

**Town of Boscawen
Advisory Budget Committee Public Meeting
Boscawen Municipal Facility
February 1, 2024, at 6:00 PM**

Members Present: Dale Randall – Chair, Gary Tillman, Tom Laliberte, Joshua Crawford & Margaret Daneau

Select Board Members Present: Matt Burdick – Chair, Lorrie Carey & Bill Bevans

Staff Present: Katie Phelps – Town Administrator, Kate Merrill – Finance/HR Director, Kellee Jo Easler – Planning & Community Development Director, Jason Killary – Police Chief/Emergency Management Director, Nicole Hoyt – Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Dean Hollins – Public Works Director, Gary Moore – Facilities Director, Tim Kenney – Fire Chief, Shawn Brechtel – Penacook Rescue Squad & Kara Gallagher – Recording Secretary

Public Present: Loren Martin, Kearsten O'Brien, & Ray Fisher

Chair Randall opened the meeting at 6:08 p.m.

Roll call completed by Recording Secretary Gallagher.

Minutes:

Mr. Tillman motioned to approve the January 25, 2024 minutes as presented. Seconded by Ms. Daneau. All in favor. None opposed.

Public Hearing:

Select Board – Budget Overview for 2024: Recording Secretary Gallagher read the following Public Notice: *There will be a public hearing on the proposed 2024 Budget on Thursday, February 1, 2024, after 6:00 PM. The meeting will be held at the Municipal Office Building in the fourth-floor meeting room, 116 North Main Street, Boscawen, NH 03303. In the event that attendance exceeds the capacity of the meeting room, there will be overflow seating on the third floor at the Boscawen Public Library. The public has the option to listen to the hearing via Go-To-Meeting. Please note: No public testimony will be taken through the Go-To-Meeting platform.*

47 The Select Board provided the following overview of the 2024 Budget:

48

<u>Acct #/Name</u>	<u>Notable Changes:</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3% Cost of Living Adjustment • Adoption of Wage Schedule with 2.9% step increases or 5% longevity increases on fifth year intervals.
<u>Acct 4130</u> <u>Executive</u> Budget - \$195,380 Decrease of 2% or \$4,587	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recording Secretary line reduced \$500 for meeting minutes that will be done by staff. • Assistant to the Administrator position eliminated and line reduced \$2,373. • Contractual computer maintenance reflects our new contracted total of \$22,000 which is a \$7,000 reduction. • Equipment Maintenance increased \$2,366 due to moving expenses to this line from Contracted Services & Agreements. • Office Supplies, Postage, and Advertising and Public Notices adjusted per 2023 actuals.
<u>Acct 4140</u> <u>Town Clerk & Elections</u> Budget - \$120,426 Increase of 18% or \$18,369	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor distribution changes based on staff changes. • Increase in Moderator & Supervisors stipends, Equipment and Election costs due to 4 elections in 2024.
<u>Acct 4150</u> <u>Financial Administration</u> Budget - \$106,280 Increase of 5% or \$5,370	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No change to Treasurer/Deputy Treasurer Stipends • New audit agreement for 2024 – Increase of \$2,325 • New finance office supply line for \$1,340
<u>Acct 4151</u> <u>Tax Collector</u> Budget - \$83,374 Increase of 5% or \$4,023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Assistant line reduction of \$10,343 based on staff change. • Lien Expenses increased by \$200 • Meetings and Travel increased by \$500
<u>Acct 4152</u> <u>Assessing</u> Budget - \$93,261 Decrease of 0.2% or \$206	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing Clerk line reduction of \$773 based on staff change. • Software increase of \$100 • Public Data Hosting increase of \$95
<u>Acct 4153</u> <u>Legal Expenses</u> Budget \$50,000 No Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Internal procedure for Utilization of Town Counsel for 2024 to work to stay within the budget.
<u>Acct 4155</u> <u>Personnel Administration</u> Budget - \$1,054,249 Decrease of 2% or \$2,029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retiree health insurance rate increase. • Staff worked to reduce costs by switching to a different insurance plan. (It's estimated that insurance line would have increased \$93,190 under former plan). • Dental Insurance rate increase of 4.7%. • Primex Unemployment and Workers Compensation rates increased. • NH Retirement reflects a full year of lower rates. • Short-Term Disability rates increased.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-Term Disability costs decreased. • Removed an additional single health insurance plan for a savings of \$10,502.68.
<u>Acct 4191</u> <u>Planning & Community Development</u> Budget - \$144,336 Increase of 7% or \$8,904	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wage distribution changes due to staff change. • The Building Inspector Revolving Fund will offset budget by \$8,837. • Telephone decrease due to one service being eliminated. • Ordinance Updates increased based on contract.
<u>Acct 4193</u> <u>Agricultural Commission</u> Budget - \$600 Decrease of 65% or \$1,100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select Board voted to reduce budget to \$600. • Agricultural Commission has a separate revolving fund that can be utilized.
<u>Acct 4194</u> <u>Town Buildings</u> Budget - \$195,075 Decrease of 5% or \$9,965	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of \$2,989 for Custodian wages. • 116 North Main Street energy costs decreased an estimated 25% due to the insulation project. • Vehicle maintenance increased \$6,000 due to need for repairs. • Reduced Radio Maintenance line from \$2,000 to \$1 due to actuals.
<u>Acct 4195</u> <u>Cemeteries</u> Budget - \$3,000 No Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No change for 2024.
<u>4196</u> <u>Property Liability Insurance</u> Budget - \$58,863 Increase of 16% or \$8,157	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurance rate increased for 2024. • No payment holidays offered by Primex.
<u>Acct 4210</u> <u>Police Department</u> Budget - \$745,368 Decrease of 2% of \$15,080	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrol officer position eliminated for 2024 for a decrease of \$72,093. • New officers are being brought in with more experience at a higher rate of pay. • Overtime increased by \$2,000. • Police Dispatch increased 50% due to hardware and software upgrades at Merrimack County. This occurs approximately every 5 years.
<u>Acct 4215</u> <u>Ambulance</u> Budget - \$273,049 Increase of 9% or \$22,857	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase due to inflation, adjustments to pay scales, and costs to renovate/update the Torrent Station. • If PRS doesn't enter an agreement with the town to acquire Torrent, funding will be saved for future expansion or moving to larger location.
<u>Acct 4220</u> <u>Fire Department</u> Budget - \$203,519 Decrease of 2% or \$3,898	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnout Gear Maintenance reduced \$5,000 due to gear purchased with 2023 funds. • Radio Maintenance expenses reduced \$2,000
<u>Acct 4240</u> <u>Life Safety Officer</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase of \$100 for inspections in 2024. • Meetings, Training, and Travel reduced \$300.

Budget \$2,200 Increase of 5% or \$100.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office Supplies expense of \$100 eliminated.
<u>Acct 4290</u> <u>Emergency Management</u> Budget \$11,396 Decrease of 5% or \$550	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease in meetings for 2024.
<u>Acct 4312</u> <u>Highways & Streets</u> Budget - \$608,402 Increase of 5% or \$28,138	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage increases due to a 2023 CDL Market Rate Adjustment. Reduction in Overtime and Holiday Pay of \$5,000.
<u>Acct 4316</u> <u>Street Lighting</u> Budget - \$25,000 Decrease of 31% or \$11,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction based on 2023 actuals.
<u>Acct 4319</u> <u>Other Highways & Streets</u> Budget \$5,800 No change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No change for 2024
<u>Acct 4324</u> <u>Solid Waste Disposal</u> Budget - \$270,925 Increase of 5% or \$13,106	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage increases due to a 2023 CDL Market Rate Adjustment. Reduction of \$1,000 in tipping fees. Reduction of \$1,500 for Solid Waste Equipment maintenance by utilizing other available funds.
<u>Acct 4325</u> <u>Solid Waste Cleanup</u> Budget - \$15,250 Decrease of 10% or \$1,750	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landfill Covering and Maintenance reduced \$5,000 due to actuals over multiple years. Increase of \$3,250 for groundwater sampling costs.
<u>Acct 4329</u> <u>Other Sanitation</u> Budget - \$90,498 Increase of 0.1% or \$78	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased contribution for Sewer Agreement to \$88,498 as approved by Select Board following sewer study. Removed Engineering Services for \$2,500.
<u>Acct 4410</u> <u>Health Department</u> Budget - \$11,703 Increase of 29% or \$2,650	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage distribution changes due to staff change. Increase in meetings and travel of \$200. Eliminated office supply line for \$100.
<u>Acct 4441</u> <u>Human Services</u> Budget - \$75,429 Increase of 15% or \$10,016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welfare Assistance and Backpack Program increasing after utilizing remaining ARPA funds and donations over the last couple years. Backpack expense reduced by received donations.
<u>Acct 4520</u> <u>Parks & Recreation</u> Budget - \$34,624 Increase of 4% or \$1,416	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase due to wage increases.
<u>Acct 4550</u> <u>Public Library</u> Budget \$107,670	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3% increase in wages for 2024. Reduced utilities based on 2023 actuals.

Increase of 0.5% or \$514	
<u>Acct 4611</u> <u>Conservation Commission</u> Budget - \$500 Decrease of 77% or \$1,700	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select Board voted to reduce budget to \$500. • The Conservation Commission has two separate revolving funds (Conservation and Forest).
<u>Acct 4651</u> <u>Economic Development</u> Budget - \$3,750 Increase of 67% or \$1,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase for contract, postage, and supplies
<u>Acct 4700</u> <u>Debt Service</u> Budget \$77,748 Decrease of 20% or \$18,926	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Building Insulation loan paid off with 2023 funds.
<u>Conclusion</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024 Operating Budget: \$4,917,675 • 2024 Estimated Revenues: \$1,607,754 • 1.1% increase or \$54,407

Public Input: Chair Randall requested anyone who wished to speak to first sign in, second state their name for the record, and lastly direct all questions to the Budget Committee.

Chair Randall opened the Public Hearing at 6:28 p.m.

Ms. Loren Martin, resident of 225 Water Street, had several questions. She asked if the Committee had reviewed the Facilities Department budget. She stated there was an increase of \$6,000 in 4194505 Vehicle Maintenance, for the Facilities Director who works 3 days a week. She said there is a separate vehicle for our Building Inspector who works 2 days a week. She wondered why they couldn't share one vehicle. Selectwoman Carey said they are used for two separate purposes. One is a used 2005 single cab pickup truck purchased from the Penacook-Boscawen Water Precinct, and the other is a 2009 7 passenger SUV purchased through the Building Inspector revolving fund, which is fully funded by permit fees and has no burden upon the taxpayers. The truck is used for working on the facilities and to buy supplies/materials when needed, and the SUV is used for inspections, conferences, trainings, etc. At last week's meeting a question was raised about what 4155571 Meetings and Travel was used for. The answer to the question was this line was mainly for mileage reimbursement for all staff. Ms. Martin wondered why every department has a line item for meetings and travel. The majority of 4155571 goes to the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's office for bank runs. The Town Clerk/Tax Collector's office is reimbursed from the Executive budget because they bank for the whole municipality. Ms. Martin believed this was misleading. Ms. Martin said at the 1/25/24 meeting, Mr. Laliberte suggested prioritizing expenses in the Capital Improvement Plan, and Ms. Martin agreed that this would be the best approach. She said the Public Works building is at the top of that list. The Public Works Building Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) had approximately \$305,000. Ms. Martin suggested scratching everything off the proposed contributions to Capital Reserves on the warrant and putting \$400,000-\$500,000 towards the Public Works Building. Doing so could mean Public Works Director Hollins could have a new building in 2025. She said the town should focus on priority projects. She believed many of the proposed CRFs should be part of the annual budget. She thought the budget could have a 0%

78 increase if looked at a little closer. She would be happy to share her other suggestions with whoever
79 would like to hear them.
80

81 Mr. Ray Fisher, resident of 200 Water Street, asked why the Fire Department needs a command
82 vehicle. He asked why the Fire Chief is getting a raise. Selectwoman Carey said all employees get
83 a 2.9% step increase every year. As for the command vehicle, she said Fire Chief Kenney needs a
84 properly marked vehicle to get through town during construction to respond to calls. Mr. Fisher
85 said if all the other firefighters use their personal vehicles to respond to calls, why can't Chief
86 Kenney. Selectwoman Carey said a command vehicle for the Fire Department has been a topic of
87 discussion for a long time, which originated from Mr. Fisher himself in the 1990s. Luckily, there
88 was a retired police vehicle to utilize instead of using tax dollars to purchase a new vehicle. The
89 Fire Chief needs to be accommodated and Primex advised this was the best practice. Select Board
90 Chair Burdick said Fire Chief Kenney had removed the warrant article for \$10,000 to establish a
91 CRF at the previous meeting. He will continue to use the retired police cruisers in the future so
92 that no financial burden will be upon the taxpayers. Mr. Fisher commented on *Warrant Article 14*
93 – *“To see if the Town will vote to authorize that 0% of the Land Use Change Tax(LUCT) Collected*
94 *pursuant to RSA 79-A:25 to be deposited into the existing Conservation Fund in accordance with*
95 *RSA 36-A:5, III, as authorized by RSA 79-A:25, II and return all funds collected to the general*
96 *fund”*. He stated that landowners should not be allowed to post their land if it is in Current Use.
97 He said he was opposed to Warrant Article 14.
98

99 Ms. Martin explained that Warrant Article 14 has nothing to do with Current Use land. Landowners
100 have every right to post their land. Currently when land comes out of Current Use a Land Use
101 Change Tax (LUCT) is assessed and 100% of those funds go into the Conservation Fund. She said
102 a good portion of our land is generating little to no income, due to 2 town forests, conservation
103 easements, Current Use land, and a proposed 3rd town forest. She looked back through the history
104 of Conservation receiving the LUCT, beginning at 0% to 50%, then 50% to 100%, and one of the
105 arguments was the LUCT going to Conservation would be to help equally offset the development.
106 But she found that only development in recent years was resulting in such large amount of LUCT
107 deposits into the Conservation fund.
108

109 Ms. Kearsten O'Brien, resident of 3 Forest Lane, said because the Select Board doesn't have a
110 plan to fill the vacant Coordinator position for Parks & Rec, she doesn't feel comfortable voting
111 in a CRF when there is no one to take the position. Selectwoman Carey said there is currently a
112 plan in place thanks to Mr. Charlie Niebling. He is working on securing a Parks Grant for
113 Boscawen Park. The estimated \$200,000 project would include expanding the facility to
114 accommodate more children, fencing, a stone wall, etc. Ms. O'Brien suggested making the CRFs
115 individual warrant articles to make things less confusing for voters.
116

117 Mr. Tillman said he was disappointed to see \$3600 taken out of the Backpack Program. Donations
118 should be in addition to the budget not in place of. With the current economy and the rising cost
119 of goods, the Backpack program will be needed now more than ever. He believed it was a mistake
120 to reduce that budget.
121

122 **Chair Randall closed the Public Hearing at 6:57 p.m.**
123

124 **New Business:**

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126 **Committee Discussion:**

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128 **4194505 Vehicle Maintenance** – Mr. Laliberte would like to discuss the Facilities Director
129 vehicle. He asked if the Building Inspector (BI) and Facilities Director work on different days.
130 Selectwoman Carey said there is some crossover, and the Planning and Community Development
131 department works every day and utilizes the BI vehicle. PCD Director Easler said the BI vehicle
132 is fully funded by the BI revolving fund. Any maintenance for that vehicle comes out of that fund.
133 The reason the SUV was purchased for the BI was because it would be less expensive than paying
134 for mileage reimbursement. The BI vehicle is available to all employees if the BI is not using it.
135 Mr. Crawford asked what the Facilities Director uses the pickup truck to transport. Facilities
136 Director Moore said supplies for the facilities, paper goods, furniture, dump runs, etc. The police
137 department also uses it on occasion. Mr. Crawford asked if the vehicle got the needed repairs,
138 would we get another 3-5 years out of it. Facilities Director Moore said he hoped so but couldn't
139 say for sure. To replace the truck would be around \$30,000. It would be more cost effective to
140 repair the current vehicle. Public Works Director Hollins may have the potential to pass a truck.
141 The Facilities Department truck has gone from the Penacook-Boscawen Water Precinct to
142 Emergency Management and finally to the Facilities Department. The truck is just a bench seat
143 with minimal passenger capacity and the BI vehicle can transport many more employees.
144

145 **4155120 Health Insurance (Retirees)** – Mr. Laliberte would like the SB to consider removing the
146 family plan instead of the single plan which would be a difference of approximately \$16,000 from
147 4155120. He felt as though this was an insurance fund versus what is really needed. Select Board
148 Chair Burdick said the general idea was it was easier to come up with a single plan from other
149 budgets if needed. Selectwoman Carey said the last two years the budget has been very tight. She
150 is a little nervous about this year's budget and wouldn't be comfortable cutting the family plan.
151 Selectwoman Carey suggested Mr. Laliberte look back at the years prior to 2020 to get a more
152 accurate depiction of the budget. The town received a lot of funding that was not normal during
153 the pandemic. Town Clerk Hoyt noted that there are 3 vacant positions currently and the additional
154 family plan could be needed at any time.
155

156 **4215 Ambulance** – Mr. Crawford noted that if Penacook Rescue Squad (PRS) doesn't buy Torrent
157 Station this year, they would take this budget and put it into an account to expand or repair the
158 building in the future. Mr. Brechtel said this was in the town's hands as PRS has done everything
159 necessary on their end up to this point. Town Administrator Phelps said this was at a standstill
160 until a document could be drafted so both parties can work with the same lawyer. Mr. Crawford
161 asked what the odds were that this would be completed before Town Meeting. Town Administrator
162 Phelps said the chances were good. The SB required PRS to have a budget prior to coming to an
163 agreement. Mr. Brechtel said the town will not be able to build a facility to house PRS. For PRS
164 to build a facility, a long-term agreement must be in place. As of now, PRS does not have a long-
165 term agreement with any of the 3 towns that they service. Mr. Crawford asked if the Fire
166 Department wanted to add an ambulance in the future. Fire Chief Kenney does not have any
167 interest in running an ambulance system. He said it would add approximately another \$500,000 to
168 his budget. He said PRS is the best deal Boscawen can get. Mr. Brechtel said they used to charge
169 solely for uninsured trips, and when those outweighed payroll it became a problem. The town now

pays payroll. PRS replaces the ambulance, equipment, building maintenance, etc. Discussion ensued.

Capital Reserves – Mr. Laliberte believed the 2024 Budget should be higher and the Capital Reserves should be lower. He said if the project is a year-to-year expense it should be in the budget. Police Chief Killary explained if he asks for \$65,000 for a cruiser but only uses for \$60,000 the remaining \$5k can earn interest and the next year he can ask for that much less. This has a better outcome for the town and less of an impact on off years. Chair Randall said he looks at the Capital Reserve Funds as a savings account. He feels that the Select Board strives to do their best to cover all the bases. Select Board Chair Burdick said the last few discussions about the CRFs have been eye opening. They will strive to prioritize projects in the future.

Warrant Article Recommendations:

Article 12 To Approve the 2024 Operating Budget for \$4,917,675 – Ms. Daneau asked for clarity on Mr. Laliberte’s proposal. Mr. Laliberte said he would like to see some of the proposed CRFs go into the Operating Budget. **Mr. Tillman motion to accept Article 12 as presented. Seconded by Ms. Daneau. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed by a 5-0 vote.**

Article 13 Contribute to Capital Reserves Previously Established for \$585,000 – Mr. Tillman motioned to accept Article 13 as presented. Seconded by Ms. Daneau. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed by a 5-0 vote.

Article 19 To Establish Contingency Fund for \$30,000 – Mr. Tillman motioned to accept Article 19 as presented. Seconded by Ms. Daneau. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed by a 5-0 vote.

Article 20 Contribute to Court Appointed Special Advocates for \$500 – Mr. Crawford motioned to accept Article 20 as presented. Seconded by Mr. Tillman. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed by a 5-0 vote.

Article 21 Contribute to the American Red Cross for \$100 – Mr. Tillman motioned to accept Article 21 as presented. Seconded by Mr. Crawford. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed by a 5-0 vote.

Article 22 Contribute to the Community Action Program for \$7,600 – Mr. Tillman motioned to accept Article 22 as presented. Seconded by Ms. Daneau. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed by a 5-0 vote.

Article 23 Contribute to the Boscawen Historical Society for \$7,500 – Mr. Tillman motioned to accept Article 23 as presented. Seconded by Mr. Crawford. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed by a 5-0 vote.

Next Meeting: TBD

215 **Mr. Tillman motioned to adjourn at 7:50 p.m. Seconded by Ms. Daneau. All in favor. None**
216 **opposed.**
217
218 *Respectfully submitted by Kara Gallagher.*

DRAFT