

OSSIPEE BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
September 16, 2020

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

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

Pledge of Allegiance – was recited

Attendance by Roll Call: – Joe Goss, Donna Gridley, Roland Millette, Cameron Quigley - Ctr. Ossipee Fire Dept – Rep., Louise Sutherland, Lynne Parker, Donna Sargent, and Matt Sawyer, Jr, Town Administrator

Absent: Rachel Ciarmella and Martha Eldridge (Selectmen's Rep.)

Attendees: N/A

Meeting Minutes: Review minutes of August 26, 2020.

Gridley questioned if Martha Eldridge was able to get information on potential increase in student enrollments to the schools for the coming year. Matt Sawyer, Jr. reported per Sandy Libby for School District - SAU 49 enrollments states there is no increased enrollment due to COVID-19 from out of staters relocating to their vacations homes to avoid hot spots.

A **Motion** by Gridley to approve the meeting minutes of August 26, 2020 as presented. Millette seconded. No discussion. A unanimous vote was taken. **Motion passed.**

Parker thanked the secretary for good minutes.

Goss introduced John Picard from the Dam Authority, who was here to provide and update on the dams and the proposed 2021 budget.

John Picard gave a history of the dams dating back to 1988 when Central Maine Power would no longer support the dam. The State of NH was not interested in the dam, so the Ossipee Lake Dam Authority was formed and consist of 3 – Selectmen from each Town of Ossipee, Freedom and Effingham plus 2 – citizens. Effingham has subsequently withdrew from the committee. Eventually the State sold the dam for a \$1.00. The Dam Authority has worked with the State for purchasing gauges to monitor the water levels, in hopes of preventing further flooding. John has volunteered his time for the first 11 – years. The stop logs go in on Mother's Day and are removed Columbus Day weekend.

Picard reports the budget had not changed much until years ago the Selectmen voted to pay him \$1,500 a year toward gas and other expenditures and subsequently Freedom approved the pay rate, and it is split between the 2 – towns. Currently, he has 4 assistants with a \$5,000 budget. He plans to request a name change to Dam Operations which he pays the taxes on under a 1099 form. Out of the \$5,000, each assistant is paid \$300.00 yearly for being on-call and each time they have to take time off to go to the dam, they are paid \$50.00. The biggest expense is the USGS gauges.

Parker asked about current maintenance expenses for the dam. Picard reported he handles the minor issues and if can't resolve the issue then the State is called in for maintenance. Parker inquired about the frequency of inspections. Picard noted the State holds the dam and maintains all inspections.

Millette inquired about the website for reading the water levels. Picard demonstrated on his phone the water monitor for water coming in and out and the levels for all the dams in the state.

Picard reported the new Dam dedication will be at the end of September.

Selectmen's Report:

Matt Sawyer, Jr. report on letter from the NH Municipal Resources, Inc, about the "Unassigned Fund Balance." Which clarify the difference that Town does not have the money in the bank. It's authority from prior years to spend but the Town still has uncollected taxes from prior years that outweighs what was erroneously called a "Surplus." But at this point there needs to be an increase to the fund balance, but the letter reflects the NH Municipal Resources, Inc., perspective on the situation.

Matt Sawyer, Jr., report he does not have the revenue projections for tonight because the balance is so off due to COVID. The new Finance Administrator is starting on Monday, September 21, 2020 and hopefully the deposits will get coded correctly.

2020 YTD Budget Report:

Matt Sawyer, Jr., report there are expense reports for the committee's review. Everything seems to be staying on course. Equipment, maintenance and the Highway Department still seems to be costly. Water and Sewer revenue is **down per Wayne "Bo" Eldridge**. But Matt Sawyer, Jr. was not ready to report until the end of the quarter.

2020 Revenue Report: No report

Discussions:

The new Finance Administrator is Andrea Picard (formerly Brusseau) comes from the Moultonborough & Miracle Farms as their primary accountant. She does not have municipal experience but with her background and personality, she seems to be a good fit. They plan to keep Municipal Resources, Inc. at least one day a week until Andrea is up to speed.

Sutherland suggested addressing the Fund Balance verses Cash Balance description at Town Meeting. Matt Sawyer, Jr agrees based on what the DRA and MRI has put in writing it's clear and we should be getting that message out to everybody.

Parker would like to see the back taxes figures in the Town Report. She clarified just the figures, no names.

Millette inquired to the process of collecting and why are these properties not being foreclosed. It was explained that as long as their on a payment plan and paying in good faith, the Town does not seek to foreclose. Discussion ensued if the Town could foreclose even under a payment plan and are most of these residents or businesses. Discussion about demonstrating by posting graphs at the annual meeting the percentage of back taxes from residences and businesses should be made public.

Parker talked briefly on why building up a surplus is necessary.

Matt Sawyer, Jr discussed on previous revenue projections being overly optimistic especially after he recently completing the MS434 form. They have taken out the Fund Balance because it's worth the minimum and the Tax Revenue could not collect. When he was done the MS434 it was a reduction from 2.9 million down to just under 2.4 million. It will definitely affect the tax rate but there's no getting around it and it does not provide a nest egg.

Goss noted there has to be accurate figures because working with grossly inflated figures does not help anyone.

Parker asked if the tax rate has been determined. Matt Sawyer, Jr explained the MS1 assessing came in this week, and pending DRA's response.

2020-2021 Budget Schedule: Matt Sawyer, Jr will make the discussed changes for the next meeting. Fire Precincts will present on December 2nd but their budgets must be received by November 18th. Outside agencies are scheduled for November 4th and 5th will be moved to the Town Hall to help maintain the 6ft. social distance requirements.

2020 YTD Budget Report: (Cont.)

Goss noted each department seems to be within the 30% range remaining and with 3.5 months remaining the budgets not looking pretty good.

Millette noted Hwy Director, TJ Eldridge will be coming in with a proposal of setting a Capital Reserve account and submit a Warrant Article for \$108,000.00 a year to rotate equipment.

Parker inquired about the Telephone in the Tax Collector's Office. Matt Sawyer, Jr will have to follow up after he speaks with Kellie Skehan, Tax Collector.

Goss inquired about Retirement Fund with all the people that are retiring. Matt Sawyer, Jr explained there was approximately \$60,000 in the account and the one retiree depleted it by half. Goss inquire about two more retiring by the end of the year. Matt Sawyer, Jr noted Steve McConarty will not collect and Joe Duchesne will be in the Next fiscal year when he retires in January.

Next Meeting:

Scheduled for **October 8, 2020**, 6:30 PM at the Freight House.

2020-2021 Budget Schedule:

- Conservation Agent
- Board of Selectmen
- Dam Authority
- Legal
- Patriotic Purposes
- Cemeteries
- Treasurer
- Welfare

Announcements: Louise Sutherland will retire as the precincts representative effective in March 2021. Joe Goss called for a vote of those in favor of Louise ***retiring by a show of hands***. No one raised their hands, laughed and wished her well.

2021 Town Budget Proposal by Department:

Nash reported the Zba voted to level fund for the coming year.

Parker inquired about the Highway Dept. budgeted for \$20,000 and spent \$65,000 on equipment purchases. Tt Sawyer, Jr explained it's an accounting thing because the grader has no payment the first year, but you have to account for trade-in value as miscellaneous revenue and offer it with the theoretical use of it, per NHMA.

Parker inquired about line item Police Dept. – Uniforms was budgeted for \$7,000 and spent \$11,000. Matt Sawyer, Jr explained part of it was for tactical gear and the rest was offset under a partial warrant article. So instead of using unassigned fund balance but Chief Duchesne agreed to partially offset it with funds out of

the retirement amount for Don Grob. Because they could justify, they decided to over spend this line item and under spend others to others to offset the amount instead of using fund balance.

Millette inquired about the part-time Recreation Director reached out to **OACC** group and are going to work on some sort of partnership. Matt Sawyer, Jr gave a background on Justin.

Sutherland announced the Fire Precincts are starting their budget cycle. West Ossipee's big ticket item will be tactical gear They are also looking for a Fire Commissioner because Paula Moore is stepping down.

Gridley inquired if anyone knows how much the outside agencies are going to be asking for because the committee already knows some departments will have large expenditures for next year. Goss stated all the departments need to request the bare minimum. Discussion ensued.

Any Other Business Which May Come Before This Meeting:

None was heard.

Adjournment:

A **Motion** by Gridley to adjourn the meeting. Millette seconded. No further discussion. A unanimous vote was taken. **Motion passed.** The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.

Minutes approved by majority vote of the Board on –

Date

Joe Goss, Chairman
Budget Committee

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