

**Town of Hill  
Budget Committee  
2025 Budget**

**11/20/24 Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Bruce Blazon (Chair), Marshall Bennett (V. Chair), Betty Hanks, Frank Simeone, Tom Angeley, Joann Irving, Bill Machado, Shaun Bresnahan (Sec/Ex-Officio), Wendy Rosa-Fuller (Ex-Officio)

**Members Absent:** none

**Public:** Charlie Estes, Debbie Langlais, Stephen Thomson, Mark Labonte

Bruce opened the meeting at 6:30 PM.

Reviewed minutes from 11/6/2024 meeting; one spelling error corrected.

Frank made motion to accept minutes as amended; Marshall seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Waiting on Stephen Thomson for the Water Commissioner presentation; Shaun presented a summary of 2024 revenues as of 10/30/24.

Revenues for 2024 were budgeted at \$549,685 and to-date \$515,560 has been collected. Still waiting to receive revenue sharing from State Rooms & Meals tax (96,452); Ferrin Fund Transfer (\$26,274) and two months of Vehicle Registration fees (approx \$39,000 based on avg monthly collections). At the end of the year revenues should be approximately \$677,000.

Water Commissioner Charlie Estes presented the budgeted 2025 Operating Expenses for the Water Department.

Discussion began with a proposed warrant article for 2025 Town Meeting regarding a DES matching grant for upgrades and repairs to the water system totaling \$180,000. The Water Commissioners have the necessary \$90,000 funds and in-kind service to qualify. Work to consist of \$50,000 in upgrades to Pump House, work on reducing back pressure on the Old Town Road part of system and line replacement along with copper and lead abatement work on 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Road.

Bruce asked why we were presented with the Town Treasurer Profit & Loss (P&L) Statement and not the Water Commissioner report on 2024 expenses? Charlie replied that the Treasures report represent all of the paid bills for 2023 and the 2024 Expense are included with the 2025 Budget. To date \$93,421 has been spent; total appropriation was \$137,776.

Bruce asked how Retainage is calculated? Charlie replied it is based on Cash flow in and Out. In 2025 we will pay off the 2006 loan. The second loan has a balance of approximately \$275,000.

The retainage of \$28,179 will go towards the \$90,000 match required for DES grant.

The next 10 years a lot of work on lead and copper abatement will be performed; this is 100% federal money and Users will not be required to pay for this work.

A general discussion was had about the future of the Hill Water Works. Would it be best to use community wells, sell system to a commercial entity, establish a village water district or just privatize the system and hire out all management responsibilities. This will be the first of many public discussions before something is present to Town Meeting for a vote. This is a minimum of 4 years off.

Stephen Thomson believes that the water system adds value the properties that are on the system. Removing the water system he feels would reduce property values in the village.

Frank asked Charlie about comments he made in 2023 that the water system is old and unsustainable. Do you feel this is true today? And if true is there a plan to address this.

Charlie replied the system is old and is on the verge of collapse. The commissioners are working on a 4 year plan to stabilize the system and begin the rebuilding process.

Joann asked about the Hill Fire Department use of the water system to fill trucks and the use of the hydrants and why the department hasn't been billed for the \$1,800 hydrant fee? Is the water used to fill the trucks metered? Her concern is the fire department benefits the whole town yet only the users pay for the chemicals that are used to treat water.

Charlie replied that the fire department hasn't been billed in recent years because they haven't used that much water and that He believes the water that fills the trucks isn't metered. Mark Labonte confirmed this to be true.

Joann asked about average monthly gross revenue. Charlie replied between \$10,500 and \$11,700 depending on time of year. Joann followed up with the usage portion of bills and when that will billing for it resume? Charlie replied there was a two month usage holiday and usage fee will resume this month.

Frank has been reviewing the latest Water Rules and asked if there is a certified system operator as required? Charlie replied yes, it is PSI, Pump Systems Inc in Franklin.

Frank asked who the Billing Agent is? Charlie replied the Superintendent is; Frank asked who is the Superintendent? Charlie replied it was him. Frank asked if that was a conflict because he is the supervisor and worker so who would insure there are no issues. Charlie replied the other 2 water commissioners are a check to insure work is accurate. Bruce asked how this is

different from the Tax Collector? If the books are audited that would be the check to insure accuracy. Shaun said that the water books are part of the annual town audit.

Frank asked about delinquent users and how much is owed. Charlie replied currently its about \$13,000. There is a swing in this number from \$1,000 to \$13,000. This is driven by a couple of large users who sometimes get 2-3 month behind and then settle up all past due. General questions regarding the processes the commissioners have in the rules to solve unpaid bills.

Frank asked if there were any abatement granted this year for past due bills? Charlie replied none this year. Frank asked about 2023? Charlie replied there were 2. The commissioners have the authority to abate 12 months of past due bills in unique situations.

Frank asked about the water meters; who owns them? Stephen replied the users own thier meters. Frank asked what insures a users meter is working and that users will replace a broken meter? Charlie replied about 10% of the meters aren't working. Frank followed up with the rule that outlines how many meters are to be tested annually and if this is done.

Shaun asked for a point of order and feels the questioning is going beyond the authority of the Budget Committee. We don't have the authority to oversee the policy and work tasks of the water commissioners. Bruce agreed and asked that discussion return to the 2025 budget.

There was heated exchange between Frank and Charlie and Bruce called that the meeting come to order.

Frank disagrees with Shaun and we do have the authority under RSA 32;16 which he reads to insure Water Commissioners are following their rules to insure proper operation and collection of fees that pay for the running of the water system.

Charlie told Frank he would be happy to answer his questions at a Water Commissioners meeting. Frank replied that he has heard how people have been treated at past meetings.

Discussion returns to the 2025 Budget; Joann asked about Software Expenses? Charlie replied it is for the Avatar software, IT Support and propose web site for water system.

Bruce asked what is the source of the 2024 YTD Expenses? Charlie replied it is from the Treasurers report as of October.

Mark asked if any of these are new software programs? Charlie replied no.

Frank makes a motion; Does the Budget Committee (BC) have the authority to review costs and revenues and whether they follow their rules? Bruce seconded the motion. Shaun commented that we can't review whether they follow rules or procedures. Bruce called the question; motion fails (8-1 Frank).

Bruce makes a motion; As a BC do we feel that the Water Commissioners have adequately answered our questions regarding the running of the water system and move to the 2025 Budget review; Bill seconds Motion. Motion passes (8-1).

Frank would like the minutes to reflect that he feels the BC does have the authority to review the rules to insure that the water commissioners are following them.

More discussion about the overall condition of the water system and how the water commissioners are addressing the issues. Charlie discussed the DES Matching Grant again and how they will be stabilizing the system in the next 48 months.

Wendy asked if there are plans to increase rates to insure the system has the money necessary to make improvements. Stephen replied yes but we have a lot of "balls in the air"; as we resolve the pressing issues we will be working on this.

Joann asked why there is a \$52 and \$58 flat rate on pg 1 of the proposed budget. Charlie replied that last year the commissioners contemplated reducing the flat rate. They have decided it wasn't wise; it was left on the spreadsheet for transparency.

Charlie asked if the BC would go on the record to recommend that the proposed warrant article be passed. Shaun replied we are too early in the process to make the recommendation, that comes during the public hearing phase.

Shaun does make a motion that the BC supports the proposed warrant article to accept DES Matching Grant of \$180,000. Marshall seconds motion. Motion passes (8-1).

Bruce makes motion to accept the proposed 2025 water Works Budget; Bill seconds the motion. Motion passes (8-1).

Bruce asked if there was any other business?

Betty made a motion to adjourn at 8:40 PM; Bill seconds the motion. Motion passes unanimously (9-0).

Respectfully Submitted  
Shaun Bresnahan; Secretary