

*Town of Grafton, New Hampshire
Budget Committee
Minutes of October 18, 2017
(approved)*

Present: Ed Grinley, Chair; Pam Curran, Catherine Mulholland, Jennie Joyce (Select Board ex officio), and Sandi Pierson (clerical).

Others present: Bob Bassett and Russ Poitras

Meeting opened at 6:00 PM.

Minutes: The minutes of October 5, 2017 were unanimously approved as submitted.

Recycling Center: Recycling Center Manager Bob Bassett came before the Committee to discuss his 2018 proposed budget for the Recycling Center of \$81,000. His request is the same as the 2017 appropriation. Changes in line item requests from 2017 included a decrease of \$3000 in hauling fees, an increase in repairs/supplies of \$2500, and an increase of \$500 in utilities/electric. Bob said he moved the allocations around because of projected repairs on the roll-off truck, including air brake repairs that are needed before State inspection. Answering a question from Ed, Bob said that highway workers were sorting and loading the metal into the container because it would be difficult for the Recycling Center employees to do so manually. He said the forklift is not feasible for the task and it only takes a half hour for the highway department to complete the job. He stated that historically the highway department has been of assistance to the recycling center, including glass crushing, putting furniture in containers, and plowing. He added that the problem in having highway personnel switch over to the recycling center budget when working there, is that retirement costs come wholly out of the highway budget.

Ed said that people would like to know what his duties are as manager. Bob said he does the hauling, he is at the recycling center each Sunday morning, assists in baling material, checks in on Wednesday, and handles the vendor arrivals when the facility is not open.

After discussion, the Committee voted unanimously to level fund the Recycling Center budget at \$81,000.

The Committee noted that the request for the capital reserve for a roll-off truck replacement has doubled from \$10,000 to \$20,000 from 2017 and asked Bob for his rationale. Bob said that the town was fortunate to get the present truck for \$15,000 which they have been using for three years. He said that the cost of brand new one is estimated at \$225,000, though he anticipates that the town would buy a used one for their nominal travel needs. He said purchasing a trailer to be hauled by a highway truck would not be practical because of the necessary hydraulic hook-ups.

Highway Department: Road Agent Bob Bassett came before the Committee to discuss his 2018 proposed budget for the Highway Department of \$394,011, an increase of \$10,500 over the 2017 appropriation. Capital Expenditure remained at \$57,711 which is payments toward two of the trucks. The Committee agreed that although “capital expenditures” is the formal DRA line item description, for clarity to the public they would like to see it in the town report listed as truck payments. Bob requested a \$3000 increase in fuel, a \$5000 increase in sand and gravel, and \$14,000 for retirement expense. Decreases included \$4000 for repairs/supplies, \$1000 in uniform/shoes, and \$500 in heating fuel.

Bob said that his objective for 2018 is wholly road maintenance and no major projects. This will include more brush cutting and more layout of hardpack. He anticipates town-wide coverage of hardpack over gravel roads should be completed in about three years. He noted that the expense of \$29,000 for winter sand is included in the sand/gravel line item. Bob said the ledge rock taken from the Height of Land and Grafton Pond area projects were crushed at no cost to the town and re-used at their respective sites.

After discussion, Jennie motioned to approve the Highway budget at \$394,011. Catherine seconded. Motion passed unanimously in favor.

Bob gave a summary of how the SB-38 funds of about \$76,000 were used. \$50,000 went toward paving, the main project being Prescott Hill Road. \$11,500 was used for a hydraulic hammer to break ledge because the alternative would have been to contract blasting at \$43,000. The plans for the remaining funds are for guard rails on Height of Land and at a bridge site on Prescott Hill. If the tasks are not completed in 2017, the Board is allowed to encumber the revenue.

Police Department: Police Chief Russ Poitras came before the Board to discuss his proposed budget of \$192,793, an increase of \$53,220 over the 2017 appropriation. The discussion with Russ mainly focused on hiring a second, full-time officer which is the main reason for the increase. Because of the money not expended on a second officer for a portion of 2017, Russ said he was able to decrease many line items for 2018 by having reserves such as ammunition and supplies.

Russ expressed his frustration with regards to the amount of tasks he is required to take on as the town’s only police officer. He said that hiring a part-time officer is not realistic to resolve the town-wide coverage issue because entry level officers do not have the comprehensive knowledge or training to do many of the tasks required. Russ said he does not have the time to carry on his duties plus train an entry level officer. He recapped his previous experience with part-time officers. He said assistance from the State Police has been inadequate.

Russ summarized how other municipalities have been handling the issue of hiring police officers, including pay scales and the difficulty of finding candidates. Russ feels that for adequate police service and protection for the town, Grafton needs to hire a second officer that is at detective level and with a starting pay of \$65,000 (which is included in his proposed budget). After a lengthy discussion with Russ, the Committee agreed.

Russ said that it would be practical to switch over to Hanover Dispatch instead of continuing with Grafton County. He said that Grafton EMS and Fire departments are with Hanover as well as the surrounding towns thus communicating with them would be easier. He would also be able to utilize a computer linking system for the area which would save time. He said he included the services of an I.T. person in his dispatch line item to assure against hacking. He is sharing this expense with the town clerk's office who also needs hacking protection for online registration of vehicles.

After discussion, Pam motioned to accept the proposed Police budget at \$192,793. Catherine seconded. Motion passed unanimously in favor.

The Committee discussed with Russ the general condition of the present police vehicles and the capital reserve balance. Russ stated he was going to install a CO detector in his cruiser from this year's budget.

Meeting adjourned 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandi Pierson