.00 and diesel due to increases they are looking at an additional \$50.00. Chris Merrill added that for building repair line item 965 was a total of \$2,500.00 with a decrease of \$11,500.00. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that the last page in the binder was the Parks and Rec capital budget to show why it went down so much. Chris Merrill added that he did not change and some of the items were already in the capital that was planned out, such as the community center plumbing and windows, noting that the back half of the building has had been replaced already. Chris Merrill further added that the biggest addition was the women's bathroom to bring it up to ADA accommodations, noting the men's room was done in 2013.

Michael Martin noted a \$36,500.00 contribution in last year's budget for capital plans and the recommendation being \$25,000.00 this year and it goes down for the following years of \$20,000.00 and he wondered if something was missing in the capital plans for the next five years that they should be aware of. Chris Merrill replied that Cathy Sohngen and himself had only had a brief time to meet on that, so they had not done any change from the last fiscal year. Michael Martin asked to confirm that Chris Merrill had not done an exhaustive review of the capital plans for Parks and Rec. Chris Merrill responded that he had not. Michael Martin added that one of the purposes of these capital plans and purposes of building these funds is so they can avoid the whipsaw changes in the annual budget from one year to the next, citing an example being all of a sudden they have to fix a roof and we don't have any money for the roof so we add \$100,000.00 to the budget and the taxpayers get a drastic increase to their tax bills. Michael Martin further added so looking ahead if they know we are going to need a new roof, we put \$25,000.00 a year aside and in five years we have the money. Michael Martin cited concerns of the capital budget decreasing when we have an aging facility that we know has a lot of issues. Chris Merrill responded that they were untouched and the way it was as of last fiscal year. Michael Martin then added that we will have a chance to look at this again next year.

Chair Kristi Morris noted with that in mind looking under the building fund at pool deck it says \$135,000.00 estimated but there was no contribution. Town Manager Jeff Mobus replied that it was an acknowledgement that we have to do something on the pool deck, but we have not scheduled the work or planned when it would be and noted that he believed Chris Merrill would agree that the pool deck needs to be addressed. Chris Merrill agreed that he believed that some of the problems with the pool actually extends from the deck issues as well. Chris Merrill added that he is trying to get someone who evaluates commercial pools online for the spring, noting that they have to evaluate it while it's in operation to see where the level of our pool at. Chris Merrill recalled that when he presented to the Selectboard why the pool had not opened, Mr. Hammond had mentioned that the idea of finding out how much more we really have to spend, or do we look at the idea of a new facility rather than putting in more money chasing our tail on an old one. Chair Kristi Morris added that his question was the result of Mr. Martin's question regarding the roof scenario. Chris Merrill added that he did not make any changes because he was trying to get an evaluation done this next spring.

Crissy Webster stated that the \$11,500.00 difference is that the Budget Advisory Committee had put that in this fiscal year for the windows. Discussion ensued that they wanted to get all the windows done in two years instead of five years. Further discussion ensued regarding the daily usage of the Community Center are people from HCRS and some of them are mobility impaired and the women's room is not ADA compliant. Doug Johnston in-person recalled that regarding the ADA ramp replacement they had money in the budget last year for that and understood they could not get any contractors to install it and inquired where the funding went for that. Town Manager Jeff Mobus replied that it shows \$30,000.00 reduction there, but if they do not use the funds it will stay in the building fund for Parks and Rec. Doug Johnston then inquired if there are other uses you could use it for the building. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that we need to get that ADA ramp done and the fire escape that connects to it also needs to get done, adding that they put it out to bid this year and got no bids to do the work. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that the money will stay in the account, but it was still a priority to get that done down there. Crissy Webster added that the suggestion last year was to look at grant money, noting that Tara Chase may be able to speak more to that regarding grant funding to help with the funding for ADA ramps as they can be mostly covered because it is Federal guidelines.

Everett Hammond discussed that there is always something that we are going to need that we could be plugging in and working on it instead of waiting until the last minute. Discussion ensued regarding the ADA ramp and the fact that the fire escape was not allowed to be removed according to the State Fire Marshal which was complicating that project.

Jules O'Guin via Zoom asked to confirm that they had heard correctly that the Senior Center did not have a handicap accessible restroom. Chris Merrill confirmed and clarified that they have a shared restroom on the first floor, but as far as the width of the doorway, using a wheelchair or a walker, it is difficult to get in. Chris Merrill added that visitors from the Senior Center often use the Community Center restroom because it is larger. Jules O'Guin then inquired if it was open the same hours as the Senior Center and Chris Merrill replied they are open more hours than the Senior Center.

Michael Martin inquired about item 882 Trail Maintenance and Improvements if they spent the full budget. Chris Merrill responded they did not. Town Manager Jeff Mobus replied they encumber the difference on that, so they have project money for the trails. Discussion ensued that it was an actual expense, and they reserve funds up to \$25,000.00 so we have funds for doing additional trail maintenance and other projects for Parks and Rec. Michael Martin inquired where the encumbrance shows up. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that he did not have the encumbered list at this time as they were currently doing the audit right now, but he would provide it to everyone as soon as he had the list of encumbered funds. Everett Hammond added that back on that same fund, back when he was on the Budget Committee years ago, he had mentioned along the bike path there were a lot of roots running along the bike path that were causing some bumps he had suggested having them taken out and cut the roots back and inquired if that had ever been done. Chris Merrill responded it had not been done and Everett Hammond responded it would be good to get that done so we don't have to start patching that out. Further discussion ensued that sometimes taking the lower bid was not always the best option.

Public Works

Public Works Director Jeff Strong discussed on page 21 and 24 regular pay was up due to the cost of living raises that everyone is getting, noting they don't really have any pay adjustments. Jeff Strong added that advertising is up considerably because they continue to run ads in the local papers trying to get people to fill out applications to come to work for us, noting they have been 4-5 people short for quite some time and have made job offers that they believed to be good job offers that people did not take. Jeff Strong further added that they have hired a new laborer and have someone else they have an offer out to. Jeff Strong then added that they are getting some bites and it is getting better than it was, but he believes it is important to continue to advertise to make people aware that we are looking for help. Jeff Strong then discussed that the other small increase was service contract for the timeclock, as they can be see there is an actual big expense as they have purchased a new timeclock for the highway garage, wastewater treatment plant, and the transfer station that will interface with the accounting system in the Town office so as people punch in it will make payroll way easier in the long run, noting it was still a work in progress as there are some things that still need to be worked out with NEMRC.

Jeff Strong discussed another line-item change being heating fuel noting the one little difference they have with their heating oil is that the highway garage uses propane because it is above the well field, and they got rid of their oil back in the nineties and it was a little more of a wildcard than fuel oil. Jeff Strong added 22 was their revenues on Class 1-3 highway stipends they get from the State of Vermont every year and noted they had gone up slightly. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that if you look at Class 1 highways the last two years the number was higher because they were giving us extra funds during COVID, and that subsidy is gone now. Jeff Strong further added under Road Maintenance (23) regular pay was up noting it was less one employee but was due to cost-of-living raises. Jeff Strong discussed that overtime was up a little bit because of the pay raise and keeping in with the actuals, noting a lot of employees do take comp time so the overtime number is lower than it would be.

Jeff Strong discussed that on call time was up due to the stipend for on call being raised up with the union contract to \$140.00 this year, noting it will be \$160.00 the next and \$180.00 the following years. Jeff Strong went on to describe that the next large increase was in training as starting last February to get a CDL license you can't just go get your permit and start driving on the job to get experience and then get your license. Jeff Strong further discussed that the new CDL rules require about 72 hours of classroom setting along with driving so they have the money in the budget in case they get a laborer that is very promising and wants to be a truck driver, noting they are looking for people who want to grow in the Town and step up so the money is in there to be able to train someone to get a CDL license if they find the right candidate. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that was enough for two people, it was a little under \$5,000.00 per person to train. Crissy Webster inquired if there will be contractual obligations around that so that they can't just come and get a CDL and leave. Jeff Strong confirmed that it was, noting it was like the bonus it is paid in segments.

Jeff Strong discussed that safety equipment was up \$500.00 to stay in line with what they have spent. Jeff Strong added that gasoline and oil products, like everything else are going up adding that they have a lot of oil products but do not use a lot of gasoline. Jeff Strong noted that most of their fuel is diesel, adding diesel fuel was up \$20,000.00 to \$140,000.00. Jeff Strong further added that for winter road materials he was asked by the Budget Advisory Committee if \$380,000.00 was enough for this year to which he agreed it was enough before he knew the salt prices were going from \$73.00 a ton to \$84.50 per ton. Jeff Strong hopes that there are no train disruptions with salt, and we can continue to get it. Jeff Strong noted that winter road materials include sand, salt, coal patch, and winter chloride.

Jeff Strong discussed summer road materials they have asked for a \$25,000.00 increase so they can start to work on getting more gravel on the back roads, noting that part of the municipal roads general permit calls for a lot of maintenance items, grading, crowning, and making sure your roads are drained properly. Jeff Strong added that traffic sign replacement for the street and traffic signs is up a few thousand dollars, noting that Zoning has paid for the new signs they have made for the E-911 name changes, but they have a whole list of signs that need to be replaced and they have had an awful lot of signs stolen. Jeff Strong stated that stealing signs has become an epidemic. Jeff Strong further added that handrails and under this includes guardrails, noting that Donny Turner the new Operation Supervisor has been looking at the state of our guardrails and they are a safety issue, adding that he did not remember replacing guardrails with anything new other than the old pieces of guardrails they used to get from the State as they used to sell their old pieces, but they don't no longer do that. Jeff Strong stated any of their outside road projects they would like to incorporate replacing the guardrails if they are in bad shape when repaving roads.

Jeff Strong discussed line stripping was a tricky item, as long as he has worked for the Town the State of Vermont has stripped the Class 1 highway (Route 11 and Clinton Street) and they have done the white line and the stripe line, but this year we were informed that they should not have been doing that dating back to the 70s so we are going to be on the hook for painting the fog line down Main Street, Clinton Street and Route 11 and the hash marks (skip lines) and we have tried to contract before winter to have it done but the weather has run out. Jeff Strong added that the painting is about 35 cents per foot so that line item is up because it will be on our tab going forward. Further discussion ensued regarding the purchase order to do the line stripping being under \$10,000.00 and that we get a lot of questions regarding center lines on our class 3 roads and the State does the yellow lines on class 1 and 2, but most of our roads are class 3 and it would be prohibitively expensive to do that on class 3 roads. Everett Hammond noted that if you do a lot, you could likely get the price per foot down as they do it quantitatively.

Jeff Strong discussed that the other increase is the bridge maintenance fund, noting that some of that money is in there for the contribution to McDonald's bridge and the increase is an increase to fund the box culvert number one on Eureka Road, adding that they have a \$200,000.00 grant which is very similar to the Massey Road box culvert that they did, and the estimated cost of that culvert is \$280,000.00. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that on that same line in the bridges he believes we are responsible for 10% and he checked to see where we were on the McDonald's bridge, and it did make it through the regional recommendations, and it is expected to be in the budget in FY24 or FY25. Further discussion ensued regarding the projected cost of that project was originally \$4 million so they are setting money aside as this project really needs to be done.

Scott Richardson inquired if the diesel budget was a realistic number or if it should be more. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that the prices were up last year, and they were under the budget. Further discussion ensued regarding the signs having to meet the Uniform Municipal Traffic Code Standards. Everett Hammond inquired what they were budgeting roughly for dollars per gallon. Jeff Strong responded when he first looked at this, they were looking at \$5.50 per gallon. Additional discussion ensued regarding the uncertainty of the diesel prices in the days to come. Doug Johnston recalled on the paving the Budget Advisory Committee had discussed that they have one really outstanding debt regarding the Police Station around \$800,000.00 and inquired if it would be wise for them to take a look at the roads they can save and bond a certain amount of money to cover that. Chair Kristi Morris added that they are having those discussions.

Wes Marshal SAPA TV in-person inquired if the bike line stripes on Clinton Street were included in the line painting. Jeff Strong replied that those lines are actually the fog lines as the area is not really wide enough for bike paths, but they do need to be repainted. Further discussion ensued regarding the past issues with COVID and paint supplies that caused issues in getting line stripping done. Tre Ayer noted that regarding line item 1052 510 professional services the budget was three times what the historic usage has been and inquired if it was due to systematic overbudgeting or if the use of professional services had been lower than usually because of COVID. Jeff Strong replied that the professional services has been lower, maybe because of COVID, noting one of the things that had been lower because of the use of grant money and added that there may be some other outside things we want to do with professional services for our sidewalks and stormwater.

Jules O'Guin inquired if there was a contingency plan in case road salt becomes impossible to get ahold of or if we have the equipment to spread sand instead and if the budget would be about the same. Jeff Strong responded it would be pretty close, but salt is a very important part of our whole winter strategy to keep the streets safe. Jeff Strong added that if there is a problem with Cargill Salt out of Bellows Falls, we could get some salt from Apalachee over in Albany, but the cost is \$10.00 more a ton adding they will have an adequate supply of sand. Further discussion ensued regarding we would rather use salt as sand causes issues with catch basins and stormwater and road maintenance. Town Manager Jeff Mobus stated that we signed a contract for the entire year from Cargill for 4,000 tons and we are only able to store 700-800 tons at a time. Everett Hammond inquired what the average amount of salt we use was for the last 5 years, and Jeff Strong replied that it has been creeping up each year. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that the average is a little over 3,500 per year, but we have been getting more icy storms.

Chair Kristi Morris commented that in looking at the road maintenance is up to \$258,000.00 up 12.8%, noting he knows the vehicle contribution is up another \$40,000.00, so we are talking another \$300,000.00 increase which is five cents on the tax dollar and added that he will be looking at alternatives to try to prevent a 13% increase. Everett Hammond inquired if the top line item was with the addition of the position mentioned earlier. Town Manager confirmed that position was already taken out of that. Further discussion ensued regarding inflation and what they did this year to get through the year the COLAs they are looking at are 4% (half of inflation) but to help offset some of that expense they increased the copay on health insurance premium on their longer-term employees from 5% to 10%.

Jeff Strong discussed page 24 cemetery revenue based on the past lots sold they increased the proposed revenue by \$1,500.00 as well as with burials based upon the money generated and the burials, they raised that to \$16,000.00 and the investment on the funds is the same as the library for perpetual care.

Jeff Strong discussed page 25 public works cemetery the regular pay is up from pay raises. Jeff Strong added that for overtime the employees have the option of taking comp time which has held the overtime budget down. Jeff Strong further added that temp pay \$7,500, he has not hired a temp person for the cemeteries for the last 2 years because it pays minimum wage and they have not been able to find a candidate, noting that they used to hire younger people but they have to be over 18 to run a weed whacker, mower, or power equipment and this has been one of their challenges trying to hire a temp worker.

Jeff Strong discussed the land maintenance is up \$500, because the way tree cutting was done in the cemeteries at times has been paid for by the highway department out of the property maintenance budget, noting the cemetery should be responsible for their own trees and have a lot that need to be cut. Jeff Strong added the challenge much like finding a line-stripper is they have a contract with Trees Incorporated signed back in July and they have not gotten here yet because they do not have any help. Jeff Strong then added Donny Turner has been looking at other tree services that we can work with and trying to get a quote for the really bad pine trees in the cemetery.

Jeff Strong discussed the other increase is \$10,000.00 towards the cemetery's contribution to replacement of S11 which is the cemetery dump truck, noting it is used in the cemetery 7 months out of the year and the rest of the time it's in highway. Jeff Strong added they are contributing money to an equipment fund so this \$10,000.00 gets their contribution

up to \$40,000.00 of a \$60,000.00 truck and that the trade-in value of S11 is not very much. Further discussion ensued regarding the FY24 split contribution for S11 between the highway (1/3 or \$20,000.00) and cemetery (2/3 or \$40,000.00)

Jeff Strong discussed page 26 vehicles the regular pay is up because of raises, noting they had a change in the chief mechanic. Jeff Strong added that Mike is the new chief mechanic and the new assistant started today, we were able to fill that position. Jeff Strong further added on call pay is up because the stipend has gone up.

Jeff Strong discussed professional services are the same and electronic equipment is up, noting they had radio maintenance and electronic equipment has been all combined into this one contribution and this pays for radios, JD link for John Deer equipment, Navistar link for annual fees and updates for that. Jeff Strong added a small increase in chains and tires up to \$500.00, noting he gives the mechanics and guys a lot of credit they are really good at recycling chains and using both sides of them. Jeff Strong further added vehicle parts up to be in line with what we have been spending and parts are up \$5,000.00. Jeff Strong then discussed vehicle maintenance materials are \$7,000 to be more in line with what they are spending.

Jeff Strong discussed vehicle attachments the plow blades, grater blades, sweeper brooms, shoes for plows are still at 16.5, noting the big increase here is equipment fund contribution up to \$425,000.00 adding they had in the budget a request for an excavator. Jeff Strong described the idea of the excavator is for the municipal general permit, there is a lot of grant money available that we have been using this year, noting Greely Road this year and the year before Mile Hill they did a grant job that AOT funds through their grant. Jeff Strong added they have been applying for this money year after year and using a contractor to do the work and this year they had a hard time getting anyone to bid, noting with an excavator we can do more of those on our own. Jeff Strong noted he understands that an excavator is a lot of money and they have just started looking into this and he would like the chance to go back and talk with staff again about whether they do the excavator or a truck this year and start putting a little money away each year to buy an excavator down the road. Jeff Strong added that the \$25,000 extra is not a lot compared to the cost of equipment that has been going up. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that he took the truck out as the increase would be \$500,000 instead of \$400,000 and he asked them to pick one this year. Jeff Strong further added because of last year's delay in receiving the truck we are actually getting two new trucks this year as the previous year's truck was delayed to this year, noting that's why you see two trucks coming in on the first two lines.

Everett Hammond was concerned about vehicle maintenance parts number 631 and 636, as it seems like everything has gone up, he was concerned we may be low on those two line items. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted part of the reason the number is high is we are replacing two old trucks with two new trucks so we will save some money not keeping those two old trucks running. Jeff Strong added part of what's hurting us is the age of our fleet with these parts and materials for the older trucks, noting the new freightliner has come in and been sent to put the body on it and we will have freightliner from this year before we have the international from the budget before. Everett Hammond was still concerned we may be low on the number and asked if the excavator was tracks or wheels. Jeff Strong responded it will have wheels. Further discussion ensued regarding the difference between wheel and track for the excavator and the decision to go with wheel as we would have no way to move a track excavator as it would need a trailer behind a truck and driver with CDL class a license so wheeled is more versatile.

Walter Martone inquired if 751 building fund contribution as he assumed that \$20,000 contribution is only partial of the \$65,000 under building maintenance in the capital plan and the other \$45,000 was coming from somewhere else. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded it was the salt shed. Jeff Strong added in the public works repairs to the garage maintenance bay have been completed and they are carrying \$56,000 for those repairs and that work has been completed and they proposed to carry on at least \$20,000 per year for unanticipated building issues, noting that they are trying to stay ahead of a few things if they can with the old building. Doug Johnston inquired about the excavator that they are looking at if they are going to have enough people around to do these projects in the summer, noting he understands the guys are taking a lot of comp time. Jeff Strong agreed he has the same concerns about that, especially when they cannot

carry a full workforce. Doug Johnston inquired if they are limited to how many hours they can accumulate and Jeff Strong responded they are, and it has been cut back some but that becomes an issue too.

Jeff Strong discussed property maintenance the regular pay is up from pay raises. Jeff Strong added that professional service is up to be in line with what we have been spending on outside services. Jeff Strong further added land maintenance is down \$2,000 because they increased some in cemeteries as they have trees to cut, noting we have quite a lot of dead ash trees on the side of the road, and we have our tree study and so many trees we can work on and maintain around in all the town right of ways. Jeff Strong then added diesel fuel is up for property maintenance but it is only for one truck.

Jeff Strong discussed the retaining walls they held \$100,000 in there and retaining wall money is really for the River Street retaining wall, noting if we have enough money there is a grant possibility but replacement of that retaining wall is around half a million dollars. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted we were quoted \$700,000 last year and Jeff Strong added that \$200,000 was going to be from a grant. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that structures grant we can only get one \$200,000 structures grant and the one we have now is for Eureka Road and there are still more culverts on Eureka Road and other structures in town, noting we only get one grant each year, so we have to be judicious of where we use the grant. Jeff Strong added we have so many culverts, so we are up on the list to receive grants and we did have a \$200,000 for Giddings Road Class 2 paving grant. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted we can have one of those grants every other year.

Jeff Strong discussed \$45,000 for the building fund contribution and this would be the third contribution for the salt shed but we have tentatively signed up to do a study. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that we've applied for grants the last two years and this will be the third year applying to build a new salt shed so we have been building up our portion of the match, but we had kept getting denied grants. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added this year we are working with regional planning, and they said what other towns are doing is a scoping study using grant funds to see what size and location is appropriate and homing in on what is really needed and that is helping other towns get the grant. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added we scope this year and hopefully the following year we will be able to finally replace the salt shed because it is deteriorating. Jeff Strong added it is a \$500,000 project. Everett Hammond inquired if it was in the flood plain and Jeff Strong responded it was not quite, but it was close enough to it that it makes it more attractive for the grant.

Jeff Strong discussed the transfer station revenue on page 28, recycling revenue is down just a little bit to stay in line with what we have been getting, noting the Chester reimbursements is the same. Jeff Strong added solid waste and transfer are the same. Walter Martone asked to clarify that solid waste is the same but it's up 40 for match and inquired if it is actual incorrect. Jeff Strong replied that is what we are actually getting for solid waste and is what we have carried for quite some time. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added he would like to get more data on how we are doing on that. Walter Martone then responded on C&D waste he had the reverse question. Jeff Strong responded we got 40 then 61 and it bounces around and there is another option for what people can do with their C&D waste. Jeff Strong added stickers easier to project. Everett Hammond inquired which is punch cards on. Town Manager Jeff Mobus replied the punch cards are the solid waste and are actually on page 43 in the last line, noting he will get that clarified and confirm that.

Jeff Strong discussed transfer station public works expense payroll the transfer station is up a little bit and overtime has gone up, noting he wasn't sure if \$6,000 was really enough and the reason for the actual amount is that we are a lot better at public works keeping track of when someone has to go down there and cover for the weekends, noting it seems to happen a lot as the transfer station is short of help and they have had a public works employee down there almost weekly and when they are down there they are getting their regular pay at time and a half. Jeff Strong added the rest of the line items have stayed the same and actual expenditures compared to the line items are pretty much in line. Jeff Strong further discussed building maintenance and building upkeep.

Michael Martin inquired why they still are not showing the cost of actual waste disposal in these budgets. Jeff Strong responded it was material disposal and Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that they were talking about revenue before the

expense is what is on page 43, and he was combining the two. Further discussion ensued regarding inquiry and the revenue the rev from solid waste, which is the punch cards, but it doesn't show the solid waste being taken away from here. Jeff Mobus added that solid waste being taken away is on page 43 that is the \$134,000 disposal charge. Michael Martin inquired where does it show as reimbursement and Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded many years ago things that had a revenue that was offset by a separate expense Bob had put it into a separate category called reimbursement because they were supposed to be offset by a specific revenue being the punch cards. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added there is no reason why we wouldn't put that over with the transfer station, noting it had been this way for 20 years. Michael Martin inquired if they could change that, and Town Manager Jeff Mobus agreed. Finance Director Cathy Sohngen noted they will be changed when we do our whole new numbering of accounts.

Walter Martone noted a future question if there has been a significant change in money when we went back to weight. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded he does not believe it has been significant. Everett Hammond noted he would like to see is the change in personnel by division then by department, the number of employees we have for part time and full time for each department so we can keep track of this over time to have a comparison for future years, as well as, for oil and propane per building the number of gallons used, and salt and sand amounts used. Everett Hammond added that he wants to see it in a chart in the budget procedures, so they know what the average of the typical things they are always asking about. Chair Kristi Morris noted as long as they recognize it is a dynamic target from year to year it is just an average. Jeff Strong added that some of that usage is in our town report.

Administration

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed page 3 the 1st line was calculated by Cathy Sohngen and based on our contracts. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that professional service fees increased last year to enforce more blight items and we weren't spending legal fees for non-blight items last year at 65 and 52, noting he believes we can do what we want to do with code enforcement and reduce the legal but the current year will be a little higher as we were in union negotiations and the ordinance update and Steve was involved in that and next year we will not have either one of those. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that printing we are ordering less and using our laser printers and printing out our own stuff. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further discussed ads were a lot hiring in 2021-2022 and that was before we started splitting it out to each department.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed telephone increase is contractual for a cell phone for the Town Manager and we hadn't adjusted the budget for that previously. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that we are not using maps and newspapers so \$500 is out and will be a small net increase for Manager's budget. Finance Director Cathy Sohngen discussed page 4 the increase in payroll was for step increases for one of the employees and the regular COLA. Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed page 5 the assessment change in salary and the only other change is copier is coming up for renewal and expecting an increase in that. Town Manager Jeff Mobus then discussed page 6 no proposed change in budget it was increased this year because of the fee schedule, and we are expecting more revenue.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed page 7 planning and zoning expenses the salary line went up with a step increase. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added professional services this budget was higher this past year for doing a lot of E-911 expenses as we printed the street signs out of this budget because it was not a public works event, noting it was renaming streets and getting new signs up. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that Renee is retiring the end of next month and we have interviewed one candidate and spoken with other potential candidates. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further discussed Renee had brought it up in prior years to start digitizing our Zoning records the same way we digitized our vault records, so that is why he added a slight increase of \$4,000, noting it says legal fees, but it is to digitize planning and zoning records. Town Manager Jeff Mobus then discussed since E-911 street signs are done he reduced down office supplies and noted they will likely take the \$1,000 out because he suspected it was to get the computer for Carrie Kellow. Walter Martone inquired if we anticipate more advertisements for Renee's job and Town Manager Jeff Mobus replied he did not

as the advertising is in this year and the one candidate, he soke with is qualified, noting if he does not get more qualified candidates, he will start working closer with the current candidate to see if we can agree on compensation.

Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne discussed page 8 the recording fees and permits she budgeted for an increase of \$10,000. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne added that dog licenses were brought down to closer to what we have been receiving and the same with liquor licenses, noting the other change is vehicle registrations which increased that a little. Michael Martin noted a pretty hefty increase in recording fees and inquired if that was because you expect an increase in activity or is there a rate change. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne explained that she takes a look at the last three years on that, and we had a rate change in the 19-20 year, noting we had an increase in the 21-22 year of \$120,000 and that was during COVID, so she did closer to a three-year average. Michael Martin inquired if she waived fees during COVID and Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne added that those fees were for online printing and that was minimal. Michael Martin inquired that online fees were waived but that didn't cost us anything because the company that was hosting it waived those fees too. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne responded we waived about \$1.50 for every print and it did not cost us anything, but it did gain us people who were then familiar with the system and using it such as real estate agents, title searchers, and attorneys so now we do get some revenue from that and it's a little bit of a lifesaver. Michael Martin inquired if it could be part of the \$10,000. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne confirmed it could, noting she tries to do a three-year average and that works well because some years its up and some years its down, adding that COVID was unusual. Michael Martin inquired that the proposed budget is still lower than the actual from the previous year. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne noted that we usually pull in a little more revenue than what she budgets, but you just never know.

Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne discussed page 9 regular pay she finally has a half time assistant, so there is an increase there and she assumes most of that is half of her pay and she put in some overtime hours for the next election. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne noted there should be a little memo regarding this is a budget that is an off year, and we are only accommodating one election as opposed to the year we are currently in where we have many, adding that's why you see temp pay is down considerably. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne added that outside services are increased by \$700, noting normally in an off-election year she would have that number going down, but the decrease was eaten up by the land records contract that we have is for 5 years at a time and that was increased by approximately \$100 per month, noting it could have been a lot worse. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne further added also there have been a lot of ordinance changes, so she put more money in Muni code to get those documents updated online. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne further discussed printing is a little tricky, noting normally in a single election year this would go down a little bit more, but the Town Meeting ballots have gotten pretty lengthy, adding they are double sided and there are bonding potential issue coming up too and cost of printing is a little bit of a higher. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne mentioned the telephone she never knows where she stands on there so she flatlined it.

Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne discussed postage she is anticipating just having to do postage for one election and did accommodate a little bit for a postal increase that is expected. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne added that training is back to \$1,000 where it is closer to what it was in 21-22 year, noting most of that is sometimes mileage with the VMCTA that takes care of the clerk and treasurer association, state training, and mileage, adding that VLCT is great we can do online but the classes still cost money. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne further added that office supplies we are pretty careful of that, and it will stay the same and document expenses will stay the same also.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed page 10 central support, we see the utilities are down \$5,000, noting we have gotten better at allocating out the solar and we think the problem from the 21 year when it was almost \$30,000 it was not allocated out correctly. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that office supplies we have been running a little high, so we added \$250 there. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that heating fuel is based on usage and the contract rate, noting we took a two-year average. Town Manager Jeff Mobus then discussed the building materials we have been running much higher on that, noting repairs are being charged there as opposed to being charged in the repairs line, so we only need a small increase to accommodate.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed computer cost and computer repairs is the EDP maintenance and periodic repairs, noting it can be seen the last 2 years we have been above what we budgeted and have brought the budget up asking for another \$1,500 and we would be up to \$9,000 which is where we were a couple years ago. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added technical reserve \$2,500 a year into a reserve which we then use if there is a general need, like if we replaced the server.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that compensation absences this year we are in right now, we brought the budget up from \$25,000 to \$180,000 because we had the three significant retirements this year, so he recommends bringing that back down to \$20,000, noting our long-term liability has gone down drastically this year. Town Manager Jeff Mobus explained that a lot of the long-term liability has gone down so we don't need to hold as much since anyone hired after 2014 isn't able to store up sick time because we switched to a PTO system, noting that fire and police contracts are limited to how much they can accrue. Crissy Webster inquired if we have enough to cover the long-term absences. Town Manager Jeff Mobus confirmed noting if we keep going at 20 a year, adding that in the public works we implemented a plan where we give people a little bit of an incentive being 3% to keep people for three years, so we have three years to build up and we are not looking at a big wave like we just experienced. Michael Martin inquired if from an operational standpoint what we have done is we haven't filled the seats. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded we filled the places but with people that don't earn sick time they earn PTO, so they don't build up the 90 days of sick time because that's not an option anymore the most they can do is carry over 2 weeks of PTO, so you are looking at 10 days instead of 90 days. Everett Hammond noted the big cut on that one is it is still hard to plan someone leaving three years from now as they could potentially leave earlier. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that a lot of those positions we can do what we have historically done and not fill them until we have paid out the leave time. Chair Kristi Morris summarized the question what the unfunded liability is now, when we go back 3 years ago and the number of people that are going to be retiring, we didn't have any money or very little and had a big liability. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded he thinks what they need in this line are positions they are going to replace immediately; positions they can't have empty. Crissy Webster added that on the flip side if we are already down staffing in every department is that really a realistic solution. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that if you are already down, you already have vacancy savings that would cover it.

Chair Kristi Morris inquired what is the encumbered money and Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that we would have encumbered it last year, but we couldn't encumber it because we used it all up for the Parks and Rec Director and the Fire Deputy. Chair Kristi Morris asked to clarify that this \$20,000 if not spent would be encumbered and Town Manager Jeff Mobus confirmed, noting we are in a much better place in our long-term liability for sick leave. Doug Johnston inquired if paid time off had limitation to how much they can accumulate, or do they use it or lose it and how does it work. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded it has to be managed and we can't legally take away time that they have earned, but it can be a disciplinary issue if people don't use their time and that's how you control it, noting that right now we haven't had a problem with people running up the PTO it was the old sick time that was a problem.

Doug Johnston inquired if anyone compared the possibility of heat pumps vs the fuel oil if it would be cheaper to run heat pumps, noting he knows the state is pushing the electrical thing and inquired if this is something we need to start looking at and planning for in the future. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that he reached out to regional planning today to find out what kind of grant might be available in dealing with updating the heat project here in this building but could be extrapolated to other buildings too. Doug Johnston added that with the solar it might be very beneficial to have the heat pumps, noting that he has solar on his roof, and he didn't turn the furnace on unless they absolutely needed to, and they saved 600-700 gallons per year. Everett Hammond added that brings up a good point energy prices are going up and Woodstock, Hartford, and Norwich have an energy person and he is not sure if it's the town or regional planning commission, but it is worth checking into to look at every building's energy usage. Chair Kristi Morris added that we have done some of that in the past to look at the building's weatherization. Walter Martone added that if the Town Manager has a report that identifies the encumbrances that would be helpful. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that as soon as the audit is done, he will get that out to everyone. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that he put in \$50,000 for repairs

to this building during manager's report and we know there is at least \$200,000 worth of repairs for heating and elevator. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added we used to put in \$15,000 or \$20,000 a year many years ago for this building and one thin budget year they stopped doing it, so we don't have the money built up, noting that there is \$13,000 left and we did the work on this roof from this fund, adding we need to restart that fund. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted he also wants to see how much grant money he can get for some of this stuff, so he reached out to regional planning specifically to ask those questions.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus concluded that if people have questions to feel free to reach out to him and they don't have to wait till the next meeting, he will try to get answers for them.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie M. Kellow, Recording Secretary