

# TOWN OF ORFORD

Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

November 23, 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Adams, Fred Kidder II, Tom Steketee

BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE PRESENT: Lawrence Hibbard, Ruth Hook, Bob Palifka, Bill Paxton., Tim Surprenant, Tom Thomson, Ken Wiren

OTHERS PRESENT: Esther Dobbins-Marsh

## Call Meeting to Order

The GoToMeeting was called to order at 5:30 pm.

Roll call taken (members listed above were all present)

## Review of the proposed 2021 Budget

Adams relayed a few changes that will be made to the 2021 budget. Highway part-time salaries decreased by \$4,000, office supplies increased by \$500 for perambulation paint & supplies, and there will be an increase to the conservation commission e-coli testing fees. Adams also announced that our assessor, Steve Allen, will be retiring at the end of 2020. Dobbins-Marsh will be contacting other companies for quotes for this service.

Adams asked Ruth Hook, chair of the Budget Advisory Committee to review the questions for the Selectboard that arose from the BAC's meeting on 11/19/20:

- **Salary Increases**
  - Adams confirmed the salary increases for eligible employees, for budget purposes, are between 1.4% and 2%. The budget worksheet reflects these increases
- **HRA benefit explanation**
  - The HRA benefit plan is associated with the HealthTrust medical insurance plan. The HRA does not pay first dollar towards the deductible – the plan reimburses covered persons after they pay \$500 of their deductible. The payout from the HRA caps at \$500 for single, \$1,000 for employee + one, and \$1,500 for family coverage. The HRA plan carries no balance – it's used as a reimbursement account only.
- **Cost of benefits to the Town for 2021** – if renewing the current plan with an 11% employee contribution. Additional quotes received were all higher in premium than the current plan

	<u>Single</u>	<u>Plus 1</u>	<u>Family</u>
○ Health Ins	8752.47	17504.82	23631.64
○ HRA Funding	500.00	1000.00	1500.00
○ Dental	475.79	914.64	1595.59
○ Life - Based on salary to a max of \$50,000 (Guaranty Issue \$20,000) @.21 per \$1,000 per month – total per budget line item			
○ NH State Retirement – Based on salary, Police @ 28.43% (mandatory) all other Full-Time employees @ 11.17% - total reflected per line item			

- **Highway salary by employee**
  - Adams said the total department salaries are in the budget, but individual salaries are not broken out
- **Employee salaries and/or hourly rates**
  - Adams said individual salaries are not usually provided
- **Engineering Fees paid over the last 3 years by vender**
  - DuBois & King \$134,870, Horizons \$5,215
- **Fund Balance explanation – how does it impact tax rate**
  - Adams explained that this is an accounting function created by underspending the approved budget, and by receiving additional funds not applied to the tax rate calculation. NH DRA sets the amount in the fund balance (from the audited financials) and calculates the minimum and maximum the Town should retain. The Selectboard has the discretion to use fund balance funds to reduce the tax rate, but also to keep the balance close to the maximum as it can be used to apply to unusual expenses, such as those associated with the 2017 flood,
- **Delinquent Taxes**
  - Adams said historically the Town runs between \$150,000 and \$200,000 in arrears, however, payment plans are in place and are current. Adams said the Selectboard does not want to be in the business of taking residents homes for tax sales.
- **Contracting out the Highway Department**
  - Adams said the Selectboard looked into the costs for road contracted services for the Town of Fairlee – applying the cost per mile in Fairlee to Orford, Orford would pay much more than we currently budget for. If the Town were to contract out road maintenance, and sell our equipment it would leave the Town vulnerable in the event the contractor decided not to renew its contract.
- **Number of employees looking to hire for the highway department**
  - Adams said the Town is running 2 help wanted ads for the highway department – one for an on-call seasonal plow operator and one for a full-time position. We are not hiring two employees – the town is trying to find help to cover the winter months in the event a full-time employee can't be found.
- **Sale of plow purchased in 2019 not being used – can this be sold?**
  - Adams will check with the road agent as he may have plans to use in some manner, but will discuss the possibility of selling.
- **Creating a Heavy Equipment/Road Improvement advisory committee**
  - Adams agreed that this is worth exploring. It was suggested to ask for volunteers in some manner (at the Annual Meeting if held, or a mailer). Adams said the Selectboard will work on this in 2021
- **Culvert steamer**
  - The BAC asked if the highway department has a culvert steamer – yes, they do
- **Crack sealing** - The BAC asked how it was determined what cracks were sealed on the Archertown Road, what it cost, and the line item applied to
  - \$8,000 was spent and the funds came from the encumbered funds from a prior warrant article for paving projects that was to expire in 2020
  - Cracks in the pavement on Archertown Road (starting at the intersection of Indian Pond Road) were sealed if less than 1" wide

- **Request a breakdown of paving projects, with costs, over the past 5 years**
  - Adams said Dobbins-Marsh work on this analysis
    - 2016 paved Archertown Road from Indian Pond Road to Town Road #100 - \$64,520
    - 2019 engineering fees used for the Archertown Hill project - \$24,000
    - 2020 paving sealing on Archertown Road - \$8,000
- **Highway vehicle replacement schedule change**
  - Adams said the Selectboard agreed to look at using 5/7/7 years as a replacement cycle for highway trucks, but it will not be for 2021. Palifka will adjust the replacement spreadsheet for the Selectboard to review at a future date
- **Taking a loan to purchase large ticket items, then using the CRF's to make annual payments**
  - The Selectboard would need to evaluate the total interest charges vs the loss of investment earning at the time of a purchase
- **1991 fire truck**
  - Adams reiterated the fire truck was not sold as it can be used for other purposes in town. The fire truck is stored at the fire station and is used for small forest and grass fires, storage of forestry equipment and can be loaned out to the highway department to clean culverts and wash off bridges
- **10-wheel dump truck warrant article**
  - There were many concerns expressed by BAC members about this purchase:
    - The road agent said money could be saved by using a 10-wheeler to pick up gravel vs having it delivered. Using wages and total benefit package costs, an estimated \$41.00/hourly was calculated. Conclusion by the BAC, with these costs added in, picking up gravel by the Town will not save money, and may actually cost the town more. The BAC would like to see a warrant article to purchase the 6-Wheeler
      - Adams will have the road agent prepare numbers for the 6-wheeler
    - A 10-wheeler will have extra costs such as additional chains, tires, possible rims, etc.
    - Would the 10-wheeler (if purchased), 6-wheeler, and 1½ ton trucks all fit in the garage with plows and wings on, or do you have to unhook and leave plows and wings outside to fit all trucks inside the Garage?
      - Adams said the road agent has reported in a prior meeting the plow on the 10-wheeler would need to be removed and stored outside the garage
  - Would it be beneficial to the Town by not purchasing the extended warranty and instead self-insure for repairs?
    - Adams said with a small number of vehicles, self-insuring isn't usually a cost-effective method
  - Could the Town add more funds to the Heavy Equipment CRF in place of purchasing the extended warranty?
    - Adams will discuss with the Road Agent
  - What would it cost Reed's to pull the 10-wheeler out of a ditch?
    - Adams will have the road agent look into the cost

- **High Bridge Road bridge warrant article**
  - The warrant as originally written will be changed to ask the voters to revise the purpose of the bridge to become a biking/walking bridge. This will only require the decking to be repaired as authorized at the 2017 Town Meeting
- **Various outstanding Town projects and associated costs**
  - Town Road #100 is scheduled to be completed this year
    - The FEMA project is estimated at a total cost of \$418,322 of which the Town is responsible for 25% = \$104,600
  - Quinttown Road Dual Culverts is scheduled to be completed this year
    - Total project cost estimated at \$39,000 – of this total \$25,500 will be submitted to FEMA at 75% reimbursement, net cost to the Town of \$20,000
  - Sawyer Brook Headwall will be completed in 2021
    - estimates to be obtained
  - Mousley Brook culvert replacement is still open
    - another FEMA major project – similar in price to the Town Road #100 culvert
  - Jacob's Brook Bridge on Archertown Road – to be completed in 2021 (State and Town project)
    - Total Cost per State \$1,200,000 (80% paid by the State-\$960,000 and 20% paid by the Town-\$240,000)
  - Archertown Hill Road reconstruction project – on hold
    - What have we already spent in Engineer Fee's for the above project?
    - \$45,000 (paid for design and Preliminary engineering)
    - Is this causing additional Engineer fees for Orford or is this the responsibility of the Engineer's?
      - Adams said there will be additional costs as more information needs to be obtained regarding water run off as it pertains to various property owners – at this time, no estimate received for the additional expense
  - High Bridge Road bridge
    - \$22,000 was approved to come from the Road Improvement CRF – the Selectboard is researching if additional funds will be needed to complete the project
  - River Road Paving – Road Agent Straight is heading the long-term paving project
    - 3/13/2018 Annual Town Report – Warrant Article #5: \$75,000 Pave River Road
      - Adams said the road agent is looking into a 5-year plan. Prep work will include ditching, culvert replacement, etc. The culvert study completed by the UVLSRPC will be used with this project. Chip sealing alone won't solve the issues with the roads.
      - This was approved as a 1-year non-lapsing article, so in 2019 the funds were returned to the Fund Balance as no project was completed
  - Sand Pit Reclamation – Tom Steketee is heading this project
    - Per John A, under contract.
    - BAC request a follow up on the status of this project.
      - Steketee needs to complete research at the Grafton County Reg of Deeds for boundary lines and abutters, as well as the deed history of the sand pits

- Garage upgrades per Primex report – on going project
  - What are the costs of on-going project?
    - Refer to minutes of 11/16/2020
- Garage Grader Cover – Fred Kidder is heading this project
  - Because the warrant article that passed as a 1-year non-lapsing, we accepted a quote for \$8,800. With construction costs higher than planned, Kidder is working with the contractor to redesign and lower the costs
- Garage Storage Addition – Fred Kidder is heading this project
  - Fred K reported he was working on project, will have to down size the addition.
    - All quotes received were all over the \$25,000 appropriated at the annual meeting. Kidder is re-working to downsize the scope of work
- Beaver Dam Bog on Orfordville Road – Conservation Commission Project
  - Received 2 engineer bids, Horizon \$10,000 – DuBois & King \$16,500.
  - Picked Horizon Bid, actual cost was a little over \$10,000 for engineer design
  - Application submitted, 2 more hurdles left, expecting permit soon
  - Agreement between Conservation & SB, the town will pay for the repairs
    - costs unknown at this time
- **Is a warrant article needed to rename the Road Improvement CRF back to Bridges & Roads CRF?**
  - Adams said the purpose of the Road Improvement CRF includes bridge work as bridges are part of the road. The original CRF was named Bridges CRF, and in 1994 it was voted to rename to Road Improvement CRF

## **Adjourn**

*Motion made by Adams, seconded by Steketee adjourn the meeting.*

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Esther Dobbins-Marsh