

Selectboard Budget Meeting Minutes
Thursday, December 19, 2024

Present: Tom Fitzgerald, John Gannon, Tony Tribuno, Charlie Foster, Vince Rice @ 9:44

Others Present: Scott Tucker, Jessica DeFrancesco, Christine Richter, Matt Murano, Scott Moore, Marshall Dix, Chris Lavoy, Therese Lounsbury, John Lazelle, Jessica Roberts, Louis Clark, Samantha Kondracki

Meeting called to order at 8:20 am

FY26 Budget Review with Dept Heads

- **Wages;** Gannon doesn't feel taxpayers are seeing a 5% increase in their wages, so it doesn't seem right to increase employee salaries by that much. Fitzgerald commented that with so many towns struggling to keep staff, and with retirements coming for us, a competitive salary is important. Foster agrees with the 5% increase given the cost of housing in the area.
- **General Fund;** total expenditures are up just over 10% and revenues are down so looking at 16% increase in the amount to be raised. This is based on the current grand list, and there may be an increase in the grand list which would adjust the tax rate.
 - o **Town Clerk;** no major needs coming up. Recording supplies are up and "temp help."
 - o **Assessor;** the state is looking to re-vamp how appraisal work is done. There are a lot of moving pieces that they are still working on, hoping to finalize during this next legislative session. Funding for specialty property reappraisals needs to be considered. There is money in the reappraisal capital fund.
 - o **Town Manager;** Discussion about the hiring of a new firm to help with keeping computers secure and compliant
 - o **Cemeteries;** they (Cemetery Commission) have some projects to do- removing old decaying trees and crack sealing older pavement.
 - o **Zoning;** training increase is for AICP certification, the Town Plan is being re-written, and the Zoning Ordinance is getting a few updates.
 - o **Police;** Chief Murano gave an overview of the challenges with respect to turnover, recruitment and retention as it relates to the high cost of living in the area, to include the cost of purchasing a house with the market average over \$700,000. There is still one police officer opening to fill. Competing state agencies starting salary is \$71,000; Wilmington starts a patrol officer at \$58,250. The lack of and extreme cost of housing makes it difficult to find applicants. The SRO (school resource officer) position has begun and is being shared between the Police Dept. and schools. State Police is no longer sharing some resources for investigations; they had been licensing their own technology called Cellebrite, which is cut from the budget this year; once a new detective has been identified, the chief will put it back in the budget.

- **Fire;** truck maintenance is increasing now because they will have to start sending trucks out for repair. “Code and compliance” increased due to new regulations on some of the equipment.
- **Lake Raponda Dam;** engineering for a maintenance plan and capital fund increase in Lands & Fences to offset future construction on the dam.
- **Social Services;** board consensus to remove VNH, they can petition if they want funding.
- **Transfer Station;** recycling is now single-stream, trucking costs are higher. Foster asked about a drive-on scale and if it would be beneficial.
- **Recreation;** summer program changing to a 3-week program and adding training, swimming lessons, & other programs; certifying counselors in CPR and first-aid.
- **Town Hall Maintenance;** roof maintenance.
- **Town Reports;** we will be mailing out town meeting and school meeting warning to registered households.
- **Library;** requesting 14% increase; they started offering benefits to the full-time librarian. They need a shed to store things that are currently overcrowding the library. They would like to hire a bookkeeper and develop the website.
- **Capital Funds**
 - **Town hall;** air conditioning, ADA compliance
 - **MH;** siding
 - **Police equipment;** radios
 - **OFH;** second half of roof needs replacement
- **Highway**
 - Gravel is being used more with the multiple mud seasons each year.
 - Paving; trying to pave the steeper portions of dirt roads that intersect with paved roads.
 - Equipment; in 2027 possible refurbishment of truck #12 pending its evaluation and possibly a new mower.
- **Revenue**
 - Highway revenue down 33%
 - Town revenue down 10%
- **Wastewater**
 - Overall 3.2% increase
 - Sewer testing will be increasing once the new permit is issued, probably double the current amount.
 - ECU rate will be set in June
 - E Main 1; increase to \$173,000

- **Water**

- o Chemicals and filters increased; weather related. More rain events mean more filter replacements.

Meeting adjourned at 10:57 am

Respectfully Submitted,
Jessica DeFrancesco

Approved by the Wilmington Selectboard:

Thomas Fitzgerald, Chair

John Gannon, Vice Chair

Vince Rice, Clerk

Tony Tribuno

Charlie Foster