

Readfield Budget Committee Regular Meeting Minutes – January 24, 2024 – *Approved*

Present: Andy Tolman (Chair), Marty Hanish, Ed Sims, Eric Dyer (Town Manager), Anjelica Pittman (Board Secretary)

Excused Absent: Chris Sammons, Ellen Schneider, Teresa Shaw (Finance Officer)

Others Attending: Hannah Flannery, Bruce Hunter, Jackie Drouin, Matt Lajoie, Jaaron Shaw

Call to Order

Introductory Communications - 10 minutes

- Budget Committee Comments
 - Marty would like to take another look at the Budget Committee mission statement to clarify and strengthen.
- Town Staff Comments
 - Eric reminded everyone there will be a Joint Select Board and Budget Committee for Capital Planning January 31, 2024 at 6:30pm. Eric also went over Budget Committee notes explaining both process and details for FY25 budget; these are included in the agenda packet. Marty suggested a formal written policy for reserve funds. Eric will look into that.
- Public Comments
 - None

Regular Business - 5 minutes

- Review and Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes:
 - April 12, 2023 & November 15, 2023
 - **Motion** made by Ed to approve both sets of minutes, **seconded** by Marty, **vote 3-0** in favor

Old Business – 10 minutes

- Review and Discussion of Budget Adjustments
 - None

New Business – 80 minutes

- Departments I
 - General Government - 35 minutes
 - Eric presented the budget for General Government; postage has gone down, mileage will be increasing due to the end of lease on the town car, insurance cost is increasing, computer hardware cost is decreasing, software licensing is increasing. Contract services such as grants and planning has no change this year and heating assistance has been moved to special reserves line. Town employee salaries are due to increase 5% per the Union contract. Code cost is decreasing but assessing is up because we missed \$4500 in the budget last year. Attorney fees are significantly decreased as the previous year's cause of heightened cost is no longer a problem. There is a healthy \$50k in reserves for attorney fees.
 - Maintenance - 15 minutes

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- Wages are up 5%, equipment rental is budgeted for \$500, and everything else is relatively the same. Building Operation and Maintenance will increase due to material costs for building improvements. Vehicle and equipment increases as some equipment is ageing out and will need replacement. The current dump truck which has had numerous costly repairs will be replaced this year, currently working with the Select Board to get that sorted out, they have already approved a replacement, maintenance is working on finding the best truck to replace the current one. The chipper will need new teeth at a cost of \$400 this year.
- Animal control will see a small 5% increase on their stipend, otherwise the budget there remains the same.
- KVCOG number is a placeholder as we have not yet received the bill for the actual amount.
- Regional Assessments - 5 minutes
 - First Park shows \$18k on the projected budget but will be \$16k as those numbers are firmed up. We are also finally getting revenue from First Park and expect that to continue. Marty suggested possibly setting aside as special revenue, Eric will discuss with the auditors.
- County Tax - 5 minutes
 - These numbers are not confirmed yet but Eric expects about a 5% increase for the County and an 8% increase for the RSU.
- Departments II
 - Recreation and Open Space - 15 minutes
 - Matt and Hannah presented the Recreation budget; they will need new baseball helmets this year (\$6500). They organize baseball, basketball and soccer for Readfield and surrounding towns. As well as other events in town. They would also like to offer scholarships to families in need, and are working on ways to make that possible. The Rec Board requested \$4k-\$4500 for basketball and \$500 for winter events such as ice skating and sledding.
 - Eric discussed the beach budget, some changes will occur there with a new Programming Director which will be an approximate \$20k in cost. This position would be a half time without benefits. The position would supplement all the work volunteers are currently doing as well as hopefully add services like lifeguard and swim training so the town would not need to find swim lessons through the YMCA (which has been unfruitful the past couple of years). We will still have a beach superintendent; however beach staffing would be eliminated otherwise so \$6k was dropped from the budget for that. Other than staffing changes, the beach budget remains the same.
 - Jackie presented the FY25 budget for Trails. They have the same budget as last year with an additional request of \$200 for blue stone for the trails.
 - Jaaron and Bruce attended for the Conservation Committee's FY25 budget. They have \$11163 in carry forward funds that are not tax payer funded. The Vernal Pools from Stantec had errors so they would like to complete once corrected. There is a possible state grant to assist with invasives, not certain on the amount quite yet. Every 5-6 years the Town Forest is harvested to help with funding. The Commission also looked into a new revenue source this year; chaga mushroom farming, however they decided against it as the company is relatively new and the contract was high risk. Chaga farming would also kill the birch trees used to grow the chaga.

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- Eric discussed the Fairgrounds budget to the board. Draft plans have been firmed up for a new ballfield at the fairgrounds. Now looking at getting confirmed costs from the engineer. We will be creating a fundraising committee next and then move forward for a town vote. The project is estimated to be between \$800k and \$1 million according to the contractor, the Fairgrounds Working Group is looking at several fundraising opportunities and options. Eric thanked all the present committees and Cemetery Committee and Age Friendly for all their work on this project.
- Roads and Drainage - 15 minutes
 - Large increases in this budget line as there are a lot of roads needing repairs due to the last couple years of severe weather. Lane road, North Wayne Road, Thundercastle Road and Chase Road all need paving. Eric is in the process of getting a line item added for storm damage to help mitigate some of the unexpected expenses from severe weather. There is a 20% reduction in gravel and sand cost as we are well stockpiled for now. Winter maintenance contract services will see only a 1.8% increase due to over budgeting last year. Materials see a reduction depending on how this winter goes, but there is a healthy \$18k-\$20k margin in reserves.
 - Eric and Marty discussed a possible separate storm damage reserve within capital items line, Eric will look into it.

Other Business - 5 minutes

- Other Business - none
- Next Meeting – Joint Select Board and Budget Committee Meeting is Wednesday, January 31 at 6:30 to go over Capital Items.

Closing Communications - 10 minutes

- Budget Committee Comments - none
- Town Staff Comments - none
- Public Comments – none

Motion to adjourn at 8:30pm made by Marty, **seconded** by Ed, **3-0 vote** in favor

Adjourn

Minutes submitted by Anjelica Pittman, Board Secretary