

**Finance Committee  
Town of Buckland  
Minutes of Meeting  
January 24, 2022**

**This meeting is being conducted remotely in accordance with the provisions of the Governor's March 12, 2020, Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law.**

Present:

Finance Committee: Larry Langford, Bruce Lessels, Paula Consolo, Dena Willmore via Zoom

Town of Buckland: Heather Butler, Town Administrator, via Zoom, Barry DelCastillo, Select board

General Public: none

The meeting was called to order by Chair Langford at 4:10 P.M.

Dena Willmore moved to approve minutes of January 10 as written. Bruce Lessels seconded. Approved unanimously.

Collins Center will brief us on their capital planning methodology at the next meeting.

Capital budget requests -

- Town clerk - push to make bylaws more accessible by digitizing them. \$9,500 year 1, then \$1000-1200 a year for maintenance. Dena suggested we have someone go through the bylaws and organize them. They also need to be searchable. Karen Blom clarified that the company will analyze and organize our bylaws as well as making them searchable.
- Buildings and grounds - finish siding the town hall. Not a priority project this year, but Heather wanted to bring it to our attention.
- Pool project has requested \$95,000. Bruce Lessels clarified that this request is for cost overruns and/or operating capital to reopen the pool.
- Historical society - \$3,500 for gutters and downspouts on second half of building and \$10,000 to remove knob and tube wiring, \$2,000 for windows at first floor. \$20,000 for ADA fee scope study.
- Highway - \$20,000 for a woodchipper. \$113,853 for a mini excavator which will help the hwy dept maintain roads and drainage swales. \$225,000 for a loader. \$151,369 for a new dump truck.
- Salt shed - the old one has been determined to be at the end of its life. New salt shed would be at the Mayhew site with the hwy dept garage. We don't yet have a price tag, but estimate \$100/sf for a metal building

- Pickup truck for buildings and grounds. \$60,000 The existing truck doesn't have a lot of miles, but the bed is rusted out. Heather has asked Steve to consider just swapping out the bed to get a few more years on this truck.

#### Operating budget -

- Franklin tech and town salaries, esp. Hwy dept, are areas of largest increases.
- Larry Langford went back 5 years with salaries and determined that the average annual increase was a little over 3%. Heather Butler said that the first year of covid, we dropped a hwy position so that skews comparisons a bit. What town svcs are being carried over year to year, simply by rote, then is there a way to create more value by hiring differently? Heather is creating a chart showing present positions and proposed changes to them.
- Larry Langford proposed modifying the worksheets to show overs and unders. Also, historically, how far off the average curve are we? What's the trend and what's the future going to look like if this trend continues? How would someone know what's simply a legacy that's been carried over versus something that's adding value?
- Heather pointed out that the present draft budget is showing just what each dept has requested. Fin comm needs to go through line by line to evaluate each request.
- The largest areas that are not in the draft are the school budget and the FRCOG assessment. We also don't have new health insurance numbers. 2.7% in unrestricted funds for state aid. MMA is pushing back on that. We received 3.5% in the middle of the pandemic. Heather expects to see some change on this number.
- Heather increased motor vehicle excise number by \$30,000
- We should see the school and transportation budget this Wednesday.
- Certified free cash for FY 22 was \$362,394. This does not include ARPA money. Free cash number is a combination of controlling spending and an increase in revenues. Also, our hwy dept has been understaffed.

#### Line by line budget review -

- Dena suggested we hold off on reviewing personnel changes until we have the salary review proposed above.
- Why is FRCOG accounting program down \$3000? Numbers from FRCOG are not in yet.
- Assessors expense increase is due to need for assessor to recertify
- We're trying to even out the assessors revaluation expense since it's on a 5 year cycle. Dena asked if that needs to be approved separately. Heather said it's a carryover item so it needs to be voted on separately in order to be carried over from year to year.
- Public Buildings Expenses is the general expense line for B and G. Heather anticipates this will increase because we've hired someone to evaluate maintenance needs for all our public buildings. She also proposed that we budget all town building maintenance as a single number so they don't each have their own maintenance line items.

- Bruce asked whether buildings and grounds position was created because there was an observed need or because we had a person available to fill the position? Heather answered that it was a combination of the two factors. By having a building and grounds position, we should be able to do more maintenance of buildings as they need it rather than letting systems fail and then replacing them.

Paula Consolo said that FRCOG is looking for a place to base their nursing staff and that the Buckland police building is being considered. This will net the town about \$5,000 a year. Heather added that, in addition to the revenue, we would be helping the public health service program operate more efficiently in west county.

Emergency management and public bathrooms are two other potential uses for the Buckland police building.

Larry Langford - Personnel conversation would be helped by a spreadsheet that he's mapping out and will share with Heather Butler.

Continue discussion of general operating budget at next meeting on February 7. We will also have the Collins Center folks talking about the capital budget planning tool.

No public comments.

Paula moved to adjourn. Dena seconded. Unanimously approved.

Adjourned at 5:36 pm