

Kingston Municipal Budget Committee
Public Meeting
Kingston Fire Station - Meeting Room
November 13, 2022, 6 p.m.

Members in Attendance:

Trish Tidd, Chair
Rick Russman, Vice Chair
Stacy Dion, Secretary
Chuck Hart, BOS representative
Claudine Dias
Gary Finerty
Nick Hilfer
John Pramberg
Annemarie Roth
Shaw Tilton

Other Attendees:

Tammy Bakie, Town Clerk/Tax Collector
Phil Coombs, Director of Public Works
Marissa Federico, Recording Secretary
Stephanie Hasselbeck, Chair, Library's Board of Trustees
Ernie Landry, Heritage Commission
Melissa Mannon, Director, Library
Susan Prescott, Historic District Commission
Tom Roughan, Treasurer, Library's Board of Trustees

Trish called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The draft minutes from the meeting held on 11/2/22 will be discussed at the next meeting.

DEPARTMENT PRESENTATIONS:

Government Buildings (4194):

For Government Buildings, Phil noted most of the increases are in utilities as well as salary increases that were previously approved.

- *Salaries-FT (4194-S1):* Phil confirmed that there are 2 full-time employees included in this salary line.
- *Capital Improvements (4194-02):* Phil noted that a purchase order was submitted recently; all of the budgeted money from 2022 will be spent. They are also doing repairs to many town buildings.
- *Flags (4194-07):* The budget reflects the cost to replace each flag once a year.
- *Fuel Tank Maintenance (4194-08):* Phil believes all these tanks have been removed.

- *Heat and Service (4194-09)*: Once a year, all furnaces are serviced. The department is burning waste oil to defrays costs and is working on an agreement with a local business to obtain more waste oil. Per Rick's request, Phil will provide more detail regarding this budget increase.
- *Monitoring (4194-15)*: This budget has increased in part due to security services to cover the new internet-based phone system in Town Hall.
- *Portapotty (4194-21)*: The increased rental costs are included in this budget.
- *Water Cooler Rentals (4194-25)*: Phil explained that the town is buying water coolers rather than renting.
- *Electric (4194-24)*: This budget has been doubled per the advice of Unitil. Per Rick's request, Phil will provide more detail regarding this budget increase.

There was a broader discussion regarding how to handle increased utility costs, in particular Unitil's planned rate increases. There was a stress on consistency across departments. Many members expressed the importance of guidance from the BOS.

Highway (4312):

- *Salaries-Overtime (4312-S2)*: Phil noted this should be \$64,260.
- *Clothing Allowance (4312-02)*: The cost of steel-toed boots is up. The Department is doing more tree service and need high-visibility clothing.
- *Cold Patch (4312-03)*: A better product is being used that is longer lasting but more expensive.
- *Dumpster Rental (4312-05)*: The costs are up, and Phil explained that the town is charged fees for disallowed waste in dumpsters.
- *Equipment Repairs (4312-07)*: Costs are up.
- *Hardware (4312-09)*: Repairs are needed and planned.
- *Hot Mix (4312-10)*: Costs are up.
- *Matching Grant (4312-34)*: The town received a FEMA grant for bridge replacement on Main Street. The NHDES Dam Bureau is also on board with this project. The project is projected to cost \$1.1 million. The town will pay \$110,000 out of the existing capital reserve fund for highway improvement, and the rest will come from the infrastructure fund. CMA Engineers has already been hired, but the costs will be matched. The correct budget for this line item should be \$23,800 for engineering fees.
- *Pavement Markings (4312-13)*: Paint costs have gone up. The town got a block grant to assist with the cost.
- *Plow Blades (4312-14)*: Phil believes the existing equipment will last through this winter, but it is hoped to purchase new blades for next winter that are better for ice.
- *Road Rebuilding (4312-17)*: Block grants will be utilized to assist with these costs.
- *Salt (4312-19)*: Costs are up. Phil explained the town will be pre-treating with magnesium chloride to reduce the need for salt. This will also reduce the amount of phosphorous released into groundwater through the use of salt.
- *Seminars and Training (4312-21)*: Phil explained he has new employees that need training.

- *Signs and Barricades (4312-22)*: Two new school zone signs are needed near the Bakie School. They will be solar powered and active only during school hours. This should reduce electricity costs as the existing signs use continuously blinking lights.
- *Snow Plowing (4312-23)*: Plow contractors have had an increase to remain competitive with surrounding towns. Phil explained that the state started paying drivers even when there is no precipitation as the trucks need to be maintained regardless of snow.
- *Stormwater Maintenance (4312-29)*: There is a requirement for more wet weather testing, and employees need to be trained to ensure testing is being done correctly. The remaining budget consists of the standard contract. The actuals are low since their billing cycle is not calendar based.
- *Tools (4312-25)*: Equipment needs to be repaired for safety purposes.
- *Tree Removal (4312-26)*: The budget includes the cost for daily crane rental as needed for tall tree work as the existing bucket truck is inadequate to remove taller trees.

SUMMARY: Total budget is \$1,315,301.

Sanitation (4323):

- *Bulky Goods Pick-up (4323-01)*: Phil noted the budget should be \$2,000.
- *Hazardous Waste Collection (4323-04)*: This cost rotates between different towns and is reimbursed by member towns, so Kingston is not solely responsible for this cost.
- *Residential Pick-up (4323-02)*: There is a fuel surcharge included in this cost; Waste Management is changing to a natural gas-powered vehicle, but the current vehicle is run on diesel. The town will get a credit from recycling to partially offset the fuel surcharge. Phil noted that there were some businesses and homes that were getting trash pick-up from Kingston in error, so this has been corrected.
- *Solid Waste Disposal (4323-03)*: Glass waste is credited back to the town, so the only charge is transportation costs to the dump. Phil explained that there are only 2 landfills in NH, and Waste Management costs less. The goal is to reduce cost through a reduction in trash tonnage.

Other Highway Street & Bridges (4319):

- *Class VI Road Maintenance (4319-01)*: Level funded
- *Highway Block Grant (4319-02)*: Phil noted that the state does not have numbers right now, but it is anticipated that there will be funds left over from this year. To be safe, Phil recommended that the budget be pumped to \$175,000 to be safe.

Cemeteries-Contracted Services (4195-03)

Phil explained that he is working with the Trustees for Public Works to maintain the town's cemeteries. The Trustees have put this out to bid in the past, and none were received.

Historic District Commission (4191)

Susan ran through the budget, which is level funded.

- *Abutter Notices (4191-60)*: Susan noted the applicant reimburses this cost. She anticipates there will be at least 2 public hearings in 2023.
- *Books (4191-51)*: This represents the cost of books published by the Rockingham Planning Commission.
- *Grant Match (4191-58)*: The budget will be brought down to \$1 in the event this line item needs to be utilized.
- *Legal Ads (4191-53)*: The applicant reimburses this cost.
- *Technical Consulting (4191-59)*: This budget represents consultations with the town attorney or experts. Susan anticipates that with some upcoming large projects in the Districts, the HDC may need consulting services.

Library (4550)

Melissa explained that programming has been greatly expanded over the past year, and more community-based programs are offered offsite. She noted they are working hard to reach out and serve the community yet keep the budget flat.

- *Salaries-Full Time (4550-S1)*: The department is now fully staffed.
- *Salaries-Part Time (4550-S2)*: A salary increase was included in this line item.
- *Pay for Performance (4550-S3)*: This has been eliminated from the budget.
- Line items 4550-01, -02, -03, and -05 are all pending.
- *Transfer account (4550-04)*:
 - The adult services librarian will be offering classes starting in January, so the computers need to be upgraded.
 - The supply budget has been increased to reflect actual costs.
 - Administrative costs are up, but there will be decreases in other line items to offset this.
 - The costs associated with the copy machine are more accurately reflected in the budget.
 - The bookkeeping fee is up. Chuck asked if the library has considered going out to bid for a new bookkeeper. Melissa explained the current bookkeeper is knowledgeable and has provided a good service. She noted funds were encumbered in the past to cover this line item. She confirmed the bookkeeper works every other week in the library for 4-5 hours but does do some work at home.
 - IT computer support costs are down about \$12,000 due to hiring a new provider.
 - Contracting services are down 37%.
 - Ancestry and HeritageQuest subscriptions have been canceled and other software added to be more productive. Funding was reallocated to streaming services instead.
 - The budget for books has increased.
 - The Director is discussing the utility budgets with Public Works. This will also be discussed at the Trustee meeting tomorrow. The operating budget is flat with the exception of utility costs.

- The cost for carpet cleaning has gone up to \$1,900 to reflect the carpets being cleaned twice a year.
- The library needs new furniture.
- The new transfer account budget is \$98,886.

There was a discussion about how impact fees can be used. Melissa discussed this with attorney Steve Buckley of the NHMA who stated these can only be used for capital building projects, not the operating budget. Chuck is researching this. Melissa also discussed this with 2 other library directors, who discussed this with their legal counsel, and confirmed it could only be used for property improvements. In her research, Melissa stated that the new furniture cannot be paid for through impact fees. John noted the town attorney could provide clarification. Chuck noted that impact fees need to be used by the deadline or will need to be returned to the contractor; Melissa confirmed she is keeping track of the deadlines, and about \$12,000 needs to be used in 2023.

Chuck noted ARPA funding is still available and has less criteria than impact fees. Trish asked if the KMBC should keep this in mind when reviewing department budgets; Chuck stated this is appropriate and believes the funding must be spent within 4 years.

Melissa now discussed salaries. Two adjustments:

- Adult services librarian: She is doing a great job and was brought in at a low salary.
- Director: Stephanie noted the Trustees support this raise as Melissa has accomplished many things in her tenure and is doing a great job.
- Library assistant positions (part-time employees): Melissa noted that she adjusted part-time employee schedules to match the foot traffic in the library.
- Melissa included a 5% COLA and noted she wants to stay in line with the town. Chuck explained that there is no COLA built into the budget for town employees; there may be a warrant article instead. Claudine noted the budget shows a 10% salary increase for part-time employees.
- John asked how many hours library is open. Melissa provided the hours, totaling 51 hours/week. John noted the hourly cost to run the library is very low.

Multiple members expressed appreciation for the detailed breakdown for the transfer account.

Annemarie's recommendation is to keep the library's budget as requested. The costs of employment may change, but that is outside the control of the library.

Election and Registration (4140)

Tammy noted there is only one election next year, so the budget is down.

Town Clerk and Town Treasurer (4150)

- *TC-TC Salary (4150-S4)*: This represents Tammy's salary.
- *Salaries-Full Time (4150-S6)*: Tammy explained that the town clerk's office has all full-time employees except for one. This employee may retire, and the full-time salary is included in the budget for contingency purposes. There are no pay raises included for 2023.
- *Part Time (4150-S8)*: See explanation for Salaries-Full Time (4150-S6).

Claudine recommends that this budget be accepted as submitted.

There was a discussion about a COLA versus a raise. Most departments are including raises in their salary figures but not necessarily COLA. John noted the budget can be adjusted once the BOS decides how to handle COLAs. Rick noted it is best to wait to make a decision until all of the information is available. Chuck instructed Tammy to revise the full-time salary line to include employee raises, and the KMBC will review the revised budget. These possible raises will be distinct from a COLA.

Heritage (4590)

Ernie gave an overview of the role of the Heritage Commission, including their role in assisting Public Works in doing repairs to historic town-owned properties. They also work on grants to help offset the cost of maintaining properties that are considered part of the town's historic heritage. He explained they bring more money into the town through their efforts than they spend. He noted he anticipates the town may get a \$20,000 Moose Plate grant. He explained the stained-glass rehabilitation project for the Museum; Claudine asked about funding for this, and Ernie noted the building maintenance fund will assist plus fundraising and sponsorships. The cost is \$3,500/window for smaller ones, and \$4,500/window for older ones. He also explained the documentation project for at-risk properties. Ernie noted that actual expenditures are low as members did not submit their receipts for reimbursement. He explained multiple members use their own supplies, including printers and toner, to complete their work for the Commission.

- *Salaries (4590-13)*: A transcriptionist has been hired to type meeting minutes.
- *Matching Grants (4590-04)*: The budget will be reduced to \$1 as a placeholder for future possibilities.
- *Postage (4590-05)*: Ernie explained there are anticipated higher costs for mailings due to the stained-glass project.
- *Seminars and Training (4590-07)*: In recent years, training was done online but will likely be in person next year. NH Humanities also holds annual training, and it is hoped member(s) may attend in 2023.
- *Supplies (4590-08)*: Plaques will be purchased to recognize sponsors for the stained-glass restoration project, and celebrations are being planned for the addition of the Plains to the National Historic Register as well as the completion of the stained-glass project.
- *Town Brochure (4590-09)*: This project is planned to be completed in 2023.

- *Transfer to Heritage Fund (4590-11):* Ernie explained when a warrant article is approved, the funds move from the General Fund to the Heritage Fund. In 2022, a warrant article passed for \$5,000, but these funds are not listed under the actuals; Paula will be contacted. The budget will be reduced to \$1 as a placeholder for future possibilities. Trish will clarify with Paula how the warrant article funds are reflected in the budget.

Social Services (4445)

The only social service agency funded by the town that increased its budget for 2023 is Meals on Wheels; Marissa shared the figures they provided representing assistance offered to Kingston residents. All other agencies are level-funded.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Chuck will provide an ARPA funding update at the next meeting.
- Actual spending figures will be reviewed at the next meeting.
- There was a discussion about the raises approved by the BOS for some department heads. These raises total over \$140,000. Chuck explained that the money for these increases was available in each department's budget. He confirmed that the BOS does not vote on transfers between different line items in a budget on a line-by-line basis. Rick expressed a concern that if the budget fails to pass, and the default budget is enacted, the increased department head salaries would remain, but raises for other department employees would not. Annemarie is concerned about actual spending on utilities versus what is budgeted; if there is a surplus, she asked Chuck how it would be spent. Multiple members expressed their desire for consistency. There was a discussion about communication between the BOS and the KMBC. Shaw noted the issue is not whether a department head deserves the raise, rather that the KMBC needs to have all the information to make an informed decision.
- There was a discussion about the possibility of the budget failing at the polls and needing to revert to the default budget. This discussion included how the default budget could be estimated. Chuck explained the KMBC has the authority to adjust line items if they are not comfortable with what is budgeted. John asked if the final budget figure can be adjusted and have departments adjust their line items rather than the KMBC choosing line items to adjust; Chuck noted adjustments must be done by line. It was noted that the salary increases decided by the BOS have a long-term impact on the budget. Shaw emphasized that the budgetary process needs to be reviewed, not necessarily particular line items. Chuck noted the town does not have a pay matrix to compare salaries.

NEW BUSINESS:

John explained how the capital reserve fund is utilized by the town. He noted there is no anticipated transfer.

NEXT MEETING: Sunday, 11/20/22 at 6 p.m.

MM&S: Trish moved to conclude the meeting at 9:06 p.m., seconded by Stacy.

>>These minutes were voted as final without amendment on 12/28/22<<