

BUDGET COMMITTEE
Town of Hollis
Seven Monument Square
Hollis, New Hampshire 03049
Ph. 465-2209 Fax 465-3701

FINAL minutes of February 6, 2024
Meeting was held in the Community Room, Hollis Town Hall.

The Budget Committee was called to order by Tom Gehan at 6:30pm.

Members present: Tom Gehan, Chair; Mike Harris; Darlene Mann; Chris Hyde; Mike Leavitt; Mark Kost; Mark LeDoux, Select Board Representative; Amy Kellner, School Board Representative;

Officials present: Jacob Fitzgerald, Finance Director; Lori Radke, Town Administrator; David Petry, Select Board Chair; Susan Benz, Select Board; Tom Whalen, Select Board; Joe Garruba, Select Board

- Public Hearing for the Schools – February 13th
- Public Hearing for the CO-OP – February 19th
- Election Day – March 12th
- Annual meeting for the schools – March 14th
- Town meeting – March 16th at 9am
- Annual meeting for the CO-OP – March 19th

T. Gehan touched on some points regarding the public hearing process and how guidance is calculated. The projected 2024 tax rate is \$18.01.

Public Input

T. Gehan opened public input at 6:55pm.

ARTICLE 2 – Silver Lake Phosphorus Reduction Study/Design

Shall the Town of Hollis vote to raise and appropriate \$100,000 (One Hundred Thousand Dollars) to hire a Certified Lake Management / Engineering Firm to study conditions and provide design solutions to reduce external and internal phosphorus loading in Silver Lake -- to prevent future cyanobacteria blooms in the lake? And to authorize the issuance of not more than \$100,000 of bonds or notes in compliance with the Municipal Finance Act, RSA 33:1 et seq., as amended, with the amount of such bonds or notes to be reduced by any grant funding received for the project, and to comply with all laws applicable to said project; to authorize the Select Board to issue, negotiate, sell, and deliver said bonds and notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon and the maturity and other terms thereof; and to authorize the Select Board to take any other action or to pass any other vote relative thereto. It is anticipated that there will be \$100,000 in principal loan forgiveness, under the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Clean Water State Revolving Fund (NH CWSRF). The interest on this loan will be paid in full by a donation from the Silver Lake Improvement Association Water Quality Fund. Fiscal Impact Note: The Tax Impact associated with this will be \$0.00 per \$1,000 valuation. Any and all interest accrued prior to loan forgiveness and administrative costs has been negotiated to be paid by the Silver Lake Improvement Association and held in an escrow account. Estimated Tax Impact \$0.00 per Thousand. (3/5 Ballot Vote Required.)

Recommended by Board of Selectmen 0-0-0

Recommended by Budget Committee 8-0-0

Greg Lennartz, 50 Pine Hill Rd., is in support of the article in order to clean up the lake.

Bernadette McQuilkin, 225 Rocky Pond Rd., is in support of this article and feels this would be beneficial to the town.

Chelsea Lennartz, 50 Pine Hill Rd., would like her children to be able to swim in the lake someday, so appreciates the efforts to clean it up.

Karen Bridgeo, 65 Buttonwood Dr., is in support of the article, but would like people to understand why the lake is polluted. She noted that even if the money is accepted, the town does not have to abide by the state's suggestions.

James Plummer, 84 Dow Rd., stated that developing a watershed management plan will allow the town to potentially receive additional funds from the state.

Sharon O'Neill, 4 Hanson Way, is in support of this article and has involved the state in efforts on how to clean the lake.

MOVED by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde to recommend Article 2 – Silver Lake Phosphorus Reduction Study/Design. The motion PASSED 8-0-0.

ARTICLE 3 – Elderly Exemption Modification

Shall the town modify the provisions of RSA 72:39-a for elderly exemption from property tax in the Town of Hollis, based on assessed value, for qualified full time resident tax payers to be as follows: for a person 65 years of age up to 75 years, \$272,000; for a person 75 years of age up to 80 years, \$312,000; for a person 80 years of age or older \$368,000. To qualify, the person must have been a New Hampshire resident for at least 3 consecutive years preceding April 1st, own the real estate individually, or jointly, or if the real estate is owned by such person's spouse, they must have been married for at least five consecutive years.

In addition, the taxpayer must have a net income, as that term is defined in RSA 72:39-a, in each applicable age group of not more than \$63,500 or, if married, a combined net income of not more than \$72,500 and own net assets not in excess of \$198,000; excluding the value of the person's actual residence and the land upon which it is located up to the greater of 2 acres or the minimum single family residential lot size specified in the local zoning ordinance.

Recommended by Board of Selectmen 0-0-0

Recommended by Budget Committee 8-0-0

T. Gehan stated that while no taxes are to be raised for this article, it is estimated that \$65,500 fewer taxes will be collected should it pass. This equates to \$.02 on the tax rate, or \$9.00 per home.

No public input.

MOVED by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde to recommend Article 3 – Elderly Exemption Modification. The motion PASSED 8-0-0.

ARTICLE 4 – The Farley Building Community Center

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate no more than \$300,000 for the purpose of further renovations to the Farley Building Community Center by funding a complete construction and bid management package to be used relative to a request for proposal for the work. This funding will include

the following Conceptual and Schematic Design, Design, and Development, as well as Complete Electrical, Structural, and Construction Documents.

Recommended by Board of Selectmen 0-0-0

Recommended by Budget Committee 8-0-0

Dave Sullivan, 86 Worcester Rd., is the chairman of the Farley Building Community Center Committee. He explained multiple uses for the building, including making it accessible to anyone in town. If the article is approved, an opportunity to bid will be available, and the committee will be seeking private donations to fund the job. It is estimated that the overall project will cost approximately \$5 million, while tearing it down and rebuilding will cost approximately \$7 million.

Liz Barbour, 5 Broad St., is in support of this article. She believes maintaining the historic district is very important. It was noted that families and seniors would be able to benefit from the multiple uses of the Farley Building.

Chelsea Lennartz, 50 Pine Hill Rd., believes it should be discussed what the town actually needs, and is the Farley building the building that should be rebuilt. She stated that rebuilding the building would be a better idea to make it more compliant and does not need to cost as much as projected.

Kimberly Harmon, 106 North Pepperell Rd., is in support of the article. She believes it will fulfil the need for groups and clubs to have meetings.

MOVED by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde to recommend Article 4 – Farley Building Community Center. The motion PASSED 8-0-0.

M. Kost stated that he would like it to be made known at Town Meeting how the proposed \$5 million will be paid through debt services in the future.

C. Hyde stated that he has some concerns with the financial aspect of the project, especially since there are a variety of spaces that will need upgrading soon also. He believes there are historical constraints that may be an issue with renovating, and does not trust that the rebuild cost is accurate. D. Petry commented that all numbers are estimates, and donations are being collected to help offset the price of the Farley Building.

T. Gehan stated that the proposed future cost may add 9% to the tax rate, therefore he would have rather it been presented next year when more debt services are coming off.

D. Mann stated that she is concerned about the parking, transportation, and traffic flow since it's next to the school.

ARTICLE 5 – Town Clerk Compensation

To see if the Town will vote, as authorized by RSA 41:25, to compensate the position of elected Town Clerk with a combination of statutory fees and an hourly rate for election work. If approved, the Clerk will be compensated \$30.08 per hour for work associated with election duties, plus statutory fees beginning on March 18, 2024.

Recommended by Board of Selectmen 0-0-0

Recommended by Budget Committee 7-0-1

Drew Mason, Baxter Road., stated that he understands what the Town Clerk does for elections, so he supports the increase.

MOVED by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde to recommend Article 5 – Town Clerk Compensation. The motion PASSED 7-0-1 with M. Leavitt abstaining.

D. Mann questioned the wording of the hourly compensation, and if the rate will remain the same. M. LeDoux responded that the taxpayers are the only ones who can change the rate since it is in regards to an elected official.

ARTICLE 6 – Facility Space Needs Assessment for the Police and Fire Stations

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate no more than \$35,000 for the purpose of a facility space needs assessment for the Police and Fire Station.

Said funds to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance as of December 31, 2023, if available.

No amount to be raised from taxation.

Recommended by Board of Selectmen 0-0-0

Recommended by Budget Committee 8-0-0

Supporting documents were read by T. Gehan, including limited space for police and fire vehicles, the need for separate locker rooms for male and female officers, and the need for laundry facilities when coming in contact with hazardous materials.

No public input.

MOVED by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde to recommend Article 6 – Facility Space Needs Assessment for the Police and Fire Stations. The motion PASSED 8-0-0.

D. Mann questioned if there is a specific company used for a needs assessment. Joseph Hoebeke, Police Chief, stated that he would work with the Fire Chief and create an RFP that would go out to bid.

ARTICLE 7 – Excavator Purchase

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum not to exceed \$300,000 for the purpose of purchasing one (1) excavator with attachments for the Public Works Department.

Said funds to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance as of December 31, 2023, if available.

No amount to be raised from taxation.

Recommended by Board of Selectmen 0-0-0

Recommended by Budget Committee 8-0-0

No public input.

MOVED by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde to recommend Article 7 – Excavator Purchase. The motion PASSED 8-0-0.

ARTICLE 8 – Enterprise Town Vehicle Lease

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to enter into a Master Equity Lease and Fleet Management Agreement for the purchase, maintenance, and sale of passenger vehicles for the Town of Hollis, and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$39,110 for the first year's payment for that purpose. This lease agreement contains an escape clause. Further, to establish a Fleet Management Committee to oversee the Town's rolling stock of vehicles and replacement thereof. Participation in the agreement and the Committee will remain until rescinded. All proceeds from vehicle sales will offset the acquisition cost of the replacement vehicles.

Recommended by Board of Selectmen 0-0-0

Recommended by Budget Committee 8-0-0

No public input.

MOVED by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde to recommend Article 8 – Enterprise Town Vehicle Lease. The motion PASSED 8-0-0.

No public input.

MOVED by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde to recommend Article 12 – Compensated Absences Payable Expendable Trust Fund. The motion PASSED 8-0-0.

ARTICLE 13– Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$14,500 to be placed in the Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund as previously established at the 1996 Annual Town Meeting.

Said funds to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance as of December 31, 2023, if available.

No amount to be raised from taxation.

Recommended by Board of Selectmen 0-0-0

Recommended by Budget Committee 8-0-0

No public input.

MOVED by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde to recommend Article 12 – Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund. The motion PASSED 8-0-0.

ARTICLE 14 – Municipal Buildings & Facilities Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$150,000 to be placed in the Municipal Buildings and Facilities Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund as previously established at the 2008 Annual Town Meeting and amended by the 2009 Annual Town Meeting.

Said funds to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance as of December 31, 2023, if available.

No amount to be raised from taxation.

Recommended by Board of Selectmen 0-0-0

Recommended by Budget Committee 8-0-0

No public input.

MOVED by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde to recommend Article 14 – Municipal Buildings & Facilities Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund. The motion PASSED 8-0-0.

ARTICLE 15 – Establish a Contingency Fund

To see if the Town will authorize the establishment of a contingency fund under the provisions of RSA 31:98-a for the purpose of funding unanticipated expenses that may arise during the year. Furthermore, to raise and appropriate \$70,000 towards this purpose and appoint the Select Board as agents to expend from said fund.

Said funds to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance as of December 31, 2023, if available.

No amount to be raised from taxation.

Recommended by Board of Selectmen 0-0-0

Recommended by Budget Committee 8-0-0

No public input.

MOVED by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde to recommend Article 15 – Establish a Contingency Fund. The motion PASSED 8-0-0.

ARTICLE 16 – 2024 Operating Budget

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$14,160,524 which represents the operating budget of the Town for 2024, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately.

Recommended by Board of Selectmen 0-0-0

Recommended by Budget Committee 8-0-0

Drew Mason, Baxter Rd., asked what road projects are planned for 2024. Joan Cudworth, DPW Director, listed multiple roads throughout town that have planned projects. It was noted that a slide for road projects may be included in future presentations.

Public input was closed by T. Gehan at 7:52pm.

MOVED by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde to recommend Article 16 – 2024 Operating Budget. The motion PASSED 8-0-0.

Review/Acceptance of Meeting Minutes

Draft Budget Committee Minutes – January 8, 2024

MOVED by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde to approve the minutes. The motion PASSED 7-0-1 with A. Kellner abstaining.

Appointment

MOVED by M. Harris and seconded by C. Hyde to appoint M. Leavitt to the Hollis School District Enrollment Committee. The motion PASSED 8-0-0.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by M. LeDoux and seconded by C. Hyde. The motion PASSED unanimously 8-0-0.