



Town Council Budget Meeting Minutes



Wednesday, January 17, 2024, at 6:30 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Call to Order

Vice Chair Harrington called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Present at the meeting were Vice Chair Harrington, Councilor Hunter, Councilor Koenig, Councilor Healey and Town Manager Paul Micali.

Chairman Rothhaus and Councilor M. Murphy were excused. Councilor N. Murphy arrived at 6:34 PM

Before beginning, Mr. Micali shared that at the last meeting, there was a question about how the Master Plan was funded. He shared that the previous one was funded over a number of years, and this will be discussed again next Wednesday to see if the Council wishes to have this newer one funded over a period of several years as well. Next, Mr. Micali shared that petition bonds are due by Friday, February 9th and petition warrant articles are due by Tuesday, February 13th. He also wanted to stress that the required signatures for these only count if the people signing are registered to vote in the town of Merrimack. Lastly, Mr. Micali shared that the primary is Tuesday, January 23rd and they will not be running live results with the media division. He is encouraging people to go to the main news networks for results.

The Town Council will hold a public meeting to review the 2024/25 budget, to include the following departments: Solid Waste Disposal, Wastewater Treatment Fund, Highway, Equipment Maintenance, Buildings & Grounds and Public Works Administration

Public Comment - None

- **Solid Waste Disposal**

Mr. Micali began by sharing that Solid Waste has two unions, and one union has a raise included in the budget while the other is Teamster, and they are currently negotiating their raises. DPW Director Dawn Tuomala and Transfer Station Foreman Kris Perreault were present to share the budget. Ms. Tuomala stated that there was an overall 9.75% cost decrease for the department, which includes the fueling station, which was 1.4%. Mr. Perreault then shared that the greatest change in this budget is with the contractual statements, which include:

- Solid waste disposal through waste management- 5 year contract that runs from December 15th, 2021 to December 14th, 2025. With the anticipated tonnage, their average went from \$79.25 per ton to \$84.63 per ton as a tipping fee.
- Single stream recycling through waste management- 5 year contract that runs from February 1st, 2022 to January 31st 2027. 3 costs: Equipment rental- \$650/month that stays consistent throughout the contract, Transportation which has a \$9 increase per haul every year (from \$229 to \$238 this year), and blended value of the commodities that they collect, which they're seeing a downward trend- from \$102.60 per ton with an annual low of \$76.48 this past December.
- Construction demo through a subsidy of waste management resource- 3 year contract that runs from December 15, 2021 to December 14, 2024. Increase from \$97 per ton to \$98.08 per ton.

Continuing on with the budget, Mr. Perreault shared that the only small change in the budget is in special waste disposal, which he shared that a lot of the costs are recovered through their fee structures as well as any scrap metal they recover.

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- Wastewater Treatment Fund

Before beginning, Vice Chair Harrington shared that this fund is tax neutral and is based on user fees from the sewer enterprise funds. Mr. Micali shared that this department also has non-union and union employees, so the salary increases are similar to the solid waste disposal section. Leo Laviolette was present to share the budget, beginning with the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System Permit, issued by the EPA, which has resulted in an increase in cost of chemicals to maintain their permit. Bulking agents for compost and wet sludge has also increased due to sawdust vendors increasing their rates. Maintenance machinery has increased, largely due to the cost of motors and variable frequency drives. Lastly, the budget for manhole covers increased by \$10,000 to replace some covers (about 30 total). Mr. Micali specified that the covers are flip top with hinges to reduce back injuries for employees.

- Highway

Lori Halverson shared that for this budget, the equipment rental line item increased due to the RC mower for the storm water retention and detention basins increasing by \$1,000 for a week. Next, line 8300 went down \$3,000 because that was a one-time training session. Maintenance buildings increased for gutters for the new highway garage. Maintenance grounds also increased for wood fence repairs at Bishop field. Sand and salt did not increase much since the prices for salt are starting to come down. For other outside services, street sweeping decreased by \$40,000 due to stopping using sand in their winter operations when they switched to magnesium chloride and pre-wetting the salt in the spinner so they do not have to clean up the sand as much in the spring. Lastly, buildings also decreased.

- Equipment Maintenance

Lori Halverson shared that this budget is mostly made up of personnel, but there was an increase of \$4,000 for a mitering bandsaw, and a one-time purchase of the tire changer wheel balancer, which cost \$10,000.

- Buildings & Grounds

Dawn Tuomala was present with Leo Laviolette to discuss the budget, which overall has decreased due to \$150,000 being moved to fire sprinklers and repurposing \$100,000 to work on various building maintenance projects. She shared that they have made a plan to reorganize all the fire extinguishers in their buildings, and are looking to upgrade some of their equipment such as mowers and vacuums. She also discussed plowing for the town parking lots, and setting up a building maintenance schedule to establish when things need to be upgraded or fixed before more damage is done, such as building foundations and rebar repair. Ms. Tuomala also shared that they will have another custodian starting soon and that will be a huge help with all these anticipated projects.

- Public Works Administration

Ms. Tuomala shared that this division has a 100% change over rate, so they are working on getting caught up. She shared that the MS4 testing budget stayed the same, and Mr. Micali mentioned that dues and fees increased due to training that the new Civil Engineer will need to partake in for their role. Ms. Tuomala shared that there is new software and computer equipment included in the budget due to technology always evolving in this field.

- Adjourn

MOTION made by Councilor Healey and seconded by Councilor N. Murphy to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION CARRIES 5-0-0

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Steagald

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