

Selectmen's Meeting
February 10, 2020

At the Selectmen's Meeting held on Monday, February 10, 2020, the following people were in attendance: John Tholl, Peter Corey, and Stanley Holz participated via conference call.

Chairman Tholl called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

John reviewed the bids received and reviewed at the last meeting for the Generator Replacement at the Robinson Well. The bids received were:

Androscoggin Electric with transfer switch: \$32,000

Powers Guaranteed Generators with transfer switch: \$26,700

JA Corey Electric with transfer switch and 10-year warranty: \$22,292

John Tholl made a motion that we award the contract to J.A. Corey in the amount of \$22,292. Stanley Holz seconded the motion. Peter Corey recused himself from this. Roll call vote: Holz: Yes; Tholl: Yes. 2-0, Motion passed.

Ted Fitts has sent in a couple of requests for an abatement on his recent water bill at 22 Knot Hill Road. He does not believe the bill is accurate. Fred Ingerson said that Mr. Fitts is gone during the winter months, and he is here during the summer. His house is shut down during the winter months and he has a person who looks after his house and does maintenance. He had the person turn the water on earlier than usual for the new meter installation. Fred is not sure when he turned the water on, but it was a couple of days before New England Back Flow came. New England Back Flow came and saw something running through the meter and noticed something in a shower or bath tub leaking. Fred said it was repaired so much of the usage was from the old water meter that was changed out. Ti-Sales data logged the new meter to show there was no usage on the new meter. Fred she he does not know what was leaking and what was used. Mr. Fitts is disputing the reading because it was more than his normal usage. New England Back Flow was supposed to keep all the old meters so if something came up they could go back and check them. When Fred called them to do it, that meter was no longer available. The Board felt that we need to go with the reading that New England Back Flow did. The ordinance is clear if it goes through the meter, it has to be billed. We will send a letter to Mr. Fitts.

Mr. Corey said he felt that In light of the email we received from the Motor Vehicle Salvage Yard Program Coordinator at NHDES, we should ask them what capacity do they have to do inspections. Stanley said it may be worthwhile to meet with them to see what our responsibilities are.

A motion was made by Stanley Holz to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2020 Selectmen Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Peter Corey. Roll call vote: Holz: Yes; Corey: Yes; Tholl: Yes. All in favor, 3-0. Motion passed.

John said in reference to the Public Budget Hearing, any questions should be directed to the chair. No discussion among the parties in the audience. John will recognize people in the audience to speak. The budget hand outs are available on the table.

John Tholl called the Public Budget Hearing to order at 6:30 p.m.

General Government:

2019 Appropriation: \$549,715

2020 Appropriation: \$609,556 \$59,841 increase

Public Safety:

2019 Appropriation: \$887,584 2020 Appropriation: \$921,155 \$33,571 increase

Highways, Streets, Bridges & Sanitation:

2019 Appropriation: \$932,344 2020 Appropriation: \$998,399 \$66,055

Shawn White said that he used to be the Director of Public Works, and he has done the budget over the past years, and he feels the increase of 7.08% is absurd. His first question is when you are giving salary increases, what are you comparing to? John said we look at somebody's performance. Peter said we look at neighboring communities and what they pay. We just recently lost an employee, who we trained, who got more money at a larger community. It is a challenge when you are a small community to try to pay a good salary to keep people. We can't always pay what neighboring communities pay. John said we are also finding that hiring people for openings is difficult with the pay scale we offer.

Bill Robinson asked if the Public Works Director salary was \$72,000. What is the justification for that? John said when he was hired we negotiated his salary based on what we were looking for the Public Works Director's responsibilities. Bill said he doesn't run any equipment. In the past we have used engineers to manage our grant projects. Mr. Larson said previously he ran equipment and could supervise the crews. Mr. Larson said we are not in the year 2015 anymore. We are in the year 2020, and because of the two water projects and sewer projects, the state has required certain supervisory requirements, i.e. water conservation plan, leak detection plan, and we have an infrastructure plan because things over the years have been in a deficiency. Mr. Larson said he develops and writes the grants so that is the expense we don't have, and we now have an infrastructure plan, culvert plan and road plan. Peter Corey said that the Board realized we needed someone who could provide administrative and supervisory experience over all the public works departments, highway, water, sewer, and transfer station. The Board felt that we didn't need anyone out doing the work. We needed someone coordinating between the departments. In order to attract someone in that capacity, we needed to increase the salary requirements. The departments have more requirements, and we need to be smarter how we go after grants and forecasting our needs. The federal and state requirements are quite intensive, and we need an individual to focus on that for the public works departments. We made offers to other qualified individuals, and the salary being offered was an issue. Bill Robinson said he feels it is overkill. It is a slippery slope.

Louis Gooden said he only got 1.6% increase for social security. Mr. Gooden said you don't post the town employees' salaries in the town report anymore, and he feels it should be posted in the town report.

Barbara Pinkham said she has been a cemetery trustee for 5 years. Barbara said she has dealt with Mr. Larson several times, and he has been very helpful to the cemetery trustees in terms of facilitating things. He has helped with issues with Eversource. Barbara has met with him several times and he has always been enthusiastic to help. She doesn't know a lot about highways, and he has been able to simplify things for her. His door is always open. Barbara said he is helpful to her.

Shawn said he was making \$58,000 and they offered him \$6,000 to stay. Shawn said he had a 10-year road plan. He brought it to the capital improvement committee. He had culvert plans as well. Shawn said \$72,000 is a lot of money—people with pe licenses are getting that. Shawn said he knows Whitefield is a small town, and he thinks it is an extreme amount of money.

Stanley Holz said the salary was what we thought he deserved based on our desire to keep him in the position. Cabot Ronish was the last Public Works Director. Rob is doing an evaluation of employees. We recently did a review of Rob's performance, and that is what we came up with. Stanley said we feel he has earned every cent of his salary.

Shawn has a concern with overtime going up \$6,000 to \$30,000. Shawn did not have overtime in the summer months. Shawn said he is seeing people out patching sidewalks after regular hours. So instead of increasing the overtime, we should have a supervisor who is more stringent. There are things that can be done during normal hours and not during overtime. None of the overtime happened in the summer. Rob said that the overtime occurred in 2019 during the first three months of the year before he was even hired. Rob said we need to plan on bad weather. Rob said he was under budget by \$64,000 so he is not one to waste money and let people work unnecessary overtime. Rob said a lot of projects are getting done. Rob said sidewalks are a priority. Shawn thinks if we didn't spend the money last year, then why would we need to increase the budget. Mr. Larson said there is money in the budget so we can replace culverts. There is a need for culverts, and we had not budgeted for culverts in the past. Shawn said he budgeted for culverts and it came out of sand, gravel and road construction. Wendy Roberts said she had a question about Mr. Larson's salary. John said he was hired at \$66,000 and the review is given a 13% increase and the rest of the employees are only get 3%. Why is he singled out? John said that was what was negotiated. Wendy asked if any other employee said they are going to leave are you going to give them a 13% increase? Peter Corey said we went through two periods of trying to hire someone for this position. We are fortunate to have someone with competency who is doing the job. If you don't want to put that money in the budget, come to the town meeting and ask for that line item to be reduced.

Shawn White asked why the street sewer maintenance and repair line item is being increased? Mr. Larson said we have 12 manholes that need the brick work repaired and there are 17 and they are all decayed and caving in. It is estimated to be between \$300 to \$700 each to get them done. Shawn said we did 20 on Union Street, and he was able to do that for well under that amount. Shawn never expended that \$24,000 when he did it. Mr. Larson said we have to replace the generator down at Brown Street which hasn't worked for a couple of years. Josh Welch said it just stopped working the day he notified Mr. Larson. Shawn said the money to service that generator should be coming out of the sewer department. This line item is for the collection. Josh Welch said the Town is now bound by an maintenance program through the state that they have to do every year and report on it. Josh said \$30,000 is probably not enough for what we are bound by every year. Rob said he doesn't micromanage so he relies on his department heads. Mr. Gooden asked why wasn't the generator included in the upgrade of the sewer treatment plant? Rob said there isn't enough money in the grant to do the generator. Rob said we have contingency plans that we will do if there are enough funds left in the grant. John Tholl said those are bid alternates. When you do a contract this is what you have to have done, and this is what we would like to have done and work our way down through that list and get done what we can with the money that is left.

Health & Welfare:

2019 Appropriation: \$22,577

2020 Appropriation: \$23,654

\$1,077 increase

Tom Ladd asked what the increase was for, and Mr. Ross, who is the Health Officer, said it represents the amount of time that is required to do the position. Ed Samson, Police Chief, said \$2,000 is not enough to do the position.

Culture & Recreation:

2019 Appropriation: \$95,900	2020 Appropriation: \$100,450	\$4,550 increase
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Wendy Hersom said she is wondering if we didn't spend all the recreation budget last year, why are we asking for an increase. Melissa Farrow, Recreation Director, said that we did not have the senior program for the entire year, and that saved us some money last year.

Conservation Commission

2019 Appropriation: \$2,500	2020 Appropriation: \$2,500
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Economic Development

2019 Appropriation: \$5,000	2020 Appropriation: \$5,000
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Barbara Pinkham is wondering what the EDC does—what is the budget used for?

Stanley Holz said they want to build up enough funds to help businesses. They are taking a \$5,000 allocation so in theory they will have enough money to do something. The first year they did hire an engineer to pay for a feasibility study of the Fiske Barn and there is money to spend on an engineering study for the parking lot behind Cumberland Farm. The idea is to accumulate to have funds if needed. Barbara Pinkham asked if businesses can apply for the funds? Stan said Coos County Economic Development and North Country Council have some funding available. Wendy Hersom said basically the town is donating \$5,000 to the WEDC and they do what they want with it, and Stanley said they are absolutely accountable. It goes directly to WEDC, which is a non-profit organization. Claire Houghton asked why do they need \$5,000 more if they have \$5,000 left over from last year? Stanley said it is not enough to do the projects they need. It was originally intended so they would be able to have money to do their own projects. Shawn said EDC has helped out Public Works in the past. This group of people is looking for the best interest of the Town and the money goes back into the town. Stanley said they are all volunteers and no one gets paid for their service.

Principal Long Term Notes

2019 Appropriation: \$134,826	2020 Appropriation: \$107,605	\$27,221 Decrease
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Interest Long Term Notes

2019 Appropriation: \$32,057	2020 Appropriation: \$23,751	\$8,306 Decrease
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Tax Anticipation Notes

2019 Appropriation: \$7,500	2020 Appropriation: \$7,500
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Library

2019 Appropriation: \$46,825	2020 Appropriation: \$46,825
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Cemetery

2019 Appropriation: \$30,000	2020 Appropriation: \$32,000	\$2,000 Increase
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Airport:

2019 Appropriation: \$9,000	2020 Appropriation: \$9,000
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Band Concerts:

2019 Appropriation: \$3,000

2020 Appropriation: \$3,000

Total Operating Budget:

2019 Appropriation: \$2,758,828

2020 Appropriation: 2,890,395 \$131,567 Increase

Water Department:

2019 Appropriation: \$475,612

2020 Appropriation: \$543,922 \$ 68,310 Increase

Bill Robinson said he doesn't see the justification for having two full-time employees in the water department in the winter. Mr. Larson said as of this year it is mandated by the state that we have to have a licensed back-up operator so it is a requirement by the state. Rob said the other thing is we are mandated to have new test equipment, all requirements with the grant and new infrastructure, and we have to set aside money for infrastructure upgrades. All mandated by the state. Bill said we have a lot of that equipment. What are they going to do in the winter? We are also mandated now to go to quarterly billing. We are going to do meter readings once every two weeks. It is for leak detection. Rob said the Town has 37% unaccounted for water. We have to get that under 15% by the end of 2021. We have lines that run all over and we don't need where they are. Bill Robinson said you can do it with one guy for the winter. Mr. Gooden said it is hard to find someone to work part-time in the water with the licensure requirements. Mr. Gooden said it may be possible to have the person work with the sewer department as well as the water department.

Shawn said the rate payers have seen an 100% rate increase. We can't afford it anymore. There is no need to have another full-time person in the water department during the winter months. Shawn said you have to lay off the ratepayers. Mr. Gooden said you have to have a licensed worker. Mr. Jones asked what the rates are going to be the next two years. Mr. Larson said the water rates are being revamped. We haven't finalized it. The plan reduces the household usage rate and base rate, and who is picking up the increases are the commercial users.

Sewer Department:

2019 Appropriation: \$290,268

2020 Appropriation: \$426,981 \$136,713 Increase

John Tholl said the biggest increase for the sewer rate is \$100,000 for sludge removal. John said this is something we have to do. The level of sludge rose so it started to go in the intake pipe. Mr. Gooden said he feels this should have been included in the sewer treatment plant upgrade project. We have to decommission these lagoons and get rid of the sludge. Josh Welch said in the lagoons we did remove some four years ago in the second and third pond. Number one hasn't been done since Bill Robinson was here. With the new plant it will be taken out every week. With the new treatment plant upgrades, the lagoons will be decommissioned and they will go away. It will be to our long-term advantage to do away with them. In the plant itself, it will have dewatering capability so we can self-dewater those lagoons. Once the new treatment plant goes on line, the sludge will go to a landfill. Mr. Larson said that the sewer rate should go down, once we get the billing process realigned.

Capital Reserve Accounts:

Highway Equipment Replacement:

2019 Appropriation: \$47,5000

2020 Appropriation: \$45,000

Fire Department Equipment Replacement:

2019 Appropriation: \$40,000

2020 Appropriation: \$40,000

Revaluation:

2019 Appropriation: \$15,000

2020 Appropriation: \$15,000

Bridges/Town Buildings:

2019 Appropriation: \$55,000

2020 Appropriation: \$50,000

Shawn White asked why are we decreasing the amount of money in the bridges/town building capital reserve account? Mr. Larson said that we have enough money in there. \$150,260 was the balance as of 12/31/2019.

Sidewalks

2019 Appropriation: \$20,000

2020 Appropriation: \$20,000

Claire Houghton asked about the Union Street sidewalks being improved and to be ADA compliant. When are you going to fix those sidewalks? She is wondering if they are going past View Street. Mr. Larson said that the water project is going up to the railroad track then we are going to View Street. The Union Street sidewalks will be done this summer. Shawn White said that the whole reason Union Street wasn't done, was the state wouldn't sign off on it. Mr. Larson said that we have met with DOT on Union Street, and they have volunteered materials for that project. Shawn said previously the state was requiring the drainage be replaced and we were not able to do that. Shawn's recommendation is that we should get the Union Street sidewalk on the 10-year plan. It is something that should be looked at. Mr. Larson the engineering has been approved for the water line on Union Street.

Ambulance

2019 Appropriation: \$20,000

2020 Appropriation: \$20,000

Road Projects

2019 Appropriation: \$133,005

2020 Appropriation: \$100,000

Shawn asked about road projects. Rob said he has a 10-year road improvement plan. We have a warrant article for Parker Road this year. We are also doing a Middle Street culvert. That came in at \$95,000. P&R is the only person who had bid on that. Shawn is wondering why doesn't the highway department do that? Rob said they busy getting the other roads done, with ditching and culverts. We can't do it all. Shawn said he tried to save the town money by doing the projects themselves. Shawn said you pay 3x as much when you contract out the projects.

Police Cruiser

2019 Appropriation: \$0

2020 Appropriation: \$25,000

Emergency Services Building

2019 Appropriation: \$20,000

2020 Appropriation: \$20,000

Septage Receiving Station

2019 Appropriation: \$25,000

2020 Appropriation: \$25,000

Sewer Collection System

2019 Appropriation: \$10,000

2020 Appropriation: \$10,000

Recycling Center Equipment Replacement

2019 Appropriation: \$5,000

2020 Appropriation: \$5,000

Barbara Pinkham asked about getting a shredder at the recycling center.

2020 Warrant Articles:

Fire Rescue Jaws of Life: \$20,000

Radar Traffic Signs: \$16,000 - Radar traffic signs for the four entrances into town. They will be radar read-outs.

Pave Parker Road: \$175,000

Electric Vehicular Charging Station: \$60,000

Katie Kopp, a member of the WEDC, said they have been busy and we did write a grant around the parking lot in park of Cumberland Farms. She said one of their goals is to keep the tax burden off the residents, and she would like to invite people to look at different funding sources for this article. Katie thinks the warrant article is premature and the EDC is actively pursuing funding sources. Katie doesn't want to see reinventing the wheel and she wants to see a cooperative effort in this venture. Mr. Larson said we have looked at three different locations in the downtown for this. Katie invited Mr. Larson to meet with the EDC to explore their efforts. We are looking at the intangibles of this warrant article that will bring people into town and they will use the downtown businesses.

Petition Warrant Articles for Outside Agency Funding:

Ammonoosuc Community Health Services: \$4,000 – 2019 \$4,500 – 2020

White Mountain Mental Health: \$2,919 – 2019 \$2,919 – 2020

Caleb Group: \$4,000 – 2019 \$4,000 – 2020

Tri-County Transit: \$4,000 – 2019 \$4,000 -2020

Senior Meals: \$2,800 – 2019 \$2,800 – 2020

Service Link: \$1,000 – 2019 \$0 - 2020

North Country Home Health & Hospice: \$14,913 – 2019 \$14,913 – 2020

St. Paul's Church Backpack Program: \$1,348 – 2019 \$0 – 2020

Northern Gateway Chamber of Commerce: \$1,019 – 2019 \$1,019 – 2020

Homeless Outreach: \$2,500 – 2019 \$1,180 – 2020

AV Home Care: \$0 – 2019 \$3,000 – 2020

Center for New Beginnings: \$1,000 – 2019 \$1,000 – 2020

Tyler Blain House: \$2,500 – 2019 \$0 - \$2020

Tri County CAP Fuel Assistance: \$0 – 2019 \$3,050 – 2020

John Tholl said we are projecting a \$1.00/thousand tax rate increase in the town rate for 2020. \$8.63 to \$9.63 per thousand.

Claire Houghton asked what was going on at the transfer station. John Tholl said we have offered the surrounding towns to piggy-back on our contract at Mt. Carberry. The towns will pay for their own transportation, and the Town of Whitefield can make money per ton. We are not adding anything in the transfer station budget for this. Everything will come from their place to Mt. Carberry. They will do their own transportation.

The Public Budget Hearing adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

The Board reviewed the warrant articles for their recommendations.

The meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.