

MINUTES

Sanbornton Budget Committee – Meeting & Public Hearing

Meeting Date and Time: Tuesday, February 6th, 2024 6:30pm

Meeting Place: Old Town Hall, 19 Meeting House Hill Rd, Sanbornton NH

Present: Chair Kate Osgood, Dick Gardner, Bob Presby, Selectman Brandon Deacon, Tom Reneau, Bob Silvia, Chris Gagnon

a. Minutes of 1/24 – Bob Presby made a motion to approve the draft minutes of 1/24. Chris Gagnon seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

b. FY25 Warrant Articles – Dick Gardner stated that Article 2 should say it was recommended by the BOS; Town Administrator Trish Stafford will fix this. Trish stated that the article related to Elderly Exemption has been removed per recommendation from the assessing company to hold off another year. Bob Presby noted that Article 6 failed to be recommended at the last meeting by the BC.

Chair Osgood stated that she would be in favor of reducing lines such as IT Equipment that did not have any explanation given as to the reason for an increase from last year. Trish explained that many of those lines were spent, and items like new computers for Welfare and Zoning Enforcement were needed last year. Chair Osgood asked that details like this should be added to the narrative section in the budget next year.

c. Public Hearing – Chair Osgood explained that there were many new members on the Budget Committee this year; budgets were not submitted by the due date which caused delays and the warrant draft was not received until this morning.

Regarding Article 5, Winnisquam Watershed Preservation, Bob Silvia explained that the Budget Committee had not voted on this as there were concerns about the language. Trish explained that she talked to DRA about the wording and a set number must be used, it cannot say “up to” \$100,000. Bob S stated that he does not understand why the language says “to raise and appropriate” if it is coming from the fund balance, as it has already been raised. Dick stated that the language has already been approved by DRA and the Budget Committee could explain the wording at Town Meeting if needed. Ray Masse stated that he has researched the required language and DRA does recommend using the phrase “to raise and appropriate” even if it comes from the fund balance.

Dick Gardner made a motion to approve Article 5 as written. Bob Presby seconded the motion and the motion failed 3-4 with votes as follows:

Deacon/Presby/Gardner – Yes

Osgood/Reneau/Gagnon/Silvia – No

Chair Osgood read an email from a resident with questions about the operating budge (Article 1). Regarding the question about the 6% approved pay increase for employees and if it's comparable to raises most Americans are receiving, Selectman Deacon explained that the BOS used CPI and Social Security increases over the past several years to decide on the pay matrix adjustment. He explained that the Town has not remained competitive with similar towns over the years but he understands that many towns also do not pay 100% of the insurance premiums for employees like Sanbornton does. He stated that the BOS has approved requiring a 6% cost share from employees for insurance starting in FY25, growing to 10% in FY27.

Jim Gagnon stated that many people travel for better wages and one of the advantages to working locally is less pay but better benefits. Michelle Jackson stated that the BOS is placing the burden of a very good municipal pay

system and health plan on taxpayers who do not get those type of raises or benefits themselves. Donna Ledgard stated that a 5% increase was given last year across departments but several positions were given larger raises; this year there are department heads getting 20% raises. Selectman Deacon stated that last year there were some higher adjustments given to adjust some career fields where the competitive wage increased more than 5%; even if the Fire Chief had gotten a 25% increase last year he still would have been the lowest paid in the region.

Donna asked what the payroll difference was from last year to this year. Ray explained that, including burden (FICA, insurance, etc.), the payroll increase from FY23 to FY25 is about 31% which includes adding two new firefighters last year. Jim Gagnon asked how area Fire Chiefs were compared with Sanbornton's Fire Chief; Selectman Deacon explained that the duties of each person were looked at, as some Fire Chiefs serve multiple roles in emergency management, inspections, etc., which Chief Dexter does.

Public hearing closed at 8:18pm.

Chris Gagnon made a motion to increase pay by 4% instead of 6%. Bob Silvia seconded the motion.

Dick stated that the issue of a 6% increase came up earlier in the budgeting process and the BC did not vote to change what the BOS recommended; Chris stated that she has never been in favor of 6% and originally wanted 3%. Bob S stated other members felt the increase was too high but were told by the BOS Rep that the BOS have the final say when it comes to pay. Selectman Deacon stated that the law allows the BC to adjust payroll lines in order to get to a lower bottom line budget, and that budget can be approved by the legislative body, but the BOS can ultimately choose to shift lines as they see fit as long as the bottom-line budget number is maintained.

Ray stated that there is no point in having a Budget Committee if they cannot adjust payroll which affects 18 budgets and the burden that goes with it. Bob S noted that, after discussing the reasons for the larger increases for three department heads, he is more in favor of the higher increases for those positions than he is for an across-the-board 6% raise for all employees.

The motion failed 5-2 with votes as follows:

Gagnon/Reneau – Yes

Deacon/Presby/Gardner/Osgood/Silvia – No

Ray stated that there is already a CRF for saving towards the revaluation so a separate warrant article for that is not needed; the appropriation is now showing in Capital Reserves as part of Article 3 at \$20,585 per year. Chair Osgood made a motion to recommend Article 3 for \$1,596,135. Tom Reneau seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Audry Barriault