



## **TOWN OF HILL, Budget Committee Public Hearing Minutes February 06<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**Budget Committee Attendees:** Eric Herr, Shelly Henry, Charles Henry, Paul Meyerhoefer, Charles Estes, Jerry Desrochers, Tom Seymour, Bill Wilson, Denis Robie (Denise confirmed The presence of a quorum and then departed due to driving conditions. Thank You!)

**Public Attendees:** Mike Brady, December Fortin, Pam Desrochers, Joanne Irving, Kathy and Steve Kelly, Nathan and Natali Mills, Robert and Michelle Schulte, Deanna and Jeff Ford, Paula McDonough, Chris Vlitas, Shaun Bresnahan, Andrew Williamson and Lisa Seymour.

At the Chairman's request - Eric Herr, Vice Chairman, opened the budget committee meeting at 7:05 PM and immediately declared the Public Hearing of the 2019 Proposed "Town Departments" Budget – Open. {Jerry Desrochers presided as moderator of the hearing.}

The Budget Committee presented the public with its 2019 recommended budget by department and line item. The committee was open to all discussion and questions.

**4130 – Executive Budget – \$72,491.** Discussion ensued pursuant to executive expenses including pay increase. . Other questions were answered and appeared to be received satisfactorily.

**4140 / 4150 – Town Clerk/Tax Collector – Twn Clrk \$58, 385. / Tx Cltr \$ 7,970.** Discussion ensued regarding, in general, a 3% increase in wages for departmental employees. The % of increase was thought to be more than the standard increase per family could afford. There was no data presented to support the assertion. Questions were answered and appeared to be received satisfactorily.

**4152 – 4196 - Revaluation (\$11,526), Legal Expenses (\$4,000), Personnel Admin.(\$23,337), Planning and Zoning(\$4,100), Gen. Govt Building(\$18,634), Cemeteries(\$5,000), Insurances (\$16.092.)** Questions were answered and appeared to be received satisfactorily.

**4200 Public Safety –**

**4210 - Police (\$95,858.) – Chief Andrew Williamson** availed himself at the hearing to directly answer any questions that arose. Natalie Mills engaged Chief Williamson in the intention for adequate training which the Chief is planning. ("Alice Training") Considerable discussion related to the need for First Response, Mutual Aid and Mutual Participation with departments and surrounding agencies. Bill Wilson asked if the current proposed budget is adequate to keep all safe? The response is that it is a good start in the right direction. SAFE is a relative term. The nominal increase in the Police department budget is for new equipment and to update aging equipment to provide a safer

working environment of our Officers. Additional questions were answered and appeared to be received satisfactorily.

**4215 – Ambulance (\$32,740.) Fee set by Ambulance Service provider.**

**4220 – Fire (\$70,345.) – Chief Deanna Ford and Jeff Ford availed themselves to answer any questions related to the increase in the fire department budget. Discussion ensued related to an increase in the Fire Department budget from previous years. Chief Ford responded, the fire department has been the subject of cuts to the proposed budget year after year. As a result, the purchase of needed equipment and maintenance of existing equipment has been suffered. The Department is in sufficient need of update. Supported by the Budget Committee’s recommendation, the increase will begin a process of department restoration to a safe level. The Fire Engine 2 requires (8) new tires to pass safety inspection, the department requires another SCBA (breathing apparatus) in addition to the unit currently pending delivery. The department needs (2) full sets of gear and new mobile response radios. Questions were answered and appeared to be received satisfactorily.**

**4290 – Emergency Management (\$1,475.) - Questions were answered and appeared to be received satisfactorily.**

**4310**

**4312 Streets and Highways (\$386,752) - Questions and general discussion arose related to the committee’s recommendation to approve the \$2,100 addition of “clothing.” (3 men, seasonal gear, Jackets, shirts, pants, seasonal footwear, 7 days a week, including storms and/or other requirements) It was stated; town employees have not previously been provided uniforms and have worn, paid for and maintained their own seasonal attire for work. The committee recommends a starting line of \$2,100 with the intention of reviewing if over the period of the first year, the cost and impact of purchasing clothing for the road crew. Other questions were answered and appeared to be received satisfactorily.**

**4316 Street Lighting (\$6,000.)**

**4319 Reconstruction of Highways (\$47,000) (Offset by Grant)**

**4320 Sanitation – (\$82,338.) – General discussion ensued regarding the hope and a question of future intention to update the Transfer Station located on Rt 3N. Further questions and discussion related to the cost of keeping comingled recyclables clean and separated from any plastic bags that diminish any revenues to the town. Comments further related to the icy (at times) conditions around the recycle receptacle and the burden to elderly to step up on the concrete barrier to empty containers without assistance. Questions were answered and appeared to be received satisfactorily.**

**4332 – Water Services – (\$138,000.) – Jerry Desrochers, Water Commissioner was available to answer any questions related to Water Services. Joanne Irving and Paula McDonough engaged in discussion related to the billing of the flat fee and water consumption. Jerry advised this year would likely see an increase in the water delivery flat fee. No increase amount was reported at this time. Further discussion related to use of revenues and the town’s readiness in the event of water line rupture, system damage and maintenance. Questions were answered and appeared to be received satisfactorily.**

**4410 – 4415 - Health Agencies / Hospitals (\$6,300) Other Admins (\$2,500) (\$8,200 Ttl recommended)**

**4440 – Welfare (\$5,000)**

4520 – Parks and Recreation – (\$12,920.) – December Fortin availed herself for any questions related to Park and Rec. Discussion and comments related to the beautification of the area around the Pond and the maintenance or plans for the Pond itself. The Park and Rec Department is looking into the proposal of dredging the pond. Charles Estes commented there is currently “Private” consideration being given to include the addition of an aerator and fountain to the Pond to add life sustaining oxygen to the ecosystem with the intention of diminishing flying insects and bugs in the surrounding vicinity. Additional questions were answered and appeared to be received satisfactorily.

4550 – Library (\$20,000) (Reduced from the initial proposed \$31,065.) - Rousing discussion ensued related to the Committee’s initial recommendation to reduce the budget. (Restored after the hearing) Charles Estes, Chairman, stated – The Budget Committee, by a majority, voted to reduce the library budget after long consideration, with a suggestion to reduce the public hours. It was said concisely “No one wanted to see the Library CLOSED.” “The Budget Committee has no authority to tell the Library Trustees how to expend its budget.” However, it was suggested to reduce the public hours from the current 9am-5pm or 10am – 6pm Tuesday thru Friday altering the hours to times more conducive to the public using the Library for its intended purposes and resourcefulness. Several comments and discussion ensued related to what the Library means to folks in town. Kathy Kelley said the Library Trustees are working on ways to keep the library productive. Chris Vlitaz noted that comments and assertions to maintain the Library budget are rooted in emotion, not merely for the library but for an individual, and not rooted in realistic expectation of the what the Library provides. Most of the programs or “happenings” at the Library occur either after public hours or during times the public is working and/or Students are in school session limiting the attendance at events. Kathy Kelley noted the Library has extended hours on weekends during the summer months, however it is currently closed on weekends and week nights after 6PM. It was noted that individuals utilizing the WiFi services sit in their vehicles outside in order to obtain a connection for use of the service. Mike Brady commented that to reduce the Library Budget is the same as closing it; “so you may as well vote to keep it open -or- vote to close it, but reducing the budget is the same thing.” Several individuals commented that previous attempts to reduce the budget or close the library have met with strong opposition in the past, December Fortin and Pam Desrochers commented, the town’s people have spoken in the past, this should not keep coming up year after year. All questions related to the committee’s recommendation were answered and appeared to be received satisfactorily.

4583 – Patriotic Purposes (\$550.)

4619 – Other Conservation (\$175.)

Interest on Tax Anticipation (\$500.)

Budget Committee Recommended Budget \$1,129,388.

Selectmen Recommended Budget \$1,140,453.

Warrant Articles – Included as attached Exhibit 1

Capital Reserve Fund (\$98,500.), Ferrin Fund (\$60,083.) Bunker Hill Bridge, (\$500,000) Emergency Repair Fund (\$7,341.) Petition Article – Side walk fund (\$25,000)

Bill Wilson Presented Article 9 - Sidewalk Petition - to raise and appropriate \$25,000 to be put into a fund naming the selectmen as agents to expend, with this amount to come from general taxation.

**Bill expressed a passionate plea for a commitment by the town to repair the sidewalks. The Petition requires recommendations.**

**REVENUES - Total Revenues estimated (\$574,832.) - Questions related to the committee's recommendation were answered and appeared to be received satisfactorily.**

**THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS \*\* CLOSED\*\* - CONCLUDED AT 10:05PM.**

**Public Hearing Minutes "DRAFT" presented by Charles Estes, Chairman 02-11-20019**

**(SEE ATTACHED EXHIBIT #1)**