

Budget Hearing February 8, 2022

Selectmen in attendance: Scott L Young, Chairman, Brian Monahan, Lynn Sweet

Others in attendance: Fire Chief Scott Whitehouse, Police Chief Mike Richard,
Library Director Paige Holman, Road Agent Greg Messenger and Matt Messenger, Recycling Center Interim
Director Jim Andersen, and many residents

The 2022 Budget Hearing was called to order at 6:00PM. Mr. Young welcomed all those in attendance. He announced that the hearing had been publicized in the Community Calendar, on the Town Website, and posted at the Post Office.

Mr. Young noted that the purpose of the public hearing was to review the proposed budget and certain warrant articles to be voted on at the March 12, 2022 Town Meeting. He began by explaining that Articles 1 through 5 will be decided by ballot vote on Election Day, March 8th. The Selectmen briefly explained that the wording presented in the Warrant is just a summary of the intent.

Mr. Young then read the Warrant Articles 6-30 one at a time. Mr. Young, Mr. Monahan, and Ms. Sweet or a department head spoke to each article as necessary.

Article 6 To see if the Town will vote, pursuant to RSA 231:62, to change the currently "*Elected*" Road Agent position to an "*Appointed*" position, and to authorize the Selectmen as agents to appoint. The current Road Agent shall continue in the position until the end of the next Town Meeting. Mr. Messenger explained his intent was to never make this a full time/long term job for him. Mr. Young explained this has been a long time coming and it's time for the Town to have a full time Public Work's position. Ms. Sweet added that we've been very fortunate to have Greg as the 3rd generation to take care of our Town. Mr. Young went on to say it would be better to have an appointed position as a full time employee because other towns have had difficulty with going from road agent to road agent on a regular basis.

7. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$335,000. for Capital Improvements (Drainage work, culverts, gravel and paving) of roads within the Town boundaries at the discretion of the Road Agent, as funding permits.

Mr. Messenger addressed this Article stating he planned on paving Northwood Road; Kerivan's to Town line; Whig Hill Road from 202A to Aspen Drive.

No questions were asked.

8. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$812,652. for the operation and maintenance of the Strafford Police Department.

Mr. Young stated how pleased the Board was with the budgets and noted that the Department Heads had kept their budgets low. There is a 6.9% increase with COLA being 5.9%. The Board feels that it is important to not fall behind on wages. They've worked hard to get employee wages up to where they should be and do not recommend falling behind again.

There was no discussion.

9. To see if the Town will vote to discontinue the Capital Reserve Fund known as the Strafford County Radio Project Fund. The Trustees of the Trust Fund shall pay all the monies in this fund (\$5,000.59) to the Town. The Selectmen recommend this article.

There was no discussion.

10. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$556,271. for the operation and maintenance of the Strafford Fire Department.

There was no discussion or questions asked.

11. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$60,217. for the third year's payment of the lease agreement for the new ambulance approved at the 2020 Town Meeting, and to authorize the withdrawal of \$60,217. from the Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Special Revenue Fund established by Article 8 at the March 14, 2000 Town Meeting to be used for this purpose. This lease/purchase agreement contains an escape clause. No funding to come from general taxation. The Selectmen recommend this article.

No discussion followed.

12. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$15,000. for the purpose of purchasing equipment and supplies for the ambulances, and to authorize the withdrawal of \$15,000. from the Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Special Revenue Fund, with no amount to come from general taxation. The Selectmen recommend this article.

There was no discussion.

13. To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Selectmen to enter into a five year lease agreement for \$670,000. for the purpose of leasing to own a new Fire Engine Tanker, and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$155,000. for the first year's payment. This lease/purchase agreement contains an escape clause. The Selectmen recommend this article.

Fire Chief Scott Whitehouse explained this is to replace the 1993 Fire Engine. The \$155,000 is the best guessed estimate of what would be the first payment of the lease.

14. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$100,000. to be placed in the Fire Engine Capital Reserve Fund. The Selectmen recommend this article.

The Selectmen briefly discussed this article.

15. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$20,000. to purchase medical equipment (i.e. 2 AED defibrillators and LUCAS auto compression device), \$18,000. to come from a GOFERR Grant, the balance of \$2,000. to come through general taxation. The Selectmen recommend this article.

Chief Whitehouse was diligent in getting this Grant in order that the taxpayer have minimal impact. No questions were asked.

16. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$2,778. for the purpose of purchasing new forestry equipment (i.e. PPE shirts, headlamps, goggles and hose clamps) with \$1,378. to come from the State Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant and the balance of \$1,389. to come from general taxation. The Selectmen recommend this article.

Question asked whether this was for replacement items or new items to the budget. Chief Whitehouse explained that this was primarily for consumable supplies such as t-shirts, PPE, headlamps, etc. that get lost and or worn out. There was no further discussion.

17. To see if the Town will vote to establish a New Fire Station Committee to be comprised of the Fire Chief, one Fire Department member, one Selectman, and two Town residents. The committee is to report back at the 2023 Town Meeting.

Fire Chief Whitehouse states that the current stations in Town have become antiquated even though additions have been made throughout the years, they have become too small. After further discussions, Mr. Young brought it back around that this was an Article to just appoint a committee to find a location.

18. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$133,554. for the operation and maintenance of the Hill Library.

This is \$5,000 above what was asked last year. There were no further questions.

19. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000. to be placed in the Library Expansion/Improvement Capital Reserve Fund. The Selectmen recommend this article.

Paige Holman, Hill Library Director explained the definition of "future expansion" to be a new location or supplies for the library. There is over \$43,000 in the account now.

20. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000. to be placed in

the Town Office Equipment Fund. The Selectmen recommend this article.
There were no questions.

21. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000. to be placed in the Town Hall Building Maintenance, Improvements and/or Expansion Capital Reserve Fund. The Selectmen recommend this article.
There is a little over \$30,000 in the account now. There was no further discussion.

22. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000. to be placed in the Future Reval/Statistical Update Capital Reserve Fund. The Selectmen recommend this article.
Mr. Young stated that there is \$5,000 in the account now but it is necessary to put a little away every year. There was no further discussion.

23. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,747,219. for general Town operations.

Executive.....	\$ 94,238.
Election & Registration.....	39,282.
Financial Administration.....	116,623.
Appraisal of Property & Tax Maps.....	45,193.
Legal Expenses.....	60,000.
Employee Benefits, FICA, Medi & Unemp. Comp.....	46,410.
Planning and Zoning.....	52,043.
General Government Building.....	46,800.
Auto Permits/Town Clerk Fees.....	38,310.
Insurance.....	60,847.
Advertising and Regional Association.....	4,243.
Strafford Regional Planning Comm. Dues.....	5,214.
Contingency Fund.....	16,000.
Annual CPA Audit.....	13,000.
Emergency Management.....	15,000.
Building Inspection.....	18,748.
General Highway Expenses and Town Maintenance.....	643,875.
Street Lighting.....	5,000.
Solid Waste Disposal.....	352,147.
Animal Control.....	1,800.
Cemeteries.....	9,000.
Cornerstone VNA (formerly Roch Dstr VNA).....	3,991.
General Assistance and Welfare.....	15,580.
Community Action.....	2,000.
Haven Sexual Assault Support Services.....	992.
My Friend's Place.....	200.
The Homemakers Health Services.....	3,200.
Ready Rides.....	1,500.
CASA.....	500.
Strafford Nutrition & Meals on Wheels.....	1,000.
Parks and Recreation.....	23,183.
Patriotic Purposes and Fireworks	6,800.
Conservation Commission.....	2,500.
Interest Expense & Tax Anticipation Notes.....	2,000.
 TOTAL.....	 \$1,747,219.

(The intent of this article is to raise the sum of \$1,747,219. exclusive of all other Articles addressed.)

A question was asked concerning the line item for cemeteries on whether or not the cemeteries had provided the town with a detailed invoice. Mr. Young stated that one or the three had gotten back to the town with their costs;

the Board has discussed asking the cemeteries for a more detailed account. The Conservation Committee budget line is used for mowing, plowing, etc.

24. To see if the Town will vote to reclassify the following section of a Class VI road as a Class A Trail pursuant to RSA 231-A:2: First Crown Point Road from a point at the northeast corner of Tax Map 17, Lot 20 and the southwest corner of Tax Map 17, Lot 19 to the Barnstead town line (approximately 5900 feet).

25. To see if the Town will vote to reclassify the following section of Class VI road as a Class A Trail pursuant to RSA 231-A:2: Second Crown Point Road from the southeast corner of Tax Map 18, Lot 32 to the southwest corner of Tax Map 14, Lot 11-2 (approximately 3600 feet).

26. To see if the Town will vote to reclassify the following Class VI road as a Class A Trail pursuant to RSA 231-A:2: Snackerty Road (a.k.a. Church Road) from Barn Door Gap Road to the Barnstead town line (approximately 2600 feet).

27. To see if the Town will vote to reclassify the following section of a Class VI road as a Class A Trail pursuant to RSA 231-A:2: Willey Road running northerly from the Beam Camp entrance road (a.k.a Boy Scout Road) to a point 50 feet north of the north side embankment of the Little River crossing (approximately 2600 feet).

28. To see if the Town will vote to reclassify the following section of Class VI road as a Class A Trail pursuant to RSA 231-A:2: Pig Lane running northerly from Range Road at the southwest corner of Tax Map 8, Lot 20 and the southeast corner of Tax Map 8, Lot 19-1 to a point 50 feet north of the north side embankment of the Huckins Brook crossing (approximately 4490 feet).

A lengthy discussion was had on Articles 24-28 with some of the residents affected in attendance Bruce Ryll, Lori Shiere, and the Wuelpers asked questions and voiced their concerns. Charlie Moreno and Liz Evans from the Planning Board explained that the intent of the Articles is not to bind the property owners. The Selectmen also made themselves available after the initial meeting to hear those in attendance with concerns.

29. "To see if the town will support the use of the Town lot next to the Hill Library (formerly known as the Hill Lot) as the Community Garden and to allow for expansion and improvement of public access to the garden.

Improvements include installing steps, changing the slope of the lot, and placing a shed on the land. The cost of improvements will be covered by Hill Library donations, fundraising and grants, at no cost to the Town. The elected town Library Trustees will oversee the improvements." (by Petition.)

Those in attendance were reminded that this is the lot the Town had bought. A question was raised concerning the parking area. Mr. Young stated that the parking area would remain the same and that the area in front of the lot could not be used for parking because of the possible dangers that posed. Paige Holman stated the landscaping being considered would be more of a tiered/layered look with retaining walls. The proposed shed would be for the electric and water controls to be enclosed within the shed and used for the garden only.

30. To transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting. This article allows any other business that may legally come before this meeting to be transacted as part of the Warrant which will be considered on March 12, 2022 at the Strafford School gymnasium.

Selectmen stayed behind with those affected by the proposed Class A Trails. Charlie Moreno showed those affected the Planning Board's Class A Trail presentation and answered several questions.

The Public Hearing was closed at 8:06.