

**OSSIPEE BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
November 16, 2022**

Minutes summarized by Laura Nash, Budget Committee Recording Secretary, amendments are noted by ***bold/italic*** type.

Call to Order: Joe Goss called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance – was recited by all attendees.

Attendance by Roll Call: – Joe Goss, Donna Gridley, Roland Millette, Dallas Emery, Brian Keyes, Lynn Parker, Susan McGuire – Doyle, Jonathan Smith (Selectmen's Rep.), Matt Sawyer Jr (Town Administrator), and Andrea Picard (Finance Director) and TJ Eldridge, (PW Director)

Absent: Donna Sargent, and Jennifer Brown,

Members: Cameron Quigley has been replaced by Susan McGuire - Doyle, as the COFD Representative

Regular Meeting

Meeting Minutes: Committee reviewed the meeting minutes of November 3, 2022.

A **Motion** by Emery to approve the meeting minutes of November 3, 2022, as submitted. Millette seconded. No discussion. All others voted in favor. Joe Goss and Jonathan Smith abstained. **Motion passed.**

2023 Proposed Budgets:

- **Fire Precinct – Center Ossipee** - proposed 2023 operating budget of \$638,950.00 and with Warrant Articles = \$745,950.00

Joe Deighan, COFD Commissioner presented the COFD operating budget request which included increases for heat, electric, snow removal, cell phones, New ESO software, fire truck fuel, and Fire Chief's Salary. The Water & Sewer line item is decreased by \$300.00 over last year's price. All other line items are level funded. Total proposed operating budget is \$638,950.00 which is an increase of \$47,552.00. There is a proposed Warrant Articles for the Third Year Truck Payment of \$87,000.00, and an Article for LED Lighting for the Garage and Offices of \$35,000.00 with (\$15,000 from the Fund Balance) leaving the remaining balance of \$20,000.00 from taxation. The total proposed budget for COFD including warrant articles is \$745,950.00, which is an increase of \$12,979.00.

Parker inquire to the number of active members, number of calls, and number of years remaining on the truck payments. Joe Deighan and Chief Dana Cullen responded to 30 active members, approximately 570 calls which is a yearly increase between 17% – 20%, and the truck loan was \$87,000.00 for 7 years and their on the third year and the final year will include the \$87,000.00 plus the remaining balance of approximately \$100,000.00 to come from the Capital Reserve Fund.

Gridley questioned the break down of the 30 active members. Chief Cullen explained the 30 members includes part-time fire fighters, but they have 9 members that are fully qualified trained Fire Fighter's. In order to be fully qualified firefighter, they need to be EMT, and Firefighter trained to be on staff.

Discussion ensued over the new EOS software verses the current Firehouse software and why each department has their own software instead of the same software program. Basically, each department utilizes

their software's for different aspects and don't want to deviate from that at this point for various reasons including cost, retention of data but the software is department specific. Emery commented he does not like any of the increases in the budget. Keyes inquired to the audit process but also would recommend the EOS software. Joe Deighan stated they have an auditor, who does the state required audit which is the MS – 60 and they have CPA accounting firm, who does the payroll and watches over the books. They also do the monetary side of the state forms for accuracy. They feel it's a good check and balance system and only two people have authority to sign checks. Keyes explained the differences between each of the software's.

Goss questioned if they had raised money for the replacement of the water lines last year. Joe Deighan explained he was just showing what was requested last year.

Jonathan Smith inquire if they shop around for electric rates on the supply side. Joe Deighan commented they do not. Jonathan Smith informed them that they should because they could save themselves some money. M. Sawyer suggested looking into Constellation, who are primarily for municipalities. Smith inquired if they shop around for their insurance rate. Deighan reported they can not they have to go with whoever the state says but it does include staff and facility. Smith asked if they got any bids for the LED lighting. Deighan they haven't but this was just a quick quote to have a figure for the warrant article, but they are going to put it out to bid. Smith clarified that the auditor is a third-party in-house auditor. Deighan confirmed but added that they have the CPA all year round who does payroll and accounts payable is done in house.

Goss thanked them and conveyed the committee will take the request under advisement.

- **Fire Precinct – Ossipee Corner Light & Power** - presents requesting funding of \$537,990.00

Chief Adam Riley presented the OCL&P operating budget request which included increases for Legal Expenses – Audit because they switched back to Plodzik & Sanderson, P.A., heat, electric, snow removal, building insurance, vehicle insurance, general liability, and fire truck fuel. The line item for Fire Department training was decreased by \$400.00 over last year's price. All other line items are level funded. The proposed Warrant Articles for Fire Apparatus in the amount of \$100,000.00, and an Article for Building Fund (Warrant Article) (Trust) in the amount of \$50,000.00. The total proposed budget for OCL&P including warrant articles is \$537,990.00, which is an increase of \$6,950.00 or 1.36%.

Emery questioned the balance of \$17,000.00 under the insurance line item. Chief Riley and Parker explained when the budget was created the insurance bill had not come in. It has since come in and has been expensed.

Goss inquired to the number of active members, and number of calls. Chief Riley responded to 15 active members, and approximately 450 calls so far this year.

Goss thanked them and conveyed the committee will take the request under advisement.

- **Fire Precinct – West Ossipee** - presents requesting funding of \$537,990.00

Chief Carl Huddleston presents requesting funding of \$537,990.00 which includes the operating budget in the amount of \$387,990.00 and warrant articles in the amount of \$150,000.00.

Goss noted that Chief Huddleston had presented last week because someone gave him the wrong date to appear before the committee.

- **Selectmen's Report:** Jonathan Smith explained that Main Street came before the Budget Committee for funding to pay the utilizes but the Selectmen have voted to take over paying the utilizes so they won't be coming in as an outside agency. It's a town building with other town officials working out of the building, the internet nor the password would not be shared, so there should be no funding for Main Street going forward.

With the restructuring of the Transfer Station, they stopped accepting plastics. Smith read an article by Green Peace. But confirmed they are no longer accepting plastics.

Smith stated the **Tax Rates** were set as follows:

Town rate decreased by \$0.10

County rate decreased by \$0.10

School rate increased by \$0.71

Statewide Education Property Tax (known as SWEPT) decreased by \$0.46

Overall Tax Rate increased by \$0.05

Center Ossipee Fire Precinct increased by \$0.23

Ossipee Corner Light & Power increased by \$0.13

West Ossipee Fire Precinct decreased by \$0.02

Overall increase of \$0.34

The Unassigned Fund Balance is hovering around \$250,000.00 which is above the threshold of 11%.

Smith reported that the Education Freedom Account is the cause for the education portion of the taxes going up. Smith clarified that the Education Freedom Account does not increase your taxes, it gives the parents the choice to take state education money of about \$4,600.00 with them to a private school, home school to educate their child. But the other \$15,000.00 which is the local funds goes to the school district. Meaning the school district loses a kid and they still get \$15,000.00. So, if anything this should be reducing school tax not increasing it. Governor Wentworth Regional School District lost 84 students last year. Of the 84 students, 21 utilized the Education Freedom Account, so GWRS did not have 21 students to educate but they still received \$250,000.00 in revenue they did not have to expend on these students. But the tax rate still increased by \$0.71 per thousand.

- **2022 YTD - Expenditure Report:**

Matt Sawyer referred the committee to page 11 of the expenditures report to the 01-General Fund which show \$1,938,899.87 still available with a quarter of year remaining. Matt Sawyer noted they are trying to be fiscally conservative.

Emery commented he appreciates the effort and acknowledged that the T.A.N. was not used and that's saving the town a lot of money.

Goss noted that the Recreation department is down to 6.30% remaining for the year. Matt Sawyer stated they will probably go over this year, but participation is up by about 150% this year. They may go over a little, but they have cushion in other departments to offset and stay below the bottom line.

- **2022 YTD - Revenue Report:**

Matt Sawyer reported no real changes but there were two new House Bills passed this year. One was for Bridge and one for Highway. They do not get reported as regular revenue. They are meant for projects that weren't funded prior, but DRA does not allow you to put them in the revenues, but they may have some money available for that. Matt Sawyer went through the revenues with DRA to set the tax rate. Matt Sawyer noted the income from departments was pretty good, motor vehicle registration for the year may hit \$1,000,000.00 again this year. Deeded property auction from December 4th, last year along with this year's equaled \$130,000.00 in revenue.

Emery asked how much was made from timber sales. Matt Sawyer explained that was actually in 2021 and yielded approximately \$100,000.00.

- **Revenues:** proposed 2023 budget of \$3,003,330.00

Matt Sawyer most line items were carried over except for Sale of Municipal Properties which was decreased to \$75,000.00 due to lack of potential inventory. T. Eldridge is gathering old equipment to auction off. Water & Sewer have to offset exactly what their expenses are and are estimating \$250,000.00 for the Unassigned Fund Balance for next year.

Parker question that the town makes money off the cable. Matt Sawyer explained based on the franchise agreement the town makes approximately \$14,000.00. Jonathan Smith noted that their contract has expired, and they have been reaching out to Spectrum with no response back, So, they now have the Town Attorney involved in reaching out to spark negotiations with them.

Goss thanked them and conveyed the committee will take the request under advisement.

- **Warrant Articles:** proposed 2023 budget of \$10,000.00

BTLA (Board of Tax & Land Appeals): proposed 2023 budget of \$450,000.00

Matt Sawyer was contacted by a written complaint that the town had granted a tax exemption to the Masonic Lodge. But DRA laws and rules the Masonic Lodge does not qualify for a charitable exemption. Since then, the town has been in a political battle with them and the town assessor, who put forth a House Bill which passed and Jonathan Smith co-sponsored to put the assessing oversite back into the hands of experienced assessors and out of the DRA hands, who are not assessors. Jonathan Smith explained that the DRA would weaponize the assessors license in order to get what they wanted. Basically, telling the assessor either you do this, or we'll take your license. The Bill goes into effect in January. Matt Sawyer explained that the DRA is using the BTLA as their weapon. The town received a Court Order last week stating the town has to do a complete overhaul re-evaluation by re-measuring every single parcel in Ossipee including any expanded rules. The order has only been done about 6 time in the history of the state and is an EXTREME Overreach of power. They do have the Town Attorney fighting this all the way to the Supreme Court, but they have to plan on worse case scenario.

Matt Sawyer noted a normal evaluation was going to be around \$150,000.00 but their planning on \$450,000.00 and will need to determine where to get the remaining \$300,000.00. The offset would come from not doing any paving this year if the court order sticks. But if they win the case the \$300,000.00 will go back into the paving line item. Discussion ensued.

Make Govt Buildings Repairs/Improvement: proposed 2023 budget of \$20,000.00

Matt Sawyer reported the cupola on the Town Hall was leaking. The cupola has been removed and the opening capped pending a new cupola placement. Jonathan Smith stated the highway department will be doing the work because to hire a contractor it would cost more.

Add to Government Buildings ETF: proposed 2023 budget of \$20,000.00

Matt Sawyer reported this is the minimum amount that the Town has been contributing over the past several years and looking to level fund in the amount of \$20,000.00.

Paving: proposed 2023 budget of \$1.00

Matt Sawyer reported this was talked about in the BTLA Warrant Article.

Add to the Highway Equip CRF: proposed 2023 budget of \$200,000.00

Matt Sawyer reported that he and TJ Eldridge presented the 10-year plan of putting \$200,000.00 in the Capital Reserve Fund every year essentially we'll know what to expect for the tax payer. Matt Sawyer did state the plan can be redistributed if anyone needs to see it.

Grader Payment: proposed 2023 budget of \$57,000.00

Matt Sawyer reported there are two payments remaining.

Add to Invasive Species ETF: proposed 2023 budget of \$25,000.00

Matt Sawyer reported the \$25,000.00 is added to the trust fund every year to handle the milfoil and herbicide diving expenditures each year.

Add to Bridge Repair/Replace ETF: proposed 2023 budget of \$25,000.00

Matt Sawyer reported this is being level funded for this year.

Make the Water Bond Payment: proposed 2023 budget of \$58,000.00 (Last Payment)

Matt Sawyer reported this is the last payment.

Add to Benefit Pay ETF: proposed 2023 budget of \$15,000.00

Matt Sawyer reported this was severely depleted over the past two years with several long-term employees who left or retired and needs to be built back up.

Add to Solid Waste Disposal and Rec. ET: proposed 2023 budget of \$20,000.00

Matt Sawyer reported this is being level funded because at some point there will be a need for a new skid steer. It's constantly being worked on to keep it going.

Create Police Vehicle and Equipment ETF: proposed 2023 budget of \$50,000.00

Matt Sawyer reported they are hoping to create an ETF to build up the funds so when a cruiser is needed the funds are there and it's not going to the tax payers in a lump sum.

Create Recreation ETF: proposed 2023 budget of \$10,000.00

Matt Sawyer reported they have a ballfield that could use about \$500,000.00 in upgrades and improvements. Currently, there is nothing to start with so by setting up an Expendable Trust Fund money can be added, and repairs can be done over time without hitting the taxpayers with the funding all at once.

Upgrades to Whittier Covered Bridge approach and area: proposed 2023 budget of \$20,000.00

Matt Sawyer reported parts of the project that is not grant funded are putting fences back up for the landowners, add parking with some curbing, and some picnic tables to make this a recreation area and more of a destination spot.

Jonathan Smith commented that there may be an additional warrant article for approximately \$20,000.00 for security camera's at the WCB. Matt Sawyer reported their waiting on a quote for the security camera's because this bridge has so much value and has been quite the investment. If the quote for the camera's come in in time the \$20,000.00 will be added to the existing warrant article making it for \$40,000.00, instead of \$20,000.00. TJ Eldridge mentioned there may be a warrant article for approximately \$96,000.00 for a boxed culvert on the opposite side of the bridge.

Petition Warrant Articles:

Goss asked if any petition warrant articles have been submitted. Matt Sawyer reported none thus far. Goss asked who from the Selectmen are on the committee for the School's Out Program. TJ Eldridge said that Justin Chaffee the Recreation Director is the only one. Goss asked if Justin Chaffee has indicated what their ledger are going to be like this year. TJ Eldridge stated he has the report and presented it at the Selectmen's meeting. The total budget is \$245,581.51 and they're requesting \$45,000.00 from Ossipee.

Goss questioned of getting a bottom-line figure for a meeting on December 7, 2022 and any warrant articles so they can have final figures.

Parker inquired if there are plans to increase the price of Transfer Station stickers. Jonathan Smith explained the rates were increased by \$10.00 yearly. So, they're not incline to increase it again at this time.

NHMA Important 2023 Dates:

- February 7th Petition Warrant Articles are due by end of day
- February 10th last day to post notice of budget public hearing
- February 17th last day to hold Budget Committee Public Hearing
- February 22nd last day for BC to provide budget for warrant (Submit MS 737)
- February 27th last day to post warrant
- March 14th Town Meeting

Discussion ensued and dates were selected for the Public Hearing, as follows:

Next meeting:

- Thursday- February 9, 2023 – 6:30 PM at the Freight House
- Wednesday - February 15, 2023 – PUBLIC HEARING -7:00 PM at the Town Hall Bud Avery Memorial Gymnasium
- Thursday – February 16, 2023 – SNOW DATE for PUBLIC HEARING - 7:00 PM at the Town Hall Bud Avery Memorial Gymnasium
- Wednesday - February 22, 2023 –PUBLIC HEARING (SECOND Public Hearing if needed) -7:00 PM at the Town Hall Bud Avery Memorial Gymnasium
- Wednesday - February 22, 2023 – Meeting to sign MS 737's - 6:30 PM at the Freight House

Any Other Business Which May Come Before This Meeting:

Parker thanked the Budget Committee for listening to the Fire Departments budgets.

Gridley questioned and discussion ensued over the possibilities of having one fire department instead of three. Discussion included over equipment, and the departments are working together when ordering uniforms, air tanks, defibrillators, because they may get a discount when ordering quantities and sharing washing machines to clean uniforms. But other than that, each department does things differently. Some departments have trust funds set up to go towards large purchases, while other departments are yielding high interest payments and/or having balloon payments as a final payment. Emery asked and Goss explained how three departments would become one department. In order to combine the departments, the Town has to vote and except and fund a fire department and all the precincts have to vote individually to disband. If any one of the precincts votes not to disband and go to a Town wide department, it's not going to pass. Jonathan Smith stated it takes a two-thirds majority vote to dissolve two of the three precincts. Discussion ensued. M. Sawyer reported that

according MRI it would cost the town more to have the three departments become one department. General discussion ensued.

Adjournment:

A **Motion** by Millette to adjourn the meeting. Gridley seconded. No discussion. A unanimous vote was taken. **Motion passed.** The meeting adjourned at 7:47 PM.

Minutes approved by majority vote of the Board on –

Date

Joe Goss, Chairman

Donna Gridley, Vice-Chair
(In the absence of the Chairman)