

Rowe Finance Committee
Regular Meeting and Joint Budget Hearing with the Board of Selectmen
March 27, 2019
6:30 P.M. at Rowe Town Hall – Meeting Room 1

Present: Chair Wayne Zavotka, Vice-Chair Loretta Dionne, Christopher “Selmi” Hyytinen, Paul McLatchy III, Laurie Pike

Board of

Selectmen*: Chair Jennifer Morse, Vice-Chair Dennis May, Selectman Chuck Sokol

Other

Attendees: Executive Secretary Janice Boudreau

Call to Order: Chair Zavotka called the meeting to order at 6:32 P.M., with a quorum of the committee present.

OPEB/GASB: The town has received reports from Odyssey Advisors regarding an analysis of the town’s OPEB/GASB planning. Chair Morse said that she is going to set up a conference call with Odyssey to explain the reports in more detail. She has invited the Finance Committee to attend once a date and time have been set.

General Government: As of this meeting, the Selectmen have requested \$7,264 for the administrative assistant line and \$37,440 for a town administrator line. This would be in addition to the line for Executive Secretary. There is a possibility that the town might look into sharing a town administrator with Charlemont, but no details have been ironed out yet. This budget line would represent 24 hours of work a week. The idea is that all town departments would report to the Administrator. It’s also possible that some work for the Board of Health could be rolled into this role.

Chair Zavotka said he would like to review these lines, but without Mr. McLatchy and Ms. Boudreau in the room as they are affected by these lines. A brief discussion ensued about whether Executive Session would be appropriate, but it was agreed that this does not fall under allowable reasons.

Ms. Boudreau spoke to her position, and how much it has evolved in just the last five years. In the past, members of the Board of Selectmen have taken on a lot of work, but if all the members have full-time jobs, a lot falls on one person. There seemed to be no disagreement among the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee that more help is needed, just how much help and in what form. Mr. Hyytinen suggested seeing how the 40 hours a week the administrative assistant will be working pans out.

Assessors: The operations line has increased due to software support cost increases. The clerk position may be changed into an assistant assessor position, which would require higher qualifications. Therefore, the line has been increased.

Tax Collector: The tax collector line is higher due to some additional training and consulting lines. Incumbent collector Sandy Daviau is retiring after many years on the job and a new person will need some help getting acclimated.

Planning Board: After hearing back that a revolving fund was not able to be used for Planning Board legal expenses, a motion was made by Chair Zavotka and seconded by Vice-Chair Dionne to lower the 2020 line to \$5,000. The vote was 5-0-0 in favor. The Selectmen then voted unanimously to recommend this as well.

A motion was made by Mr. McLatchy and seconded by Ms. Pike to support no change in committee stipends until stipends have been reviewed as a whole. The vote was 5-0-0 in favor, and the Selectmen voted unanimously to recommend as well. The operations line was left as requested by the Planning Board.

Goal Post: The Goal Post line will be moved from the Planning Board to General Government. It will be split from one line of \$12,000 to two lines, each \$6,000, between an operations and stipend.

Custodian: The custodian position will now have her own operations line of \$3,775. However, other departmental operations lines will be reduced, so there is no new spending being requested.

Jobs: Mr. Hyytinen asked if it made sense to have a bunch of smaller jobs being done by a number of different people (i.e. snow shoveling). Perhaps different departments might be able to combine this into one position at a lower rate, rather than having some higher-paid personnel do this?

Accountant: Mr. McLatchy made a motion of recommending only a 2.5% increase to the accountant's salary line, which was seconded by Vice-Chair Dionne. However, a motion was then made by Chair Zavotka and seconded by Ms. Pike to table until more information was available. The motion to table passed 5-0-0 in favor.

Fire Department: The Fire Department's budget may be revised.

Generators: A new line of generator maintenance will be broken out from emergency management.

School: As the school is receiving roughly \$215,000 for school choice funds this year, but only \$65,000 or so is being proposed to use in the budget, a question was raised about how the remaining \$140,000 is being used. A suggestion was made by Mr. McLatchy that perhaps a stabilization fund could be used for high school tuition, to help even out the payments by saving money when tuition levels were lower, and spending when levels were higher. Chair Zavotka will speak with the chair of the School Committee about these questions.

DPW: Members discussed the topic of how the DPW Superintendent's salary and comp time were being calculated, and whether a salaried person should be given comp time. They also discussed whether there could be better, permanent fixes to dirt roads that might decrease costs in the future.

Street Lights: The Board of Selectmen are reviewing the street light listing and may turn some off in incremental stages.

Municipal Light Plant: A request of \$6,000 for a MLP Manager stipend was reviewed. While in the future this may not be necessary, it was agreed to support the stipend for this coming year.

Library: The director's increase is due to her gaining certain certifications. Otherwise, the budget has no major changes.

Park: The Park Commission is requesting a small increase to their budget, but overall it remains less than 2.5%.

Gracy House: Maintenance has never been budgeted to include more than utilities. A study committee will be formed to consider the future of the building.

Beautification: As there is no official committee, the beautification line will read as just "Beautification".

Insurance: The line for insurance has actually *decreased* this year, to the surprise of many.

Total Budget: As of now, the total budget is roughly \$4,058,801.39.

Next Meeting: The Finance Committee will meet at 5:00 on Wednesday, April 3rd for the next budget meeting. Assessors Chair Rick Williams will be in attendance.

Adjourn: A motion was made by Mr. McLatchy and seconded by Vice-Chair Dionne to adjourn the meeting at 9:31 P.M. The vote was 5-0-0 in favor.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Paul McLatchy III, Secretary*

Approved: April 3, 2019

Wayne Zavotka, Chairman

Christopher "Selmi" Hyytinen, Member

Loretta Dionne, Vice-Chairman

Laurie Pike, Member

Paul McLatchy III, Secretary

Attachments:

- Budget Draft
- Special Projects List
- Draft ATM Outline