

**OSSIPEE BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
September 20, 2023**

Minutes have been recorded for the convenience of summarization by Laura Nash, Boards & Commissions Secretary and are deleted once the minutes are board approved; any amendments to the minutes are noted in ***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, Dallas Emery, Lynne Parker, Susan McGuire – Doyle, Bob Roakes, Jennifer Brown, Jonathan Smith (Selectmen's Rep.), Matt Sawyer, Jr. (Town Administrator), and TJ Eldridge, (PW Director) and Andrea Picard (Finance Director)

Absent: Brian Keyes and Michael Hunter

Regular Meeting

Meeting Minutes: Review to approve Meeting minutes of April 5, 2023.

A **Motion** by Emery to approve the meeting minutes of April 5, 2023, as submitted. Gridley seconded. No discussion. A unanimous vote in favor was made. **Motion passed.**

Members: Resignation letter from Donna Gridley

Chairman Goss acknowledge the receipt of Donna Gridley's resignation letter but also suggested if she's willing to continue participating on the committee, it could be done via Zoom or FaceTime. Discussion ensued of not having the technical capabilities but Goss volunteered his own laptop. Sawyer noted that the link would have to be posted and then it would open the discussions to everyone. After discussing the potential legal implications, the decision was made to accept Donna Gridley's resignation.

A **Motion** by Emery to accept Donna Gridley's resignation. Parker seconded the motion with the amendment stating, "with regrets." No further discussion. A unanimous vote in favor was made. **Motion passed.**

Chairman Goss called for nominations for a new Vice- Chairman. Emery nominated Lynn Parker as Vice-Chairman. Goss seconded the nomination. The secretary inquired if fire department delegates are allowed to run for a Chair position. Goss confirmed they are voting acting members of the Budget Committee. The secretary stated she was just curious because she has never had this happened before.

Chairman Goss called for anymore nominations. No other nominations were made. Chairman Goss called for a motion.

Elect Vice-Chairman:

A **Motion** by Emery to nominate Lynn Parker as Vice-Chairman. Goss seconded. Parker stated per Robert's Rule of Order a second to a motion is not required. A unanimous vote in favor was made. **Motion passed.**

Member Vacancy:

Chairman Goss noted there is now a vacancy to be filled. Goss suggested asking Roland Millette to fill the position for the remainder of the year. Smith and Parker both commented that he is really busy with Ossipee Concern Citizens and does not want to come back.

Smith suggested Krystal Eldridge because she's at all the meetings. Chairman Goss asked Krystal Eldridge if she's interested in being on the Budget Committee. Krystal Eldridge confirmed she is interested. Chairman Goss called for a motion.

A **Motion** by Smith to appoint Krystal Eldridge to the Budget Committee to the vacancy of Donna Gridley until March 2024. Emery seconded. No discussion. A unanimous vote in favor was made. **Motion passed.**

Chairman Goss notified Krystal Eldridge that she will need to be sworn in by the Town Clerk before the next meeting. Matt Sawyer asked the secretary to write an official letter of appointment to Krystal Eldridge and send copies to the Town Clerk and Board of Selectmen.

Selectmen's Report:

- Smith reported on the road damages the town has endured due to the multiple rain storms.
- Smith reported that TJ Eldridge has been very diligent in applying to FEMA for State Reimbursement for Storm Damages. TJ confirmed the Town is expecting to receive approximately \$460,000.00 in reimbursements. Smith commented their hoping to receive the funding in October.
- Smith reports the budget is in good shape but they have exhausted a lot of gravel and other associated cost because of the storm damages.
- Smith reported and TJ Eldridge confirmed that next year they should be getting reimbursed for the storm damages that occurred in June and July of this year.
- Smith wanted to give accolades to TJ Eldridge for the attention to details that needed to be kept in order to receive 100% reimbursement from the state for the storm damages.
- Smith reported on the Town Audit and commended Andrea Picard on the job she does to ensure the audits go smoothly and little to no corrections to be done.
- Smith reports the Unassigned Fund Balance is 2.6 million and within the past 2 years that amount has tripled and they have been able to cut the tax rate. Smith stated they are investing properly, spending properly and commends Matt Sawyer, Andrea Picard but mostly TJ Eldridge because he treats the money as though it's his own and they're on the right path. It's not perfect but it's light years ahead of where they were.

Lynn Parker:

- Inquired about the standing of the internet. Matt Sawyer explained that Consolidated Communications, who the town partnered with and formed the communication district won the grant bid for round two with 40 million dollars to the state. They have made Ossipee one of the top priorities in the state. In 2024, Ossipee should experience higher internet speed in most of the town than before with a minimum of 100 gigs download and 20 gigs upload with eventually getting the town to 100 % coverage.
- Town Fuel Pump: Parker thinks the system needs to be upgraded for accountability purposes because Ossipee Corner Fire Dept. is having trouble getting their bill on time. Andrea Picard stated the precincts are billed quarterly because she only has two precincts that she bills. One precinct she did not have an account for but has since received an account. Parker noted the fire department knows how much they use because they track it themselves but needs the bill to double check the accuracy and they did not receive the year end bill for 2022. In January, they closed their books because they did not receive the last quarter bill until way late.

TJ Eldridge suggested doing away with the pumps completely because no one is responsible when using the pumps. There have been incidents of driving away with the pump in the trucks and/or vehicles multiple times. TJ has 4 Fire Department keys in his truck because people leave them in the pump. When the key is left on the pump is continually cycling and it caused the reader to burn up. So,

they could not get a quarterly reading for billing. TJ suggested getting fleet cards for the fire and police departments and they could go to Irving's to fuel up their trucks. TJ noted that they were not able to achieve it this year because it takes a lot to start a fleet card. But if they do too much work to the fuel site, the state will require bringing the pumps and site up to code and that will be a huge expense to the town. Parker advised if they are going to work on the pump site are they going to request a warrant article for the cost.

Susan McGuire - Doyle stated on June 1st, her husband took over the documentation and fueling for the trucks at Center Ossipee Fire Precinct and since June the numbers have been 100% accurate. TJ Eldridge spoke on the maintenance cost of the pumps and treatment of the fuel because there was algae in the fuel. TJ Eldridge noted the cost will be increasing to the departments for the additional maintenance that has been incurred this summer.

Dallas Emery:

- Inquired about taking out a T.A.NOTE this year at an 8% interest rate and is the town planning on using it. Smith commented they have not used it thus far. Smith explained they are waiting on the town wide re-evaluation to get certified by DRA which could delay the tax bills from going out on time. Matt Sawyer is pretty sure they will be using the T.A.NOTE this year. Andrea Picard stated that once that bill comes in she will be paying off the interest as soon as possible. They all agreed that they don't want to pay the 8% interest if they have to.

Joe Goss:

- Suggested a company called Wright Express for obtaining fuel cards. The cards are assigned to a specific truck or a specific driver and can be used at any gas station.

Robert Roakes:

- Use to work for Wright Express when they were in Portland, Maine. He explained how the card system works and that it used for fleets.

Discussion ensued over using the cards for the police and fire departments and either keeping the existing fuel pumps for highway department and emergencies or getting an above ground tank to serve the same purpose.

2023 YTD - Expenditure Report: Jan. – Aug. 2023

YTD - Revenue Report: Jan. – Aug. 2023

Matt Sawyer: presented the latest revenue report stating their in really good shape. Sawyer referred to page 4, the bottom line figures which includes figures from the transfers in from the enterprise fund of water and sewer, and tax revenue that does not go on the real revenue.

- **Motor Vehicle Permit Fees:** Sawyer explained it was budget for \$1,000,000.00 and they are currently at \$787,456.03 with (4) months until year end.
- **Meals & Rooms Tax Distribution:** Was budgeted for \$389,000.00 but the return will not come in until close to December 1st.
- **Highway Block Grant:** Was budgeted for \$178,000.00 with \$125,962.36 collected and (4) months remaining until the end of the year. Sawyer stated they are waiting on Q4.
- **Income From Departments:** Overall being 66% through the year and have collected 69.61 %.
- **Transfer Station:** Is way ahead of goal due in part to the fee increase a couple years ago. It

will not be self-sustaining but they're on pace to get \$150,000.00 from dump fees.

- **Building Permit Fees:** Was set high at \$100,000.00 and have collected \$48,970.92 YTD.
- **Recreation Department:** Will be looked at a little closer because it may have been a little over zealous in its anticipated income.
- **Sales of Municipal Property:** Tax Deeded land, and Sale of Town Owned Property was sold with one property getting 6 or 7 bids alone for an estimated revenue of \$65,676.43 YTD.
- **Interest on Investments:** Recently the interest rate was 3% and change but through renegotiation they are earning 5.25% interest rate.
- **Water & Sewer:** Is a journal entry at the end of the year.
- **Policer Department – Details:** Had no projected revenue for the year but have collected \$6,028.59 YTD.

Dallas Emery: Inquired if the Police Department fuels their vehicles at the Town pumps. TJ and Matt both confirmed that they do.

Jonathan Smith: Wanted to add something to the Selectmen's Report.

- The town has taken possession of an excavator. The town was constantly renting an excavator for an exorbitant amount of money. With all the storm damage it was costing \$7,500 per month to rent, if you could find one. Smith turned the discussion over to TJ Eldridge, Public Works Director.

TJ Eldridge:

- Worked with the Chadwick - BaRoss Company out of Westbrook, Maine. The salesman allowed TJ Eldridge to test the Volvo excavator onsite on Blake Hill Rd. If they didn't like one machine the salesman would bring another one for them to test drive.
- They went to two other dealerships and were never approached by a salesman or got to look at an excavator.
- The deal is for a zero-turn, with a blade, a thumb, they have warranty for the duration of the lease. The lease is for 7 years at 100% coverage, travel and the excavator is big enough for what they need to do and small enough at 40,000 pounds to haul it wherever they need to go. It's a 160 in a 145 chassis. The competitors were 70 hp but this one is 121 hp.
- They worked with a local contractor who bought a new trailer and didn't need it anymore. So, they were able to get the trailer to haul the excavator and
- No payment until January 1st.
- The salesman put a list together of all the attachments and options available to rent including a computer setup for a hammer and forestry head and everything is quick disconnect.
- **Finance:** Payment is \$40,000.00 a year for 7 years, with a payment due every October 1st, starting in 2024. Once the first payment is made the town can pay it off at anytime. Smith stated once they get the FEMA reimbursement the plan is to pay off the excavator loan to save on the interest.

TJ Eldridge and Andrea Picard both stated it was costing the town between \$7,000 and \$8,000 per week to have Dig & Doze to come with their excavator and last week cost approximately \$12,000.00 for the excavator. Smith noted this is a huge asset because they will have the excavator for approximately 20 years.

Chairman Goss called for questions.

Joe Goss: where is the income for the telephone poles listed in the revenue report. Sawyer stated it's included in the property tax revenue line item but didn't understand why.

Andrea Picard: clarified that it was changed this year because it's actually being computed accurately. The auditors at the end of the year use to make these huge journal entries to this line. By recording the entries properly and taking the precinct money out of this line item immediately because this is not what this account is about. The school amount and the county is included in the line item.

Joe Goss: Inquired about the telephone poles because there are several locations where a second pole has been placed but the first pole has yet to be removed, which means the town is being double taxed for the double poles. Matt Sawyer explained according to the Town Assessor, Todd Hayward, who states he has reflected for it if they have it there. Goss clarified that they are paying for the double pole.

SCHEDULE OF SELECTMEN and BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

Matt Sawyer: Explained the changes made to the meeting schedule. The original scheduled was laid out according to the MS – 737 and some lines (i.e., Ambulance) which is contract driven and not discussable were grouped together for one night and then there would be the larger departments which are a little more involved on another night.

Matt Sawyer stated that the secretary noted a couple of conflicts with the Conservation Commission. Matt asked Conservation Chairman, Krystal Eldridge, who is in attendance, if the Conservation Commission could accommodate the Budget Committee on these two nights. Krystal Eldridge stated that the Conservation Commission is willing to cancel the October meeting so that the Budget Committee can use the Freight House and depending on what's on the agenda for the November meeting, she will determine if it will be moved to the Main Street Building and Angela Eldridge would record the minutes and take notes for the secretary to type up later.

Chairman Goss asked Matt Sawyer if he wants to modify the schedule. Matt Sawyer commented he would like to keep it the same if the Budget Committee agrees.

Lynn Parker: Had concerns about the Library Trustees having their budget ready in time for the October 4th, meeting. Matt Sawyer confirmed with Andrea Picard that the Library has completed their budget and have submitted it to the town.

Donna Gridley: Informed Krystal Eldridge that she was responsible for the checking in with the Emergency Management, and Highway & Streets Departments.

Robert Roakes: Questioned when does the interest start on the excavator. Matt Sawyer explained that it's a lease purchase so the interest starts immediately and the first payment of interest would be due even if they paid it early. The interest rate was approximately 3%+/-.

Joe Goss: Inquired about getting the Town Warrant Articles as soon as possible. Matt Sawyer stated he should have them by November 15th, meeting.

Dallas Emery: Suggested an idea to think about in the next few years concerning the buildings that house the Police Department and the Water & Sewer Department. The buildings are in horrible condition and will be going to need replacing at some point. Discussion ensued over the cost being in the millions. Smith stated the cost is going to be so prohibitive that it would require a bond to finance. Emery suggested combining the Police Department and Fire Department within one complex building similar to Moultonborough. Discussion ensued over this being a future topic but not at this time. Andrea Picard jokingly commented to Emery that he didn't want her to use the T.A. Note. Smith noted there would need to be a building committee, possibly bringing all the fire departments into one department. They all agreed on the need for a public safety building but there is a lot of planning and funding to work out.

Joe Goss: Wanted to discuss about passing on to department head about keeping their overall budget increase between 3 - 4 %.

Jonathan Smith: State that the Union Contract is currently being negotiated and will be a warrant article on the ballot. State budget increased by 20%. The re-evaluation is ranging between 60% to 150% evaluation increase. Because properties have been selling fast and for enormous values. Don't panic because while evaluations go up the tax rate usually decreases. But he hopes the Committee sees that their not wasting money. Joe Goss stated he has no quarrels with how things are going.

Joe Goss: Stated the evaluation increase usually means the tax rate decreases but sometime it doesn't decrease enough because they spend more. Goss noted he realizes that prices have gone up but peoples incomes have not gone up and people are really starting to hurt and to think of the tax payers here in Ossipee. So, he wants to give departments a heads up that if their going to go over a 3-4 % increase, don't bother bringing it to the Budget Committee because they're going to throw it out.

Matt Sawyer: Stated the Selectmen's Office is going to be way over that because their probably going to be hiring a new assessor recommended by the town attorney and the contract will be at a much higher rate. Legal budget will almost double because there are some uncontrollable stuff but the bottom line figure may not be that far off from the 3-4 % increase.

TJ Eldridge: Stated that his budgets will be flatlined because he cannot go off the numbers he's been getting this year. But there will be a warrant article for paving to increase from \$300,000.00 to \$450,000.00. Smith commented that paving costs have gone up 60% this year and the town has been at \$300,000.00 for about 20 years.

Next Meeting: Chairman Goss announced the next meeting will be:

- **October 4, 2023 – 6:30 pm at the Freight House**
 - Long-Term Debt
 - Trustees of Trust Funds
 - Library
 - Fire Warden
 - Emergency Management
 - Conservation Commission
 - Planning Board
 - Zoning Board of Adjustment

Any Other Business Which May Come Before This Meeting:

Goss called for any other business. With none heard, Goss called for a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment:

A **Motion** by Gridley to adjourn the meeting. Roakes seconded. No discussion. A unanimous vote was taken. **Motion passed.** The meeting adjourned at 7:21 PM.

Minutes approved by majority vote of the Board on –

Date

Joe Goss, Chairman

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