

**Town of Boscawen
Advisory Budget Committee Public Meeting
Boscawen Municipal Facility
January 18, 2024, at 6:00 PM**

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

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, Dean Hollins – Public Works Director, Gary Moore – Facilities Director, Nicole Hoyt – Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Tim Kenney – Fire Chief, Bonny John – Library Director, Shawn Brechtel – Penacook Rescue Squad & Kara Gallagher – Recording Secretary

Town Administrator Phelps opened the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

Roll call completed by Recording Secretary Gallagher.

Nomination of Chair:

Mr. Tillman motioned to nominate Dale Randall as Chair. Seconded by Ms. Daneau. All in favor. None opposed.

Minutes:

Mr. Tillman requested two changes be made to the February 23, 2023 minutes. On line 68: Change “be” to “we”. Insert the word “to” between “had” and “cut”.

Mr. Tillman motioned to approve the February 23, 2023, minutes as amended. Seconded by Ms. Daneau. All in favor. None opposed. Two abstentions by Mr. Crawford and Mr. Laliberte.

New Business:

2024 Budgets by Department: Recording Secretary Gallagher read the following Public Notice: There will be a public meeting on the proposed 2024 Budget on Thursday, January 18, 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 meeting via Go-To-Meeting. Please note: No public comment will be taken through the Go-To-Meeting platform.

Select Board Chair Burdick reviewed the notable changes to the 2024 Budget as listed below:

Acct #/Name	2024 Budget	Notable Changes for 2024 <i>3% COLA, Adoption of Wage Schedule 2.9% step increase or 5% longevity on fifth year intervals</i>
4130 Executive	\$195,380 – Decrease of 2% or \$4,587	The Recording Secretary line has been reduced to reflect minutes that will be done in house for the Trustee of the Trust Funds. The Assistant to the Administrator position and associated budget have been eliminated. Contractual computer maintenance has been reduced to reflect our new contracted total. Equipment maintenance has increased because printer maintenance costs were moved to this line from Contracted Services & Agreements. Office Supplies, Postage, and Advertising and Public Notices were adjusted per 2023 actuals.
4140 Town Clerk/Elections	\$120,426 - Increase of 18% or \$18,369	Labor distribution changes based on staff changes. Increase in Moderator & Supervisors stipends, Equipment and Election costs due to 4 elections in 2024.
4150 Financial Administration	\$106,280 - Increase of 5% or \$5,370	New audit contract agreement (Obtained new vendor for audit, \$2,793 more than 2023 but \$2,515 less than previous auditors proposed cost for 2024). Includes addition of finance office supplies line.
4151 Tax Collector	\$83,374 - Increase of 5% or \$4,023	Labor distribution changes based on staff changes.
4152 Assessing	\$93,261 - Decrease of 0.2% or \$206	Staff change caused lower salary. Software saw a slight increase. Net change was slight decrease in assessing budget.
4153 Legal Expenses	\$50,000 – No Change	New Procedure for Utilization of Town Counsel for 2024 to work to stay within budget.
4155 Personnel Administration	\$1,064,751 - Increase of 1% or \$8,473	Retiree health insurance rate increased. Department Heads reviewed insurance plans and made a plan switch. Estimated that insurance line under last year's plan would have increased \$93,190. Dental increased rates 4.7%. Primex insurance rates increased. NHRS reflects full year of lower NHRS rates, police officer position that was removed decreased NRHS. Short-Term Disability rates increased; Long-Term Disability costs decreased.
4191 Planning & Community Development	\$144,336 - Increase of 7% or \$8,904	Salary labor distribution changes due to staff change. Building Inspection account to offset increase in this budget by \$8,837. Net change after distribution to be an increase of \$67. Telephone expenses decreased due to one service being eliminated, Ordinance Updates increased based on contract.

4193 Agricultural Commission	\$600 – Decrease of \$1,100 or 65%	Select Board voted to reduce budget to \$600. Agricultural Commission has a separate revolving fund for their revenues and expenses that can be utilized.
4194 Town Buildings	\$197,074 – Decrease of 4% or \$7,966	This budget decreased because energy costs decreased and consumption of energy was reduced an estimated 25% due to the insulation project.
4195 Cemeteries	\$3,000 - No Change	-
4196 Property Liability Insurance	\$58,863 - Increase of \$8,157 or 16%	Rates increased for 2024. No payment holidays for 2024.
4210 Police Department	\$745,368 – Decrease of 2% of \$15,080	Patrol officer position eliminated for 2024. New hires coming in with more experience at a higher rate of pay. Police Dispatch went up 50% due to hardware and software upgrades at Merrimack County, these upgrades are anticipated once every five years.
4215 Ambulance	\$273,049 - Increase of \$22,857 or 9%	Increase due to continued economic inflation affecting daily operating costs, adjustments to our pay scales including COLA as well as costs to renovate/update the additional space at the Torrent Fire Station.
4220 Fire Department	\$203,519 – Decrease of \$3,898 or 2%	Budget reduced due to the purchase of additional turnout gear in 2023 with remaining funds. Radio expenses decreased due to change in need.
4240 Life Safety Officer	\$2,200 - Increase of 5% or \$100.00	Increase due to expectation of more inspections needed.
4290 Emergency Management	\$11,396- Decrease of 5% or \$550	Decrease in meetings for 2024.
4312 Highways & Streets	\$608,402 - Increase of 5% or \$28,138	Increase in salaries for a 2023 CDL Market Rate Adjustment. Reduction of Overtime and Holiday Pay \$5,000.
4316 Street Lighting	\$25,000 - Decrease of 31% or \$11,000	Reduced based on actuals due to energy savings.
4319 Other Highways & Streets	\$5,800 - No change	-
4324 Solid Waste Disposal	\$270,925 - Increase of 5% or \$13,106	Increase in salaries for a 2023 CDL Market Rate Adjustment. Reduction of Solid Waste Maintenance, by utilizing other funds.
4325 Solid Waste Cleanup	\$15,250- Decrease of 10% or \$1,750	Removed Landfill Covering and Maintenance due to actuals over the past few years. Increased costs in groundwater sampling.
4329 Other Sanitation	\$90,498 - Increase of 0.1% or \$78	Increased contribution for Sewer Agreement as approved by Select Board following a sewer study. Removed engineering services as it will get lumped into the Sewer project.

4410 Health Department	\$11,703 - Increase of 29% or \$2,650	Staff change caused labor distribution to shift from 5% to 10%. Staff total salary reflects a decrease from previous employee.
4441 Human Services Administration	\$79,029 - Increase of 21% or \$13,616	The Welfare Assistance and Backpack Program budget is increasing after utilizing ARPA funds and donations over the last couple years.
4520 Parks & Recreation	\$34,624 - Increase of 4% or \$1,416	Increase attributable to salary increases.
4550 Public Library	\$107,670 - Increase of 0.5% or \$514	Based on 2023 actuals for salaries and 3% increase for 2024. Reduced utilities based on actuals.
4611 Conservation Commission	\$500 – Decrease of 77% or \$1,700	Select Board voted to reduce budget to a total of \$500 through one administration line. Conservation has two separate revolving funds (Conservation and Forest).
4651 Economic Development	\$3,750 – Increase of 67% or \$1,500	Increase based on contract amount.
4700 Debt Service	\$77,748 - Decrease of 20% or \$18,926	Paid off insulation loan with 2023 funds. 2024 interest less 2020 refunding in the amount of \$5,824.

Mr. Tillman noted one correction to **4290 Emergency Management**: The total decrease should be \$550. Mr. Tillman requested consistency on all budgets.

4130 Executive: Mr. Laliberte had one question about 4130625-Postage. He asked what is being mailed out. Town Administrator Phelps answered certified mailers, public notices, accounts payable, etc. There are many documents that are required to be mailed out in all departments. Mr. Crawford had one question about 4130111-Select Board salaries. He suggested the stipends be decreased by \$200 each. Mr. Tillman, Chair Randall, and Mr. Laliberte disagreed. Ms. Daneau said our Board members' stipends are less than other municipalities. Chair Randall had one question about 4130338-Equipment Maintenance. The budget increased from \$513.00 in 2023 to \$2879.00 in 2024. Town Administrator Phelps said the printer maintenance agreements were previously separated into two different lines and have now been combined into one.

4140 Town Clerk/Elections: Ms. Daneau had one question about 4140801-TC Vital Records Preservation and 4140802-Town Historian Supplies. She asked why there was only \$1 in each line. Town Clerk Hoyt said \$1 holds the line open. Mr. Crawford asked about the suggestion about adding a donation tab to the website and if that idea had gone away. Town Clerk Hoyt said the cost is still in the budget. Town Clerk Hoyt said half is under the welfare budget and the other half is in 4140332-TC Equipment, Contracts and Supplies. She said that would be about \$600 for the year. Mr. Tillman asked if Boscawen had 2 elections last year. Town Clerk Hoyt said there was only 1. Mr. Tillman asked why 4140191-Moderator & Supervisors was being raised \$4000. TC Hoyt noted that all election officials are paid out of that line. Mr. Laliberte said there will be 4 elections in 2024 and assumed that caused the increase. Town Clerk Hoyt agreed and said Primary Elections are more expensive due to double the number of workers.

4151 Tax Collector: Ms. Daneau had one question about 3186-Payment in Lieu of Taxes. She asked why the 2023 actuals were so high. Finance Director Merrill said one of the PILOT agreements the town has is with Briar Hydro which is based on the water that goes over the dam. She believed having a rainy year plus a review of the agreement caused the increase.

4155 Personnel Administration: Mr. Laliberte had one question about 4155120-Health Insurance for Retirees/Other. He asked why the budget was so much higher than the actual amount spent in 2023, as well as the budget also being so high for 2024. Finance Director Merrill said the town budgets for an additional family plan and single plan in case there are any midyear changes. The additional plans were not utilized in 2023. Mr. Tillman asked if Finance Director Merrill could check if the budget was close to fully spent in previous years. Chair Randall asked if this line included Medicare for Retirees. Finance Director Merrill said once a Retiree reaches a certain age they change to Medicare as a primary plan and the town insurance is supplemental. Chair Randall asked if there were many Retirees under the age of 65. Town Administrator Phelps said most are over 65. The benefit of insurance coverage following retirement from the town was eliminated in 2019, to decrease the future liability to the town. Next year the plans for retirees should go down. Mr. Laliberte had one question about 4155124-Health Reimbursement Account. He asked if this was tied to the new insurance plan because the lines for 2023 were blank. Finance Director Merrill said this was an incentive presented to assist employees with the new plan and to pay a portion of their deductibles. This will be phased out within 2 years. Ms. Daneau had a question about 4155222-Unemployment Insurance. She asked if this is what the town pays Primex. Finance Director Merrill said yes. Ms. Merrill also noted that there were no payment holidays offered by Primex for 2024.

4191 Planning & Community Development: Ms. Daneau inquired about 4191551-LU Telephone. Town Administrator Phelps said one line was removed. Mr. Crawford asked why the 4191611-Energy Committee budget doubled. PCD Director Easler said to accommodate for mailings and public notices associated with their projects. Boscawen Community Power will be on the warrant for 2024. There was a typo under 4415-Health Agencies. 100% should be 0%. Mr. Laliberte asked what the percentage of salaries and benefits makes up the total budget. Finance Director Merrill will research further and report back.

4651 Economic Development: Mr. Tillman asked why 4651000-Economic Development Committee had such a large increase. PCD Director Easler said that \$3,000 is a contracted amount with Central NH Regional Planning Commission, and she encumbered \$750. There was no budget after the contract if they wanted to send any mailings out to the public.

4194 Town Buildings: Mr. Crawford asked if 4194504-Vehicle Maintenance had enough money to fix the truck. Facilities Director Moore has not investigated the cost further than one quote several months ago and needs to get other quotes. It's a 2005 truck with low mileage, and it would be much more expensive to buy a newer used truck. Chair Randall asked what the vehicle is used for. Facilities Director Moore uses it to check on the buildings, travel to Concord to get building supplies, flag maintenance, etc.

4210 Police Department: Mr. Laliberte asked about the removal of the 4210111-Police Lieutenant. Police Chief Killary decided to remove a position to rebuild the department for this year. Mr. Laliberte asked if Police Chief Killary is doing both positions. Police Chief Killary said some of the duties are spread out and he will delegate the rest as time goes on. Chair Randall said it seemed like Police Chief Killary used that money to spread around the department and come out flat. Police Chief Killary explained the officers that left in 2023 were replaced with more experienced people which resulted in salary increases. Mr. Crawford asked if more overtime was worked last year being down officers. Police Chief Killary said no because they could not cover those shifts with so few officers. Police Chief Killary said the reason he added \$2000 was for more training and added patrols.

4215 Ambulance: Mr. Crawford asked if Penacook Rescue was taking Torrent Station. SB Chair Burdick said there was no official answer at this point. Chair Randall asked if there was any money put aside for Torrent in the budget. SB Chair Burdick said yes. Mr. Brechtel said the building needs a lot of work and it cannot hold another ambulance. It potentially could be storage space or office space and would solidify Penacook Rescue's existence in the town.

4220 Fire Department: Mr. Crawford asked if the command vehicle was considered a fire truck. Fire Chief Kenney said no, it would not be a fire apparatus, it would have its own designation. To replace that vehicle in the future would cost thousands of dollars, so his plan was to put money away in the CRF to save for the future. Mr. Laliberte asked one question about 4220700-FD Equipment. He asked how this differs from FD Safety Equipment. Fire Chief Kenney said FD Equipment maintenance is in this budget, and new FD Safety Equipment is a Capital Reserve Fund. Mr. Crawford asked if 4220200-FD Administration was under budgeted or if the 2023 actuals were higher because of a spike. Fire Chief Kenney replied it was due to purchasing unexpected office supplies such as printer cartridges. Mr. Crawford asked about 4220110-FD Staff Wages, and why there was a large gap between the budget and actual. Fire Chief Kenney said they cannot determine how many calls will occur in any given year and having a cushion also allows to staff for extreme weather events or a fire watch.

4312 Highways & Streets: Chair Randall asked about the increases in the General Laborer positions. Public Works Director Hollins explained he had struggled to fill some of the positions because a CDL was required. The increase in salaries accounted for a 2023 CDL Market Rate Adjustment. Mr. Laliberte asked why the 4312610-HW Road Oil and 4312635-HW Gasoline lines did not change when only a small portion of each was spent in 2023. Public Works Director Hollins explained that he encumbered money that then went to paving. 2023 was very rainy and a lot of the planned paving never happened. Road Oil is also used for crack sealing and the PW department did not do any crack sealing because of the rain. The gas pumps at the shop must be inspected annually and state inspected every 3 years. The state would like a new gas station to be built at the public works building. Every year, Public Works Director Hollins tries to repair what he can to prevent that. The budgets are left as is to account for these issues as well as the unknown price of gas and oil.

4441 Human Services Administration: Mr. Tillman asked if \$9,400 was enough for the 4442810-Backpack Program. Overseer of Welfare Hoyt said it was an estimate based off 2023. There has been food donated monthly. Mr. Laliberte said there was a large gap between the 2023 budget, 2023 actual and 2024 budget for 4442809-Welfare Assistance. He asked what welfare assistance does and why there was such a large increase. Overseer of Welfare Hoyt said welfare assistance is any assistance for homeless, rent, fuel, food, etc. Prior Welfare Administrator, Sarah Gerlack, assisted in securing a \$16,000 grant in 2023, as well as ARPA funds. It is hard to know if increases will happen because rates are high due to housing shortage.

4520 Parks & Recreation: Mr. Laliberte asked if 3406.1-P&R Donations would help to offset the Park Program expenses. Finance Director Merrill explained the donations were used to aid in funding events such as Movie Night and the Police vs Fire Softball game.

4100 Old Home Day: Bingo is coming back for 2024. It hasn't been done since pre-covid. OHD expends their own funds to give the senior population activities to look forward to.

2024 Warrant:

#11. To Approve the 2024 Operating Budget: Mr. Crawford asked about the difference between the \$4,933,766 noted on the warrant and the amount shown for tax impact. It was clarified that tax impact is calculated differently and the amount shown on the warrant is the correct budget. Chair Randall said he went through the administrative office breakdown by department and was able to find every employee's line that aligned with their income except for Kara Gallagher-Building Inspection. He could not find a line that supported an amount of money. Town Administrator Phelps said that portion of her salary is reimbursed by an interfund and would not be shown within the budget. Finance Director Merrill said the full expense was shown under PCD Coordinator in the PCD budget, and 10% of that amount will show up in the income line as offsetting revenue. Mr. Tillman asked why the SB did not recommend the operating budget. SB Chair Burdick said they wanted to have a little back and forth with the Budget Committee before giving full approval.

#12. Contributions to Capital Reserves Previously Established: Mr. Tillman was glad to see the increase and felt money needs to be put away for the future. Mr. Tillman asked why there was a \$51,000 increase for municipal buildings. Facilities Director Moore explained he has been trying to save for future projects. Town Hall repair, paving, a new boiler, a new roof at the old PD, storage at Torrent, etc. are all examples of potential projects. A lot of the work has been deferred over the years. Mr. Laliberte said he struggled with the Capital Reserves and felt as though money was being placed in a bunch savings accounts with no deadlines. He believed cruisers, the PW building & FD building should be included in the budget or as separate warrant articles instead of a CIP item. Discussion ensued. Selectwoman Carey said another purpose of a CRF is to apply for grants. Mr. Crawford asked about the \$15,000 Townwide Safety for King Street Improvements. He asked if this CRF was for a crosswalk and crossing light at Depot Street only. SB Chair Burdick said because the state will only touch the road itself, the town must pay for the crosswalk and have

funds available. The town has no say in what the state requires here. If the town hopes to qualify for any further grants or funding for upgrades to sidewalks, signage, beautifying the area, etc., the town must have funds available.

#23. Plan to Sell Torrent Station: The building had a Market Analysis and was found to be worth approximately \$333,000. No one can figure out the front and back of the building. The estimate to renovate Torrent Station would be around three times what it's worth. Mr. Crawford asked if Penacook Rescue Squad leases the building from the town. Mr. Brechtel said they occupy and maintain the section they use per an agreement with the town.

Other Business: Mr. Laliberte asked for feedback on a petitioned warrant article for holding Town elections and the meeting on two different days. According to NH RSA 39:2-a Optional Provisions, 25 signatures could allow a petitioned warrant article requiring the town to hold two different meetings: the ballot portion from 7am-7pm on one day, and the business portion would be required to be on a different day. He said this would make Town Meeting more accessible to residents. This situation happened at the 2023 Town Meeting when the days were split between a Tuesday and a Saturday. There was a larger turnout than usual. Discussion ensued.

Next Meeting: January 25, 2024, after 6:00 p.m. at the Boscawen Municipal Facility.

Ms. Daneau will not be able to attend the next meeting.

Mr. Tillman motioned to adjourn at 8:35 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Laliberte. All in favor. None opposed.

Respectfully submitted by Kara Gallagher