

TOWN OF KENSINGTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
MONDAY
OCTOBER 23, 2023

Meeting Minutes

Approved

In Attendance: Joseph Pace, Robert Solomon, Robert Gustafson

Department Heads: Sarah Wiggin, Town Clerk, Carlene Wiggin, Tax Collector, Matt Armstrong, Road Manager, Jacqueline Benson, Cemetery Trustee, Susie Gilbert, Library Director, Library Trustee Matt Dow, Kathleen T Felch, Town Administrator.

J. Pace opened the Budget meeting at 6:30pm.

Cemetery Budget:

Jacqueline Benson was in attendance to represent the Cemetery Trustees.

Their Budget is at \$12,000.00 for 2024 they have decreased their budget by \$14,900 due to completing the work in this year's budget and a decrease in mowing expenses. J. Pace was concerned that they were lowering it and didn't want to see a spike in next year's requests. The option of a warrant article to establish a trust fund for the Cemetery Maintenance needs was suggested. J. Benson will look into this and bring the recommendations back to the trustees.

Town Clerk Budget:

S. Wiggin went through her budget requests and her largest request was for the 4 elections in 2024. Increasing that line item by \$14,529. Town elections cost and average of \$6129 and state election cost around \$4448 and with 4 of them next year there is no way around putting that request in the budget, if the budget were to go to default, then the board would have to find money in the default to fund the elections that we must have. S. Wiggin also informed the board that she would like to add a ballot tabulation device to the 2024 budget that is not part of what was originally submitted. The estimated cost of that device is \$7000. There is uncertainty around the older model that the town currently has and the ability to obtain parts to fix if there was an issue at some point. The state is or has certified two other models and she and the moderator are looking into them both. They have heard that the state will be making a recommendation to the towns to obtain a new ballot counting device in 2024. There was concern about the state mandating that cost to the towns and that the state might not continue to certify the older machine. If that recommendation comes down from the state, they might be looking to phase out the older model. The newer models have thermal ink and better quality paper that will be used. B. Solomon is concerned with diving into this at a budget session, but J. Pace explained that there is budgeting for it then actually purchasing it would be a 2 step process.

Tax Collector Budget:

C. Wiggin was in attendance to discuss her budget and K. Felch explained that some of the categories are for both departments. This department had a minimal increase to the line items. The cost for the newly signed Avitar contract was updated and it was explained that the cost for the audit might be going

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up but K. Felch has not heard back yet from the firm.

S. Heal asked if the supplies for each department could be looked into and if there could be a central ordering person. J. Pace stated that he likes to see what each department is spending on supplies and what they actually need for them instead of lumping it into one central supply line item for all departments. K. Felch will review the supply line items.

Library Budget:

S. Gilbert was in attendance to present the library budget to the board and show them the requested amounts and explain the increased needs they increased the operating expenses by \$2,000 and the Payroll by 3% for employees and the director got a needed increase to bring her up to a competitive rate. The payroll line item increased by \$8356.07.

The library uses their other fund to offset the expenses of the library where the budget is not enough to cover all of the monthly expenses. The electric bill has gone from \$2983 to \$5319 in the last 3 years making it hard to budget what the actual costs will be year to year.

S. Gilbert informed the board that the library will be going forward with a warrant article for March of 2024 for an addition on the building. J. Pace asked if this would increase their expenses if the article was to pass, and she does not believe so.

Road Budget:

M. Armstrong went through the line items on his budget and S. Heal questions why he paid for special details to the pd when they worked within the town. And it was explained that the details were over and above the regular hours for the officers and the rate of \$60 is paid per hour for them to cover the details for town work. This is a discounted rate for town details. J. Pace stated that on Wednesday Chief Scott Cain could answer more questions on the way that the details are billed.

M. Armstrong decreased his Sand and Salt line item by \$1000 due to the recent signing of the contract for salt being at 69 cents per ton instead of the 72 cents per ton that it was at last year.

He explained that he went up 6% on the winter maintenance line item to cover for one more storm event in 2024. B. Solomon asked if it has ever been looked into for the town buying a loader for the salt shed instead of paying out \$10,000 yearly for the rental of one. M. Armstrong stated that the cost of maintaining and buying one would not be cost effective. J. Pace explained that it was discussed before and that there is no place to house it on the lot either.

Executive Budget: The rest of the budget departments will be explained by K. Felch

K. Felch went through the executive budget for the board and the Town Administrator. She stated that she had added line items for supplies and IT support for her in this department and moved them from Financial Administration to better reflect her expenses and to separate the Tax Collector expenses and the Town Administrator expenses. S. Heal stated that the board should be paid more than the stipend of \$4500, he proposed \$6000, but the board did not feel right making that change at this time.

Legal Budget:

Legal expenses will be left at the same amount as last year, there is no telling what the legal expenses will be in the coming year, the current budget is over by \$20,000 due to added legal expenses.

Personnel Administration:

Health insurance is up by 15% and the number of 2-person and family plans have increased. If the personnel do not change then the projected amount for the town's portion of the health insurance will be up \$41,000. The board discussed adding an additional line item for other charges to cover background checks and money needed for new employees. K. Felch will add in \$1000 to the 4155 section of the budget.

Cindy Heal asked if the town has looked at alternative companies for health insurance. The town has not asked for pricing in several years and the board will consider that for the next budget cycle.

General Government Buildings:

Building maintenance was increased just a little to cover any increases in supplies and maintenance needed for the building.

Insurance no otherwise allocated:

K. Felch is still waiting to hear from Primex on a cost for 2024.

Other General Government:

Utility costs are already above the budgeted amount for 2023 by 5300. That line item was increased by 6300. Office supplies are over as well, due to increased costs. Departments do shop sales and various vendors for the least expense products when they are available.

Building Inspector:

There was a minimal increase to this line item, one increase was for the yearly support from Avitar for the Building Permits module for \$1,051.

Streetlights and Sanitation stayed the same.

Health Officer- did not increase/ **Pest Control** 1000 was added/ **Direct Assistance-Welfare** was not changed/ **Parks and Recreation** did not change their budget from 2023/**Sawyer Park Agreement** is the same/**Conservation Commission** did not change their budget/ **Loan Debt** for interest was reduced to reflect the bond agreement.

The board discussed the fact that they will be meeting with the Fire Department, Police Department and the Planning Board on Wednesday the 25th of October here at the Town Hall at 6:30pm.

B. Gustafson made a motion to adjourn at 915pm, seconded by B. Solomon all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen T Felch