

Temple Budget Advisory Committee (BAC)
December 13, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Present: Gary Scholl, Gail Cromwell, Tim Fiske, Rob Kenney, Bill Ezell, Peter Allen

Chairman Gary Scholl called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

The BAC reviewed a number of budget requests from Town organizations and departments:

1. Community Advisory Committee

Lilliane LeBel represented the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), requesting \$1,000 for 2024. The CAC plans several mailings and Harvest Festival communications. The CAC has received a grant from the SW Regional Planning Commission to develop a Complete Streets policy for safety and accessibility and the group plans to print and distribute a flyer about the program.

2. Historical District Commission

The BAC received a budget request of \$415 to fund a mailer to promote a public presentation on the architectural history of houses in Temple. The group has not had a budget in the past.

3. Welfare

Gary Scholl reported that he spoke with the Town Welfare Officer, who requested a \$15,000 appropriation, the same as 2023. Welfare has expended \$6,480 so far this year, but it was noted that additional heat assistance may be needed in 2024 given the high price of fuel.

4. Library

Library Director Beth Crooker and Trustees Gretchen Whitcomb and Carter Sartell presented the proposed budget for the Library, totaling \$78,261, an 8.8% increase over the prior year. This includes a 4% wage increase; Carter Sartell explained this is a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) aligned with the Town's COLA. Bill Ezell noted that the Town's COLA has not yet been set. The Library Trustees indicated they would align with whatever is decided. Beth Crooker explained that increases to the salary line also included additional hours of staffing, explaining that the Library is still catching up service levels that were down during the pandemic. Crooker explained that costs for resources and other expenses have been on the rise. A \$200 increase in Professional Development is intended to allow more staff to attend courses. Crooker reported that the Library engaged a new cleaning service and Bill Ezell noted that the Town also has a new service and there may be economies by consolidating the Library cleaning in that contract.

Crooker noted that Library use and participation in programs is up, surpassing the previous year's circulation by 1,200 additional check-outs.

5. Highway Department

Road Agent Kent Perry requested an increase to previously proposed highway budget, adding \$5,000 to cover the cost of the state Commercial Driving License (CDL) course for one new member of the crew. This would serve as an enticement for recruitment and retention, which has been challenging. The staff member would agree to stay for a minimum specified time period (TBD), with a claw-back provision if they leave before the commitment is fulfilled.

Perry also requested a \$500 clothing allowance, to be added as a new line item.

Bill Ezell noted that the Town needs to offer enticements like these to attract and retain staff to meet the department's needs. These could include innovative benefits offerings, such as a "cafeteria plan" that offers employees more flexibility in how to use benefit dollars. Ezell said the Select Board is working with the Road Agent to explore options for making compensation more competitive with other towns of similar size.

6. Police Department

The BAC received from Police Chief McTague a request totaling \$321,712 for Temple's share of the budget, up from \$276,061 the previous year. The increase is due to new officer training and increasing contributions to the retirement fund. The goal is to bring department staffing up to four full-and part-time officers; currently, there are just three officers.

7. Ambulance Service

The Town received the annual cost for ambulance services from Peterborough Fire and Rescue (PFR), totaling \$103,274, up from \$65,559 in 2023—an increase of 57.5%. Peter Allen summarized the financial explanations from PFR and apparently, the service had a \$500,000 shortfall due to an inability to take on revenue-generating transfer services because of staffing shortages, and this shortfall is reflected in the cost increases to the towns using PFR's service.

8. Other department budgets discussed:

- Building inspection: \$1,000 (spent \$1,077 in 2023)
- Moderator: \$4011 (includes \$3,910 for printing Town Report. Ezell noted the Town has a new printer)
- Voter Registration: \$2,411 (includes increase in salaries from \$1,600 to \$2,011 due to increased activity in the 2024 election year)
- Election Administration: \$4,166 up from \$1,852 in 2023 due to increased activity in the 2024 election year
- Holiday Lighting: \$3,100 including \$2,700 for stringing lights and taking them down

The BAC is still awaiting updated budget numbers for the following:

- Personnel Administration: updated insurance/workers comp costs
- Zoning Board
- Emergency Management
- Recycling Center

9. Other business

Scholl asked about progress on the Town's financial procedures documentation. Ezell said this would be completed in 2024.

The minutes of the November 8 combined BAC/CIP meeting were approved with one minor edit (noting that the previous meetings were approved).

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Cromwell