



Town Council Meeting Minutes



Wednesday, January 12, 2022, at 6:30 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Chairman Koenig called the meeting to order at 6:34 pm. Present at the meeting were Chairman Koenig, Councilor Harrington, Councilor Healey, Councilor Hunter, Councilor Murphy, Councilor Woods, and Town Manager Paul Micali. Vice Chair Rothhaus was excused.

The Town Council will hold a public meeting to review the 2022/23 budget, to include the following departments:

Public Comment

None.

• Wastewater Treatment Fund

Mr. Micali began by sharing that Wastewater Treatment has two unions: Teamsters, which is for the supervisors and secretaries, and AFSCME (American Federation of State County Municipal Employees) that covers the laborers in the union. He then shared that there are no raises in this budget for those two groups as they are in negotiations for new contracts. Public Works Director Kyle Fox then took over the presentation, first discussing the Wastewater budget along with Assistant Director Sarita Croce. He presented the following:

- The Wastewater division is responsible for processing more than 700 million gallons of wastewater from residents and businesses each year.
- They maintain 9 pump stations, 98 miles of sewer pipe, and the waste is removed from the water and turned into a class A biosolid (compost) that is available to residents and businesses and generates revenue for the division.
- There are 22 full-time positions and 1 part-time position, along with 1 summer intern position.

Mr. Fox then shared the goals for FY23, which include:

- Continue construction for the Phase III and IV upgrade projects.
- Continue to look for ways to improve operations to lower energy consumption.
- Work with various stakeholder groups to help establish appropriate limits for wastewater discharges.
- Continue to develop the Asset Management program.

Mr. Fox then highlighted that the budget is not funded out of the tax base, but rather funded solely out of sewer use fees. The proposed budget total for this year is \$4,179,578, which is up \$115,011 from last year. Personnel expenses are down 2.7%, or \$61,000, primarily due to the 53rd week of payroll not being carried through to this year and no contractual raises. He then shared the following budget updates:

- The operating expenses are up 7.2%, which is \$124,643
- Electricity up \$11,000

- Chemicals up \$12,461
- Bulking agent up \$26,760
- Maintenance machinery up \$81,420
 - Need to replace three bio-filters at a cost of \$60,920
- Other outside services down \$27,934
- General funds allocation down \$19,334
- PFAS water analysis down \$15,000
- Capital Expenditures are up 945.5%, or \$52,000
- Infrastructure up \$25,000
 - Manhole/Sewer Line Rehab (previously a CRF Item)
- Operating Equipment up \$27,000
 - Replace 15 Compost Blowers (Year 1 of 5 year program)

Mr. Fox then shared the proposed capital reserve fund purchases based on the CIP that was presented to the Council late last year, which include the following:

- SUV- Pretreatment (2008)
- Crane truck (1988)
- Pennichuck Pump Station (Design)
- Burt St Pump Station (Design/Build)
- Telemetry upgrade (Pump Station Communications) (Design)
- Agitator Process Logic Controller upgrade (Replacement)

Councilor Hunter wanted to clarify that wastewater is offset by sewer usage fees, so if the budget is cut in half if that means that the town sewer fees eventually go down by half, in which Mr. Micali said no because the sewer fees are set and there is a set amount for residential and commercial, and the fee for next year is already set at \$304 for residential. Further, he explained that that amount will be the price regardless of what the budget is and this is an enterprise fund, meaning that it is self-sufficient.

Councilor Healey asked about overtime/other, which has increased to \$84,135, which is significantly higher than the actual, which was \$53,000 in 2021. Ms. Croce clarified that this is for AFSCME, so they are hoping that they will help cover some of the overtime costs. She then shared that the plant is monitored 8 hours a day 7 days a week, and for problems that occur outside of those hours they utilize something called SCADA, which is an application that sends out a phone call to the on-call operator who then goes to check on the issue.

Councilor Healey then asked about cellphones, stating that there are 6 cellphones in the budget, and she is wondering if these cellphones are to communicate during the day or if they are for after hours only, in which Ms. Croce stated that it's to communicate during the workday, and there are 4 tablets as well on the cellphone plan that are used daily to pull up SCADA and view work orders, among other uses. Councilor Healey then asked about maintenance machinery, specifically about the bio-filters and if that was part of the renovation, in which Ms. Croce stated that there are 3 bio-filters that remove odors and they are required to change out all the media in the filters, which hasn't been done since 2016. Councilor Healey asked how long this will last since it is \$60,000, in which Ms. Croce stated these filters last 5 years.

Councilor Murphy asked if bids get put out when help is needed for CSSI, in which Mr. Micali stated there is a bidding process in which they get bids from vendors and will go with the lowest priced bid, which is usually CSSI.

- **Solid Waste Disposal**

Solid Waste Foreman Kris Perreault joined Mr. Fox to present the Solid Waste budget. Before they began, Mr. Micali provided a brief overview, stating that this budget is pretty straightforward and there are no contractual raises built into this budget as all 6 employees are under labor agreements. Similar to Wastewater, this budget is 100% tax based. Mr. Fox then shared that the Solid Waste division is responsible for the receipt and disposal of more than 10,000 tons of material each year. These materials include trash, demolition materials, recyclables, organic matter. Additional responsibilities include maintaining and monitoring of their two closed landfills and facilitating the swap shop. There are 6 full-time employees and 1 part-time employee. Mr. Fox then shared the goals for FY23, which include:

- Continue to look for ways to make the transfer of materials out of the facility as inexpensive and environmentally friendly as possible.
- Continue to partner with Eversource/NH Saves to offer free recycling events for residents.
- Transition to new recycling requirements and decal program.

Mr. Fox then shared the following budget updates:

- Proposed budget total - \$1,755,786
- Overall budget is up 2.4%, which is \$40,814
- Personnel expenses down 1.7%, or \$10,200
 - This is due to no contractual raises (Town is in negotiations with the two Unions)
 - 53rd week payroll from last year not carried through
- Operating expenses are up 4.4%, or \$49,014
 - Solid Waste Disposal up \$38,025
 - Tipping fee increase for trash from \$75.25 to \$79.25

- Tipping fee increase for Construction and Demolition material from \$75.25 to \$96.00
- Single Stream fee decrease from \$128 to \$115 (includes equipment rental and transportation of compactor and trailers)

Mr. Fox then shared the proposed capital reserve fund purchases based on the CIP that was presented to the Council late last year, which include the following:

- Pickup with plow, L-8 (2010)

Mr. Micali then wanted to share with the Council a potential savings of \$10,000, which is under maintenance vehicle and equipment. Since they just purchased 4 new trailers and have a fairly new tractor, loader, forklift, and bobcat, the budget has been changed to \$30,000 from \$40,000 as they will not need new equipment but rather just repairs on their current vehicles.

Councilor Harrington asked about the office trailer, stating that something needs to be done about this as there isn't even a bathroom for employees. Mr. Micali stated that the discussion for this has begun, and there are repairs to be made to the building to get them through the next year or so, but there is not a capital reserve fund for town buildings and building repairs. Councilor Harrington shared that she wants to work with them to establish a CRF for town buildings as they need to get voter approval for this, as she feels this is necessary as this is a big problem that needs to be dealt with.

Councilor Healey asked that regarding town wide trash pickup if it's cheaper to hire an outside vendor to pick it up, deliver it, and provide barrels, in which Mr. Fox stated that he can't imagine it would be any cheaper than running the transfer station as they would have to hire out trucks (including vehicle maintenance) and the trash will still have to go somewhere. Mr. Micali stated that they had previously looked at curb side pickup, and it was around \$1.9-\$2 million.

Chairman Koenig asked about equipment rental and why it has gone down by almost half of a thousand dollars, in which Mr. Fox shared that they no longer need to rent equipment since they purchased several new pieces of equipment, such as a forklift. Chairman Koenig then asked about operating supplies, stating that this went from \$5,000 to \$6,500. Mr. Fox stated that this is a combination of inflation and Covid since the employees need additional gear since they are out with the public.

- **Highway**

Mr. Micali highlighted some big changes, such as sand & salt, proposing another Equipment Operator I position, and why there is a need for a new base radio system at the garage. Mr. Fox then took over, stating that the Highway division is responsible for maintaining the town's public infrastructure, which includes 180 centerline miles of public roads, 14 bridges, 5 town parks, 4 burial grounds, 2 boat ramps, 50 acres of athletic fields, the community ice rink and volleyball courts, and Wasserman Park. Major work functions include snow removal and anti-icing treatment, pavement maintenance, drainage maintenance (including catch basins and pipes, ditch lines, and detention ponds), street sweeping, mowing, election set-up, road sign maintenance, project inspection, coordination with utility companies and contractors, and anything else that needs to be accomplished. The division has 23 full-time employees and 1 part-time position, plus 3 summer maintainer positions that help maintain the parks.

He then shared the goals for FY23, which include:

- Continue to perform all of our functions in a professional manner, giving top customer service to our residents.
- Look for opportunities to provide public service for the Town, including participating in outreach programs such as touch a truck events and other educational outreach opportunities.
- Improve overall condition of the road network through the continued use of the milling machine attachment combined with rental of a sidewalk paver to repair distresses before they become potholes.
- Develop protocols for maintaining the drainage infrastructure for reporting to the EPA under the MS4 program.

Mr. Fox then shared the following budget updates:

- Proposed budget total- \$4,235,849
- Overall budget up 1.3%, or \$52,875
- Personnel expenses up 1.9%, or \$39,926
 - No contractual raises- Town in negotiations with the two Unions
 - 53rd week payroll from last year not carried through
 - Added Equipment Operator I (\$79,553 salary and benefits)
- Operating expenses up 12.2%, or \$96,949
- General Insurance up \$10,404
- Sand & Salt up \$60,980
- Other outside services up \$13,725
 - Contracted cost for street sweeping and portable toilets
- Maintenance grounds- MYA up \$20,870
 - Portable toilets, dumpster, maintenance agreements for Elbit Fields
- Capital Expenditures down 6.6%, or \$84,000
- Infrastructure/Paving down \$80,000
- Communications Equipment up \$28,000
- Operating Equipment down \$31,000
 - Flail mower attachment- one time purchase last year

- Purchasing Exmark mower out of current year savings

Mr. Fox then shared the proposed capital reserve fund purchases based on the CIP that was presented to the Council late last year, which include the following:

- ¾ Ton Pickup w/ Plow (H-5)
- 2 6-wheel dump trucks (H-29), (New H-36)
- Field Tractor (H-42)
- Message Board (MB-11)
- Brine Trailer (MN-080)

Mr. Fox then shared major projects in the CRF, which include:

- US 3 over Baboosic Brook Bridge Replacement (Design)
- Stormwater improvements/Permit Compliance
- Woodland Park Drainage Improvements (Phase 1 of 6)
- Slope Stabilization at Seaverns Bridge Road canoe launch
- Souhegan River Trail
- Depot Street boat ramp repairs

Mr. Fox then wanted to touch upon the new Equipment Operator position they are proposing, stating that they have about 180 miles of roadway to maintain, and there are currently 15 equipment operators and 3 maintainers. It currently takes about 3 hours to plow 10 miles of road, and in addition to this need there are endless tasks in the summertime, such as cleaning catch basins, paving projects, ditch lines, gravel roads, ballfields, etc. He then shared that for this position, it would be about \$46,000 for wages and the balance would be the benefits (health insurance, retirement, etc.). Councilor Healey first asked about the base radio, asking if this can be tied to fire, police, and dispatch since they are Motorola radios, or alternatively if the radios being used now by these departments can be recycled and used for this department, in which Mr. Micali stated that he doesn't believe so because they are different style radios, but he can check on this.

Councilor Healey then asked about vehicle storage facility/old garage, specifically if this needs to be heated if they are just storing vehicles, in which Mr. Fox stated that having it heated allows for quicker response as the trucks can be pre-loaded before a storm, and Mr. Micali stated this helped extend the life of their vehicles as they can keep them washed off and stored away from the elements. Councilor Healey then asked about the MYA, asking why they get sod as the other fields only get seed and fertilizer. Mr. Fox replied that they are athletic fields, whereas the others are parks, so the grass does not need to be as nice since they are not being played on and this is a safety/performance/liability issue.

Councilor Murphy asked about the brine trailer, specifically what the department is doing about the amount of sodium and chloride in the mixture and potential health related issues, in which Mr. Fox stated he has been working with MVD about updating their winter policy and procedure manual to use less salt and receive more training. He then shared that all their vehicles have ground speed control, which is the

electronic control that determines the amount of salt the spreaders distribute, so when the trucks speed up more salt comes out and when the truck slows down less salt comes out. Councilor Harrington then shared that many of these issues with salt come from the state, mainly when making certain areas low or no salt areas. Mr. Fox elaborated on this, stating that back in 2011 the state participated in a pilot program that covered the area from Continental Blvd from Industrial Dr. to 101A to lower their salt use. This was successful but unfortunately fell to the wayside over the years. He then shared that another issue is staffing issues, and when there is less manpower the solution is to use more materials to keep the roads cleared for longer.

Councilor Hunter asked about equipment rental, particularly how the actuals last year were \$2,400 and this year it's \$5,900, in which Mr. Fox stated this is because of the programs he mentioned before, such as the rental of the sidewalk paver for the mill and fill program and using equipment to maintain the landfill, one of which being a remote control mower to tend to the grass. The last of this money is for renting equipment they do not own, but the main reasons are for the sidewalk paver and remote control mower.

- **Equipment Maintenance**

Mr. Micali provided a brief overview, stating that there are 5 employees, and they manage the town's fleet of vehicles and equipment. The budget is up about \$3,000 from last year, and Mr. Fox will provide details on this. Mr. Fox then took over the presentation, stating that this department is responsible for over 240 vehicles throughout the town, and their FY23 goals are to continue to improve on the knowledge of the new vehicles that departments purchase, and continue to work with departments to identify cost-saving measures to keep the fleet running.

Mr. Fox then shared the following budget updates:

- The total budget proposed is \$498,000, which is up \$3,800
- Personnel expenses are up \$907
- Operating expenses are up \$2,920
- General insurance is up \$620
- Maintenance machinery up \$900 (one time purchase of metal work bench)
- Maintenance office equipment up \$924
 - Diagnostic scanner user license updates

Councilor Woods asked about education and training, specifically if they are spending more for outside services with the newer vehicles. Mr. Fox stated that the crew does a good job staying on top of new vehicles and how to maintain them, and there have been vendors that come in to give training on new equipment.

- **Buildings & Grounds**

Mr. Micali stated that for this department, there are two full-time employees that take care of the grounds and buildings for the Town Hall campus, including Abbie Griffin Park, the Police station, and the John O'Leary Adult Community Center. Additionally, there are a couple of part-time custodians that take care of

the Police and Town Hall bathrooms. He shared that this budget is up about \$11,000 from the previous year. Mr. Fox then shared that the goals for FY23 are to continue providing safe work and public spaces for employees, residents, and business owners, and to continue to provide timely service to all of the users of the facilities while performing preventative maintenance on systems to maximize useful life.

Mr. Fox then shared the following budget updates:

- Proposed budget total is \$342,114
- Overall budget is up \$11,939
- Personnel expenses down \$3,366
- Operating expenses up \$15,305
- Electricity up \$9,184
- General insurance up \$1,906
- Maintenance buildings up \$3,352

Councilor Healey asked what the ambulance garage building is used for and how it is being used, in which Mr. Fox replied that this is now the office and warehouse for the buildings and grounds group, and also serves as storage for all their products, equipment, and tools. Chairman Koenig asked Mr. Fox to talk more about the electricity, specifically since LED lights were put in to save money but they are not. Mr. Fox replied that he can't quite explain it, but he knows they are saving electricity, but it has not shown on the bill yet. Mr. Micali then discussed that they will be looking into this more over the next year to see if they can lower costs even more. Chairman Koenig then asked if the increase in maintenance and buildings is because of Covid, in which Mr. Fox stated that this is inflation related and additional use due to Covid (cleaning products, gloves, masks, etc.).

Councilor Healey then asked about reconstructing the church parking lot, asking what this is in reference to, in which Mr. Micali stated this is a quote for paving a private church lot based on an agreement they have with the church, but the lot is not at 30 years yet, so he withdrew it from the budget. Another lot was for the police station, but the police chief said they can make do with what they have right now.

• **Public Works Administration**

Mr. Micali began by stating that there are 4 full-time employees for this department, including the town engineer, MS4 employee, DPW director, and secretary, and 4 summer engineering intern positions. This department oversees all the previously listed departments, and their budget is down about \$3,800. Mr. Fox then continued, sharing that this department is responsible for the upper level management of the six public works divisions. He then stated that the FY23 goals are:

- Continue the department wide initiative to foster the “big three”- professionalism, ethics, and teamwork.
- Enhance their GIS and asset management capabilities.
- Increase their solicitation of public input into capital projects.

- Continue to develop information sharing of the department's goals and accomplishments through social media platforms.

Mr. Fox then shared the following budget updates:

- Proposed budget total- \$547,581
- Overall budget down \$3,863
- Personnel expenses down \$5,497
- Operating expenses up \$1,634
- Office supplies up \$400
- General insurance up \$1,354

There were no questions from the Council regarding the budget, but members shared their gratitude for all the great work this department does to keep the town flourishing, as well as thank them for bringing the MS4 project to the town.

ADJOURN

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

MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Steagald