

**Middleton Budget Committee**

**Public Hearing/ Meeting**

**January 19, 2020**

**Board Members:**

Roxanne Tufts-Keegan, Chair	Laura Parker, Vice Chair
Tracy Donovan-Laviolette	Scott Ferguson
Bonnie Gagnon	Mary Knapp, School Board Rep
Joe Varga, Selectman Rep	Janet Kalar (Absent)

Roxanne Tufts-Keegan motions to open the Town of Middleton Public Hearing at 6:31 PM.

Mark Knapp motions to accept the January 6, 2021 minutes as written. Tracy Donovan-Laviolette seconds, all in favor.

Roxanne Tufts, Keegan mentions how the Board of Selectmen initially recommended a 5% pay increase across the board but this has been changed to a 2.5% across the board with the exception of the Police Chief, and the new bookkeeper. Question was asked regarding the new police secretary who has been in the position for only a couple months. This employee was included in the 2.5% increase. Scott Ferguson does not feel the elected positions should be getting the pay increase. They are not considered employees.

Deputy bookkeeper is budgeted for 16 hours a week @ \$15.00 per hour. Current full time secretary only works 4 days a week and the Board of selectmen would like this person to be in the office one day with the current secretary and also there the day the full time secretary is not in the office. Joe Varga mentions how the Board looked into BMSI but are leaning more towards a payroll company to complete the weekly payroll. Laura Parker then questions the need for the deputy bookkeeper. Payroll companies do a lot of the reporting as well which will take a lot of the work off the secretary.

Joe Varga speaks about the increase in the computer line. The Board of Selectmen are looking into entering a lease agreement. Question asked regarding the ages of the current computers. Ages are unknown at this time. Joe Varga stated that the computer company would have to come in and look at all computers. If they are still in good condition they would be included in the lease.

Question asked about the website status. Joe Varga commented that the new website should be going live on February 12<sup>th</sup>.

Town Meeting line was increased. Joe Varga stated that since the March meeting is scheduled to happen outside due to Covid, that the town would need a sound system to host the meeting outside.

Bonnie Gagnon asked about the Deputy Town Clerk. This individual is included in the 2.5% pay increase. Joe Varga mentioned how this employee started back in March or April of last year.

Discussion on Health/Dental insurance. This year the rates have increased. Full time employees only pay 10% of the cost, the town pays 90%. Question asked regarding the deductibles. Joe Varga did not have that answer.

There is a new line added this year for electricity for the new salt shed.

Building & Maintenance line increase because of the new security system.

Discussion on the Police Chief salary increase. Police Chief is requesting a 7% increase. Roxanne Tufts-Keegan read aloud the document provided from the Chief regarding other towns Police Chief salaries.

- New Durham, \$77,216 ( Chief and 4 officers)
- Sandwich, \$67,457 ( Chief and 1 officer)
- Tamworth, \$74,464 ( Chief and 2 officers)
- Mount Vernon, \$82,500 ( Chief and 2 officers)
- Milton, \$83,408
- Farmington, \$87,506

Question on how long Chief has been a chief? He has been chief since summer of 2019. Question on is it the policy of the town to hire new employees at the rate of the out-going employee? Joe Varga mentions that since he has been on the board they haven't hired that many.

Police secretary is budgeted for 16 hours a week at \$16.97 (this is what the out-going secretary was making). Out-going secretary has over 20 years' experience.

Cell phone stipends have gone to \$50 for all employees who receive them. Question on how many highway employees receive cell phone stipends. Joe Varga answers that currently all four receive the stipend. The police Chief and the 3 fulltime officers, Welfare Director, Code Enforcement Officer, Emergency Management Director and Fire Chief all receive the stipend.

The Selectmen increase the medical supplies hoping to staff the ambulance during the day for daytime coverage. If town is covering more calls, the selectmen believe there would be a need for more supplies. The Selectmen increase the shift pay to budget for two people to be on-call 24 hours a day 365 days a year. The current budget was only for nights and weekends. Joe Varga mentions that the ambulance revolving account can help offset the cost. Question on how much is currently in the ambulance revolving account? That number is not known. Laura Parker mentions that even if the revolving account is to offset and the whole \$95,000 is budget the town would still need to raise those funds, especially is the amount is unknown in the revolving account. Milton has started billing the town for mutual aid calls. Question was how many times has Milton charged Middleton. Joe Varga stated that Milton has provided mutual aid approximately 2 times a month since October. There is a new EMT that has been providing a lot of daytime coverage for Middleton.

Increase in the Fire Chief salary. Joe Varga explains that this is because they figured out his hourly rate and it was less than the other officers in the department. Board of Selectmen increase the stipend and then also included the Chief in the member expense so when he went on a call he would get an hourly rate during that time. Stipend is budget for 8 hours a week administrative duties. Question on how much of a percentage increase that is? It approximately a 5% increase in the stipend amount.

Increase in the Building & Maintenance is due to currently the Fire Department members do a lot of the maintenance on the vehicles and they shouldn't have to do the maintenance.

Question on the computer line. If the town is looking to lease wouldn't the fire department included in that lease. Joe Varga mentioned that this was an oversight and should not be budgeted because fire department would be included in the lease.

Joe Varga spoke about the contracted services and the increase is due to a mutual aid agreement. This agreement would be for hazardous spills, or if there is a boat needed etc.

Code enforcement officer is a new person that is why there is a difference in last year budgeted amount and this years budgeted amount.

Emergency Management cell phone stipend. Currently that person is the Police Chief who also receives a stipend as the Police Chief. Question, does he receive both stipends? Answer was yes he receives both stipends. Discussion on how one person would need \$100 per month for one cellphone. Question was asked if he has a cell phone for Police and a separate cell phone for Emergency management. Answer was there is only one phone.

Highway overtime. This increase was explained by Joe Varga. Usually the budget only represents 20 events. The norm is that there is about 30 plus events each year. The selectmen budgeted for 30 events at \$1500 each event.

Highway diesel year to date is only at \$7,000 expended, why the increase?

Shop supplies has increased because some items were being paid for out of other lines. This line is for tools and misc items.

Joe Varga explained highway on-call pay. Currently in the winter months each highway employee is on call and receive 2 hours of overtime pay per week. In the summer months there is an employee on for a week on a rotation schedule. For this week the employee is on call they would receive 2 hours a day. Current YTD is \$20,500. Discussion on this being part of their normal job and why should they receive on call pay. It is part of the current policy. Question on if this can be change and it can. The Police also receive on-call pay as do EMS who are on call.

Highway seasonal employee does not receive a cell phone stipend. Seasonal employee works from 1<sup>st</sup> snowfall through April 1<sup>st</sup>. Scott Ferguson questioned the amount budgeted for the seasonal. This amount should be lower if this is a new employee. Joe Varga agreed. This amount was calculated on the previous seasonal worker. Seasonal employee makes \$19.05 and works approximately only 20 weeks. Total should be \$15,240

Highway tree pruning YTD expenses show that nothing has been spent. Joe Varga explained that this was due to staffing issues. Question was asked if there was staffing coverage issues than why did that not reflect in the salary lines.

School Diesel. Bonnie Gagnon asked if there was follow up from the last meeting regarding the school invoices. Joe Varga advised that the invoices were just sent out last week.

The Selectmen are looking into the streetlights and possibly changing to LED's if it would be cost effective.

Discussion on the tonnage budgeted. YTD is \$140,698. November expense was not included in this total so there would need to be an additional \$30,000 added for end of year cost. Joe Varga explains that there is a monthly fee for the truck to come out and then there is a fee for the tonnage, which has been higher since the changeover to Pinard. This past bulk pick-up was less than the prior pick-up.

Animal Control Officer is an hourly employee. Cocheco dues are only paid when we utilize the services. Tracy Donovan-Laviolette mentioned how the name of facility has been changed and should be updated. There has been no money spent on the ACO uniform line in 2020.

Discussion on the donation lines. According to the end of year expense report, no funds have been paid out. Question asked if the amounts budgeted, were requested from each organization. That is unknown.

Welfare officer now includes the Health Officer for an additional \$50.00 per month. This also includes a 2.5% increase.

Last year children's parties was combined with other culture/rec.

Roxanne Tufts-Keegan mentions that anything with an asterisk on the budget sheet in the capital reserve section the Selectmen are looking to fund through the fund balance. Laura Parker asked what the fund balance amount currently is. Joe Varga could not provide that number.

Joe Varga mentioned how the Board of Selectmen have not completed the warrant articles. Another public hearing will need to be held to disclose that information. Joe Varga spoke about two warrant articles that will be written for the Highway Vehicle and Highway Building Fund where they would only be funded if at the end of the year the Highway Department had remaining funds in their budget. Laura Parker asked how that would work. If the town is a bottom line budget and another department went over there would be no funds left to fund these articles. Joe Varga agreed and advised that the funds would have to come from the prior year according to legal. Laura Parker mentioned that so it would be from the fund balance like normal.

Roxanne Tufts-Keegan asked the public for their input regarding the raises amounts. Most of the participation agreed with the cost of living increase and if that is what was submitted for the school employees it should be the same across the board. Need to take in consideration when doing raises that the town health insurance increased this year and that the employees only pay 10%.

One participant mentioned how the cell phone stipends should only be for department heads and not all full time employees.

Mary Knapp wants added to the minutes that she would like to thank Joe Varga for putting in numerous hours into the budget.

Mary Knapp motions to close the public hearing at 8:31 PM. Bonnie Gagnon seconds, all in favor.

Roxanne Tufts-Keegan mentions that the Budget Committee needs to have the final budget to the Board of Selectmen for posting by February 17<sup>th</sup>, so the budget committee should need to complete the budget at least a week before.

Roxanne Tufts-Keegan brings forth the school warrants articles that have been adjusted this past week at the school meeting that the Budget Committee needs to re-vote on. School Board wants to take \$6,000 from Special Ed fund and place it in to the Building Fund.

Special Education- School Board is recommending to reduce to \$1,000. Mary Knapp makes the motion to reduce the special education warrant article to \$1,000. Scott Ferguson seconds. Board voted 0 in favor and 7 opposed motion did not pass. 0-7-0

School Board recommends adding \$5,000 to the Bus Capital reserve Fund. Mary Knapp motions. Tracy Donovan-Laviolette seconds. Board voted, 7 in favor and 0 opposed, motion passed. 7-0-0

School Board recommends changing the Building Construction Capital Reserve from \$10,000 to \$16,000. Mary Knapp makes the motion. Tracy Donovan-Laviolette seconds. Laura Parker makes note that the Budget Committee budget will now increase by \$6,000. Board voted. 7 in favor and 0 opposed, motion passed. 7-0-0

Roxanne Tufts-Keegan mentions to the public that there will be 3 open positions for Budget Committee this year on the ballot.

Roxanne Tufts-Keegan will send out notice for next public hearing to go over the warrant articles.

Tracy Donovan-Laviolette makes a motion to adjourn at 8:39 PM. Mary Knapp seconds, board voted, motions passed 7-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,  
Laura Parker