

## **BUDGET COMMITTEE**

Town of Hollis

Seven Monument Square

Hollis, New Hampshire 03049

Ph. 465-2209 Fax 465-3701

FINAL minutes of June 8, 2021

Meeting was held in the Community Room, Hollis Town Hall.

The Budget Committee was called to order by Tom Gehan at 7:00PM.

**Members present:** Tom Gehan, Chairman; Mike Leavitt; Chris Hyde; Lorin Rydstrom; Carryl Roy, School Board Representative; Kelly Sealey, Business Administrator for SAU41; Mark LeDoux, Select Board Representative; Darlene Mann

**Members absent:** Mike Harris

**Officials present:** Jacob Fitzgerald, Hollis Finance Director;

### **Review/Acceptance of Meeting Minutes**

Draft Budget Committee Minutes – May 17, 2021

*MOVED* by M. LeDoux and seconded by C. Hyde to accept the minutes. The motion PASSED 6-0-1 with L. Rydstrom abstaining.

### **Public Input**

Joe Garruba of 28 Winchester Drive spoke about the possibility of reducing the funding of Land Use Change Tax to the Conservation Commission. He believes that any proposal to reduce the funding to the Conservation Commission be supported by a well-supported and rationally defended position in order to justify any changes.

Bernadette McQuilkin of 225 Rocky Pond Road is concerned about land use issues. She believes that the land that the town has acquired should be protected and that the Conservation Commission should be strengthened. She supports leaving the Land Use Change Tax to the Conservation Commission.

Pam Hicks of 8 Maple Knoll Drive would rather see the tax dollars go towards purchasing land instead of attracting new people to come to Hollis. She does not believe the resources Hollis has will not support the amount of new homes that are being built.

Mark Post of 43 Love Lane would like the Budget Committee to start thinking of land purchases as perpetual annuity instead of just a budget line item.

Tom Davies of 43 Forest View Drive stated that the Conservation Commission is currently trying to purchase more properties in town, but in the current market the market for this land is going up. Currently the Conservation Commission has \$1.4 million.

### **Town Report**

M. LeDoux stated that on June 7, 2021, the Select Board ratified and accepted the audit report. They discussed the Unassigned Fund Balance and found that about \$400,000 was from taxes that were collected earlier than anticipated (prepayments).

M. LeDoux discussed that the town should be crafting the budget for the upcoming year in order to see where there are savings, but will need to go line by line to see where those are. He also stated that health insurance premiums went down instead of the anticipated increase. This could be attributed to the health savings accounts for employees, along with having a high deductible plan which saved about \$500,000 for tax payers. Also, the unfilled positions were made up by overtime work instead of hiring new employees. The unassigned fund balance is currently at 12% of the expenditures.

M. LeDoux stated that the DPW Director, Joan Cudworth, has been asked for information on road repairs that funds could be applied to in order to fix. M. LeDoux asked if there has been an engineering study done on the DPW building and J. Fitzgerald replied that they had not received any responses to the RFP.

### **School Report**

K. Sealey reported that the schools have received \$175,000 in federal funding for Covid-19 related expenses and reimbursements. SR2 and SR3 will total around \$100,000 and the administration is looking into applying those funds to learning loss. The School Board approved the Expendable Trust request for \$114,500, \$15,000 to turn the SAU building bathtub into a hallway, and \$5000 to replace a Rocky Pond pump.

K. Sealey updated the board on the HSMART progress. Due to increased labor and material costs, the extra projects that were expected to be started this summer will cost more than expected of about \$800,000. The extra projects will be funded by the school's general fund, which will cost around \$439,000. The school district has an unreserved fund balance in the amount of \$97,000 which will be returned to the tax payers.

M. LeDoux would like to have the school district move to the high deductible plan for their health insurance. T. Gehan will put that in the July agenda to discuss further.

### **New Business**

M. LeDoux is concerned that if the current Land Use Change Tax funds aren't revisited soon, it may send the wrong signal to the current land owners about the potential valuation about their conservation land easement.

L. Rydstrom commented that he emotionally and financially supportive of conservation, however he believes the current system is at the expense of other tax payers so he does not support 100% of the Land Use Change Tax payments going towards the Conservation Commission. He would support closer to a 50/50 split.

Tom Dufresne of 17 Pound Road and chairman of the Conservation Commission, stated that the funds given to Conservation Commission covers title searches, legal fees, survey work, environmental studies, etc. He stated that normally the Conservation Commission does not have as much money, but the current amount is due to the building going on in town.

C. Hyde commented that a balance needs to be found, but, while he supports obtaining conservation land, he does not support giving 100% of funds to Conservation Commission. T. Dufresne commented that when the change was originally implemented at town meeting, the residents wanted it raised to 100% going to Conservation Commission.

The board discussed areas to look closer at when doing the upcoming budget including solid waste disposal, pension cost, health care insurance and energy cost.

**Adjournment:** *Motion to adjourn* by M. LeDoux and seconded by C. Hyde. The motion PASSED unanimously 7-0-0.