

TOWN OF ORFORD

Board of Selectmen

Minutes of the 2021 Budget Public Hearing

January 21, 2021

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: John Adams, Fred Kidder II

RECORDED BY: Esther Dobbins-Marsh,

Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm

Adams reviewed the Warrant Articles

WA #2 – Operating Budget \$1,158,454

The operating budget for 2021 of \$1,158,454 is lower than the budget from 2020 by \$6,997.

- Highway Department - Concerns were addressed about the cost of hiring contracted help for snow plowing vs hiring a 3rd road crew member. Adams explained at the start of the snow season, the department did hire contracted help, but recently did hire an on-call plow operator to assist when additional help is needed for plowing. Contracted services were also used this summer to help with culvert installation, as the crew had other projects they were working on. Should the department hire a mechanic as its 3rd employee as that person could do in house maintenance vs sending trucks to Reed's for repairs.
- Fire Department – why is the budget line item for vehicle maintenance and equipment so much higher than the amount actually spent in 2020. Chief Straight said in 2020 the department held off spending, which is why the line item is lower than the budget in 2020. The budget for 2021 is based on anticipated expenses, and catch up for some items not purchased in 2020.

Fire Department Rent – who is this paid to? The building is owned by the Orford Fire Fighters Association, Inc. and Orford pays annual rent to them to house the fire department.

The Budget Advisory Committee agreed to table their vote until their next meeting

WA #3 – Funding of Capital Reserve Accounts \$337,146

Capital Reserve accounts act like savings accounts so there are funds to cover large expenditures, such as vehicles, large equipment and repairs to roads & bridges.

- Discussion and comments were made about the amount of funding and suggested a reduction of 10% would be prudent given the current financial climate. Others commented that a 10% reduction would be too much – possible look at a 2-4% reduction. Some felt the Town could keep its vehicles and equipment for a longer period of time if properly maintained, which would allow for less funding into the accounts each year. Another suggestion is looking into the cost of refurbished equipment vs purchasing new equipment, especially for the loader and grader.

*The Budget advisory Committee voted 5-1 to reduce by 10%**

WA #4 – Move \$26,530 from the unassigned Fund Balance into the Road Improvement Capital Reserve Fund

FEMA funds received can't be paid into the Capital Reserve accounts until the voters approve the transaction, which is what this article is requesting.

*The Budget Advisory Committee voted 6-0 in favor of this article**

**One member had challenges calling into that meeting, and the Budget Advisory Chair could not hear his vote*

WA #5 – Establish a Broadband Development Capital Reserve Account \$2,000

This article was suggested by the Grafton County Broadband committee. This funding would be used for expenses related to the development of Town wide plan and/or business models for the Town wide broadband system.

The Budget Advisory Committee voted 7-0 in favor of this article

WA #6 – Charitable Appropriations \$15,607

These are various charitable organizations that request funding and provide services to residents of Orford. The Town receives annual appropriation requests for the Town's consideration

The Budget Advisory Committee voted 7-0 in favor of this article.

WA #7 – Highway Truck Purchase \$220,000

The Highway department is requesting to replace the 2008 International 6-wheel dump truck with a new 10-wheel dump truck.

- Adams stated the replacement of this truck has been pushed outward several years. Purchasing the 10-wheeler will allow for more product to be trucked out east during snow storms, and regular work projects vs having to make multiple trips to back and forth to the garage. Another option could be to purchase a 6-wheel truck at a comparable cost of \$192,000

Many residents that spoke agreed that a 10-wheeler is not the way to go. Will it fit in the garage? What impact will the weight have on the roads, especially during mud season? The 2008 International has less than 70,000 miles – that seems low to look at replacing. Another observation is if we only have 2 highway crew men, do we need a 3rd truck? Adams said the Town has hired an on-call plow operator, so all three trucks are being used during snow storms, and both the large trucks are being used for road work. Many agreed the Town should keep the 2008 truck for one more year. Scott Reed (owner of Reed's Truck that services the Town trucks, and had provided an estimate for the 6-wheel and 10-wheel truck options) was granted permission to speak. Tom Thomson asked how Reed knew of the meeting – Reed said he was asked to call in by the Road Agent to address questions about the truck (old and new) that might be asked. He explained the 2008-2020 international trucks are becoming more unreliable. Mileage and hours are not the only issue. Major repairs won't generate 100% pay back at the time of sale. Reed also said while the 10 -wheel truck is heavier, the additional tires it will spread the weight on the roads.

The Budget Advisory Committee voted 0-6-1 abstaining, against this article.

WA #8 – High Bridge road bridge – changing the use to a pedestrian bridge

The purpose of this article is to see if the voters will amend the original purpose of the Warrant article from the March 2017 Town Meeting (restoration of the decking back to a 3-ton bridge) to a pedestrian bridge. Unfortunately, after this article was approved in 2017, the flood hit and funds for this project were not available. The reason for the suggested change is due to the additional cost the Town will incur to repair the support buttresses prior to restoring the decking – approximately \$50,000 more.

The Budget Advisory Committee voted 6-1 to allow the 2017 article to lapse

WA #9 – Replacement of the Archertown Road bridge over Jacobs Brook \$1,200,000

This is a State of NH project, and the Town of Orford is responsible for 20% of the cost (\$240,000), with the balance coming from NH DOT State Bridge Aid. The Town’s portion would be paid from the Road Improvements Capital Reserve account.

- What is the cost of construction? Adams said the project will be put out to bid once the final design is approved by the State. Do we know if the State has funds available for this project? Adams said he’s received verbal confirmation that funds are there, but will request it in writing. There was concern expressed about the decision to NOT restore the bridge as it would effectively change the status/classification of the road.

The Budget Advisory Committee voted 7-0 in favor of this article.

WA #10 – Discontinuer the Bridge Replacement Capital Reserve Fund account

The Trustees of the Trust Funds have recommended closing this account. When created, no funds were added to the account, nor was a purpose stated.

The Budget Advisory Committee voted 7-0 in favor of this article.

WA #11 – Discontinue the Community Field Expendable Trust Fund (1984)

The Trustees of the Trust Funds have recommended closing this account as it currently has a zero balance

The Budget Advisory Committee voted 7-0 in favor of this article.

WA #12 – Discontinue the Community Field 1 (Hazen Morey) Expendable Trust Fund (1984)

The Trustees of the Trust Funds have recommended closing this account as it currently has a zero balance

The Budget Advisory Committee voted 7-0 in favor of this article.

WA #13 – Grader Cover \$5,200

Due to the cost of construction supplies, this project will cost additional funds that originally anticipated

- By using the Unassigned Fund Balance for these funds, the Town does not have to raise taxes for this project. Previously, the Selectboard accepted an estimate for labor of \$8,800 for a larger project. Kidder has worked to create a smaller design that would house the grader at a lower cost. Unfortunately, with the cost of lumber it was not possible. This additional funding will allow the project to be completed.

The Budget Advisory Committee agreed to table their vote until the next meeting

WA #14 – Highway Garage Building Addition \$40,000

The Warrant article from 2020 was to construct an additional to the garage in the amount of \$25,000. All bids received were higher than this amount, even after amending the project scope. After 12/31/2020 these funds are no longer available to be used. This article will use funds from the Unassigned Fund Balance to complete this project which means no taxes need to be raised to complete the project. The addition will be added to the north side of the garage at a total size of 10 x 42.

The Budget Advisory Committee agreed to table their vote until the next meeting

Annual Meeting – the State is still working on options for Towns to hold their 2021 annual meetings. Harry Pease, moderator, will be calling into the 1/27/2021 Selectboard meeting to discuss option with the board.

Adjourn

Motion made by Adams, seconded by Kidder to adjourn the meeting. Motion Passed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:23 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Esther Dobbins-Marsh