

# CONWAY MUNICIPAL BUDGET COMMITTEE

Monday, January 3, 2022

Professional Development Center  
Kennett Middle School, Conway, NH

Jim LeFebvre called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM. The following Budget Committee members were present: Chair Jim LeFebvre, Vice-Chair Peter Donohoe, Erik Corbett, Randy Davison, Bob Drinkhall, John Edgerton, John Colbath, Caitlin Hickey, Frank Jost, Dave Jensen, Terry McCarthy, William Marvel, and Stacy Sand

Excused: Ellin Leonard

Absent: Mike Fougere

The pledge of allegiance was led by Ms. Sands.

3. CSD Budget Books were distributed.

4. Approval of Outstanding Minutes (12/15/2021)

**Mr. Jost moved, seconded by Mr. Donohoe to approve the December 15, 2021 minutes as written. Motion Carries (10-0-3 [Ms. Sands, Mr. Jensen, and Mr. Colbath]).**

5. Town Presentation by Department:

1. Executive

- ▶ Budget is \$12,712,868 including the Library and Police Department
- ▶ Increase 5.13%
- ▶ No revaluation this year
- ▶ Difficult to compare to last year due to change in financial software.
- ▶ All employee benefits were moved into individual departments, eliminating the “virtual” employee benefit department.
- ▶ Tax collection was transferred from the finance department to Town Clerk.
- ▶ The road crew and maintenance garages now have their own budget.
- ▶ Inflation is higher than it was in 1990.
- ▶ The executive budget has 3 months of Mr. Eastman’s salary for his training period.
- ▶ The part-time clerk’s hours are being expanded.
- ▶ Due to the inability to find an assessor, the town has gone with a contract assessor.
- ▶ Legal service budget went over in 2021, but is level funded for 2022.
- ▶ The old rec site was kept by the town which has been cleaned up with a pickle ball court partially installed.
- ▶ The Town Hall Annex (old town hall) has been kept by the town in hopes of renting out the offices. The budget is close to breaking even; however, there needs to be a capital reserve fund for upcoming repairs.
- ▶ The non-precinct fire contracts are up for renewal and contracts been presented to the Fire Chiefs.
- ▶ The ambulance contract is up for renewal and have been awarded to Conway Village and Action Ambulance.
- ▶ Full-time (with benefits) janitor has been hired to clean the town buildings
- ▶ An assistant building inspector has been hired and is being trained to be able to fill the building inspector position upon retirement.

- 49 ▶ There has been a 25% increase in town business, except for welfare due to no housing and “free”  
50 money offered through the government.  
51 ▶ Firework budget has been increased.  
52 ▶ One loan was requested through TANS to pay a school payment and was paid off within 3  
53 weeks with a \$200 interest payment.  
54

55 Questions / Comments:

- 56 • **Mr. Marvel** suggested using bonds rather than capital reserve accounts, so the current residents  
57 are not paying for the next generation, especially with the inflation. **Mr. Holmes** stated he had not  
58 considered alternative funding but suggested starting the discussion with the select board. **Chair**  
59 **LeFebvre** asked Mr. Colbath to add the topic to the select board’s agenda. **Mr. Marvel** inquired  
60 if the capital reserve funds could be reallocated. **Mr. Holmes** advised they could not be as the  
61 governing body voted on it and the funds would need to be used for the indicated purpose.  
62 However, there have been instances in the past where the capital reserve accounts were not funded.  
63 • **Mr. Davison** inquired if the town is required to provide ambulance services. **Mr. Holmes** advised  
64 they are not statutorily required to provide services; however, the governing body has repeatedly  
65 supported the ambulance contracts. Further noting the town only pays a subsidy as the ambulance  
66 company bill for their services.  
67

68 2. Precincts

69 Center Conway – Chief Merrill, Treasurer, Nancy Leavitt, and Commissioner McLaughlin

- 70 ▶ Total operating budget is \$264,617 an increase of \$8,850 due to inflation.  
71 ▶ The capital reserve contribution increased from \$40,000 to \$60,000 to try and stay ahead.

72 Questions / Comments:

- 73 • **Mr. Jost** inquired how many calls they had last year and how many full-time staff. **Chief**  
74 **Merrill** advised they responded to 293 calls, and he is the only full-time employee.  
75 • **Mr. Corbett** inquired what the “fast squad” was. **Chief Merrill** advised it is the first  
76 responders.  
77 • **Ms. Sands** inquired if the \$10,000 left in the building maintenance account will be spent and  
78 on what. **Chief Merrill** advised there is a tower that does not meet code and needs to be taken  
79 down. This project could not be completed last year as everyone was busy, but they hope to  
80 have it completed in 2022.  
81 • **Chair LeFebvre** inquired of the purpose for building up the capital reserve account. **Chief**  
82 **Merrill** advised a fire engine and chief’s vehicle were replaced last year. This year they plan  
83 to replace the 2002 ambulance due to age and condition.  
84 • **Mr. Donohoe** inquired if outside training is done collaboratively with other precincts. **Chief**  
85 **Merrill** advised most training is done in house, and they have done outside training with  
86 Redstone in the past.  
87

88 East Conway – Kathy Golding

- 89 ▶ The budget is level funded at \$6,490  
90 ▶ Both capital reserve accounts had slight increases.

91 Questions / Comments

- 92 • **Mr. Jost** inquired the number of calls the department responded to.  
93 • **Ms. Sands** inquired why the equipment budget is 2x it was previously.  
94 • **Ms. Golding** was unable to answer any questions.  
95 • **Ms. Sand** asked to have the Chief present at a future meeting to answer questions.  
96

97 Redstone – Chief Henry and Commissioner Tom Coughy

- 98 ▶ Proposed budget is \$94,500 due to inflation.

- 99 ▶ Equipment budget includes equipment on the vehicle that needs to be replaced.
- 100 ▶ Looking at getting better software.

101 Questions / Comments

- 102 • **Chair LeFebvre** inquired of the age of the vehicle being replaced. **Chief Henry** advised it is a
- 103 1990.
- 104 • **Ms. Hickey** inquired what is included in the “fire” budget. **Chief Henry** advised it includes a
- 105 firefighter stipend, cost of equipment, and training.
- 106 • **Mr. Jost** inquired how many calls the precinct responded to in 2021. **Chief Henry** advised it
- 107 was approximately 60 calls.
- 108 • **Mr. Colbath** inquired if the \$10,000 intended increase was included in the \$15,000 increase.
- 109 **Commissioner Coughy** advised it should be 10% not \$10,000.
- 110 • **Mr. Colbath** inquired why the legal fund needed to be increased by \$10,000. **Commissioner**
- 111 **Coughy** noted the fund only has \$5,000, which will not cover many legal expenses and they
- 112 plan to use the legal fund soon for potential consolidation with other precincts.
- 113 • **Mr. Corbett** asked to have all precincts present their proposed budget in similar formats.
- 114 **Chair LeFebvre** stated he would make that request.
- 115

116 3. Parks and Recreation – John Eastman and Mike Lane

- 117 ▶ Budget is down 2.5%
- 118 ▶ The training and conference line has increased due to the need to hire new staff.
- 119 ▶ Information technology, employee benefits, and maintenance are new line items. The Supply
- 120 line item has also been broken up into actual cost.
- 121 ▶ New software allows for online registration and payment of programs.
- 122 ▶ Building heat is zero based on terms of the lease contract with the school.
- 123 ▶ Program cost is down due to sponsorships and community generosity.

124 Questions / Comments

- 125 • **Chair LeFebvre** clarified due to no meter in the rec space there is an inability to develop
- 126 heating cost. **Mr. Holmes** stated the lease indicates they are to pay any increase on a 3-year
- 127 average and there has been no increase.
- 128 • **Ms. Sand** clarified how the office supply line was divided up. **Mr. Eastman** stated it is
- 129 broken into technology, supplies, office expense, and telephone. **Ms. Sand** noted the total of
- 130 all 4 lines is 2x as much as previously budgeted under the supplies line item. **Mr. Eastman**
- 131 clarified the technology is a transfer from the finance department budget and the technology
- 132 from the office supply line item is for computer software.
- 133 • **Mr. Marvel** inquired of the increase for retirement contributions. **Ms. Golding** advised the
- 134 contribution increased from 11.17% to 14.53% and health insurance increased by 10.83%
- 135 • **Mr. Donohoe** clarified \$68,000 in revenue was collected from summer camp. **Mr. Eastman**
- 136 clarified it is \$86,000 that came from registrations for all programs.
- 137 • **Mr. Jensen** suggested the Friends of Conway Rec develop a website that allows for online
- 138 donations.
- 139

140 4. Conservation Commission – Rob Adair

- 141 ▶ Proposed budget is \$18,700 up \$1,200 from last year.
- 142 ▶ The increase will cover the cost of painting 3 miles of boundary lines and 10 acres of timber
- 143 improvement.

144 Questions/ Comments

- 145 • **Mr. Marvell** inquired if the current use fees fund the conservation commission. **Mr. Adair**
- 146 stated it did. **Mr. Marvell** stated he feels it is time to have an increase in the cost to take land
- 147 out of current use.

- 148 5. Elections – Louise Inkell, Town Clerk.  
149 ▶ Budget is up as there are 3 elections this year.  
150
- 151 6. Registration and Tax Collector – Louise Inkell, Town Clerk  
152 ▶ Salary line increased due to converting the part-time position to full-time  
153 ▶ Benefits, postage, and computers were new line items transferred from other departments.  
154 Questions / Comments  
155 • **Mr. Jost** inquired of the extra work associated with the parking passes and if that is being  
156 accounted for the revenue and expense of the program. **Ms. Inkell** advised her department has  
157 the initial contact either in person or telephonically and that is where the extra work came in.  
158 Otherwise, they are not involved in the issuance of the parking passes.  
159 • **Ms. Inkell** clarified the office being busier is due to answering a lot of questions, increased  
160 home sales, and vehicle registrations.  
161 • **Ms. Sand** inquired how much the increase was to move the part-time person to full-time  
162 including benefits. **Ms. Inkell** noted the increase in the salary is \$23,000 for 32 hours and  
163 increased seasonal hours.  
164 • **Mr. Drinkhall** inquired of the unpaid tax amount for 2021. **Ms. Inkell** advised it was  
165 \$800,000 which is down from the usual \$1.2 million.  
166
- 167 7. Assessing – Cori Hilton, Assessing Clerk  
168 ▶ Ms. Hilton is NH Assessing Staff Member of the Year  
169 ▶ The budget is up 11%, due to the assessor contracted services with Corporate Associates.  
170 ▶ Slight change in technology for a software upgrade.  
171 Questions / Comments  
172 • **Mr. Holmes** noted the contracted assessor cost \$105,000 per year; however, they found \$20  
173 million in unassessed utilities.  
174 • **Mr. Holmes** explained the difficulties he faced in attempting to hire a full-time assessor.  
175
- 176 8. Legal – Tom Holmes, Town Manager  
177 ▶ The 2021 legal expenses exceeded the budget.  
178 ▶ The proposed budget is level funded.  
179 ▶ Some situations are covered by Primex.  
180
- 181 9. Ambulance – Tom Holmes, Town Manager  
182 ▶ The budget is up approximately 28%.  
183 ▶ New contracts are for 5years 8 months so the next renewal will be inline with the calendar  
184 year.  
185 ▶ This budget still has last years contract rate until the warrant is voted on.  
186 Questions / Comments  
187 • **Mr. Holmes** stated East Conway, Center Conway, and Redstone are having a meeting to  
188 discuss potential consolidation of services.  
189
- 190 10. Fire Emergency Management – Tom Holmes, Town Manager  
191 ▶ The budget is down, as last year was the 5-year review.  
192 ▶ Budget is up due to non-fire precinct payments  
193
- 194 11. Building Inspector – Tom Holmes, Town Manager

195 ▶ The proposed budget is increases to cover licensing and certification courses for the new  
196 Assistant Building Inspector. This position was initially planned as a part-time code  
197 enforcement to regulate STR.  
198

199 12. Health – Tom Holmes, Town Manager

- 200 ▶ Stipends are paid to the Health Office and Assistant Health Officer
- 201 ▶ Health kennel fees increased

202 Questions / Comments

- 203 • **Mr. Marvel** inquired of the health kennel fees. **Mr. Holmes** advised when animals are not  
204 picked up by their owner they go to the Humane Society and the town is responsible for all  
205 fees until that animal is adopted.  
206

207 13. Welfare – Tome Holmes, Town Manager

- 208 ▶ \$3,000 of the \$30,000 budget was expended.
- 209 ▶ Salary and benefit have increased.
- 210 ▶ Ms. Parker wrote grants that brought in money for nonprofit organizations, scholarships for  
211 low-income children to attend the rec program, and prepares Buckets of Love for the elderly  
212 through donations.

213 Questions / Comments

- 214 • Chair LeFebvre inquired of the reason for non-expenditure of this budget. Mr. Holmes stated  
215 due to unemployment benefits, child stipends, and eviction bans the request for assistance was  
216 down.
- 217 • **Mr. Holmes** stated he has asked Mr. Parker to work on additional grants for rural  
218 development.
- 219 • **Mr. Colbath** stated this is a benevolent valley and there are a lot of agencies that work  
220 together to provide services.
- 221 • **Ms. Hickey** examples of what the \$30,000 would have been used on. **Mr. Holmes** advised it  
222 would be used for fuel assistance, groceries, utility payments, and housing. They will be  
223 looking at expanding assistance to automobile repairs.  
224

225 6. Public **Comment Discussion**

226 **Chair** LeFebvre tabled further discussion and action on this topic.  
227

228 7. Old Business

229 8. New Business

- 231 • **Chair LeFebvre** noted the recording secretary will be absent on January 19 & 24, 2022. Mr.  
232 Donohoe stated he would take attendance for the minutes.
- 233 • **Chair LeFebvre** asked for a subcommittee to look at comparable school districts based on his  
234 concern for the 80% personnel cost in Conway School District. Ms. Sands and Mr. Marvel  
235 volunteered for this committee.
- 236 • The default budget committee will meet on January 10, 2022, at 5:00 PM at the Town Hall.
- 237 • **Mr. Colbath** noted the board is still looking for representatives from the precincts.
- 238 • A discussion ensued regarding the number of fire departments and the desire for them to cooperate  
239 and consolidate  
240

241 9. Public and Media Questions/Comments:

242 Quinten Lewis, Conway

- 243 • Inquired if the town charges the precincts for tax collecting services. **Chair LeFebvre** stated he is  
244 sure they are charged for the services.

- 245 • Inquired if the fire precinct meetings are public and where are they posted. Chair LeFebvre advised  
246 the meetings are posted in the Conway Daily Sun.  
247 Lisa Towle, Center Conway
- 248 • Inquired of the hourly wage for the janitor. **Mr. Colbath** stated the selectboard will be voting on the  
249 contract on January 4, 2022.
- 250 • Inquired if the 2.5% decrease in the Parks and Rec budget is due to 3 months of Mr. Eastman’s salary  
251 being added to the executive budget. **Mr. Colbath** stated he believes it is a combination of that and  
252 Mr. Eastman’s replacement will be at a lower rate of pay.  
253
- 254 10. Adjournment
- 255 **Mr. Donohoe moved, seconded by Mr. Corbett to adjourn the meeting at 8:13 PM. Motion Carries.**  
256
- 257 Respectfully Submitted,  
258 *Lisa E. Towle*  
259 Recording Secretary