

## **BUDGET COMMITTEE**

Town of Hollis

Seven Monument Square

Hollis, New Hampshire 03049

Ph. 465-2209 Fax 465-3701

FINAL minutes of November 9, 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 Harris; Chris Hyde; Lorin Rydstrom; Mike Leavitt; Amy Kellner, School Board Representative; Mark LeDoux, Select Board Representative;

**Members absent:** Carryl Roy; Darlene Mann

**Officials present:** Jacob Fitzgerald, Hollis Finance Director; Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator for SAU41;

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

Draft Budget Committee Minutes – October 12, 2021

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

### **Public Input**

Jim Gill of 30 Milton Place urged the Budget Committee to not approve the Public Relations Specialist position. (The position title for the role is Communications Specialist, not Public Relations Specialist.)

Joe Garruba of 28 Winchester Drive spoke against the approval of the Public Relations Specialist position. He believes the money would be better spent on other school related needs. (The position title for the role is Communications and Compliance Specialist, not Public Relations Specialist.)

Jaima Wilder of 48 Pierce Lane asked the board to be financially conscious and not add another position in that would hurt the tax payers.

Mark Constantian of 99 Twiss Lane believes the Public Relations Specialist position is unnecessary for the school district. (The position title for the role is Communications and Compliance Specialist, not Public Relations Specialist.)

Lauren Farrow of 22 Richardson Road believes the money being potentially used for a Public Relations Specialist would be better used for other programs for students. She also mentioned that there are

repairs that need to be made to parks for safety. (The position title for the role is Communications and Compliance Specialist, not Public Relations Specialist.)

Dave Parry of 3 West Hollis Road believes the budget needs to be more closely examined and opposes the Public Relations Specialist position. (The position title for the role is Communications and Compliance Specialist, not Public Relations Specialist.)

Tanya Renner of 101 Rideout Road asked if the position is permanent and M. Harris replied that it would be permanent.

### **Town Report**

M. LeDoux stated that relief from budget will be nominal. He mentioned that the currently Library Director has put in her notice, so the library trustees have requested to increase library salaries by \$30,000.

The town is operating at roughly 78% of anticipated income and expenditures are as expected. Through October, there are \$1.8 million in motor vehicle renewals and it was anticipated to bring in \$2 million, so the town will go over what was anticipated.

By the end of the year, the Unassigned Fund Balance is projected to be \$4.8 million and the Select Board is looking to relieve that by \$1 million towards town warrants. There are bonds being considered to completely rebuild Wheeler Road and Worcester Road, which he believes will be around \$1.3 million but will have final numbers soon. Building a steel building for DPW could be around \$1.8 million also embodies \$300,000 which would bring the current building up to code and \$1.5 million for a new building.

The town is looking to get two new dump trucks, which would be \$380,000 funded by relieving the Unassigned Fund Balance. This would be a warrant article at Town Meeting.

The Farley Building Committee would like to do a study for \$40,000.

J. Fitzgerald stated that the final Meal and Rooms tax that was anticipated to be \$400,000 ended up being \$593,000 in revenue.

### **School**

A. Kellner stated that the school district has received notice of a 5<sup>th</sup> retirement, effective at the end of the year. This would result in a savings due to new hires starting at a lower rate. The SAU has put together a job description for the Communications and Compliance Specialist (referred to during public input as the Public Relations Specialist).

The school public hearing date will be February 8<sup>th</sup> and the HSD annual meeting will be March 9<sup>th</sup>.

K. Seeley mentioned that Hollis has a Retained Fund Balance of \$284,000 and \$95,000 in the Contingency Fund.

### **SAU41 Budget**

C. Hyde stated that he believes the positive side of hiring for the Communications and Compliance Specialist position would be to relieve other staff members of duties and allowing them to focus on

other educational duties. K. Seeley replied that the person who fills the position would respond to Right to Know requests, along with any tax payer information requests. A. Kellner mentioned that with the absence of a local newspaper, the ability to provide information to those who don't have children in the school district is tough. M. LeDoux believes the school district would receive more acceptance of the new position if they contracted it out first to see how necessary it is, and also to save money on benefits.

*Motion to accept the SAU budget recommendation as presented by M. Harris and seconded by M. Leavitt. The motion PASSED 5-2-0.*

### **Budget Guidance**

Discussion ensued about whether to include or exclude NHRS from guidance costs.

*Motion to retain the retirement system costs in the guidance number as previously done by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde. The motion PASSED 5-0-2 with M. LeDoux and A. Kellner abstaining.*

### **School District Guidance**

K. Seeley stated that she did not have any expected requests for relief from guidance, but it's still too early to tell for sure.

*Motion to adopt the preliminary guidance as final guidance by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde. The motion PASSED 7-0-0.*

### **Town Guidance**

T. Gehan inquired about the use of escrow accounts as he hadn't seen them prior to 2020. J. Fitzgerald explained that they appear to be operating as encumbrances, and moving forward titled as encumbrances pursuant to RSA 32.

T. Gehan stated that employee benefits were consistently underspent year after year. The committee discussed the need to budget for full staff for the full year per the MS1.

M. Harris suggested setting guidance at 4.3% for the town to match the guidance percentage for the school.

Discussion ensued regarding adding back the new SRO position voted at the 2021 town meeting to guidance, as done with other warrant articles. The committee is considering offering relief from guidance for this new position instead of relief for the full increase in NHRS costs. The Police Department will be adding an officer in the coming year, making an offer in December.

The library is requesting a \$30,000 increase for salaries to bring them more in line with other library salaries.

*Motion to adopt the guidance as amended as final guidance by M. Harris and seconded by M. LeDoux. The motion PASSED 7-0-0.*

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