

BAC/CIP Meeting October 25, 2023 Minutes

Present: Gary Scholl, Gail Cromwell, Tim Fiske, Rob Kenney, Bill Ezell, Mike Darnell, Peter Allen, Andy Paul, Ivy Bibler, Ken Caisse

Guests: Kent Perry, Mike Madden

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

1. Highway Department Budget Request

Road Agent Kent Perry reviewed budget requests for the Highway Department. Highlights:

- Keep salary budget items the same as previous year at \$170,144 and overtime at \$22,000.
- Increase electricity to \$700 to meet potential rate increases.
- Keep propane unchanged at \$2,500.
- Increase vehicle maintenance line by \$5,000 to \$25,000. The department has overspent this line item in 2023 due to unexpected repairs to the 2009 International truck and other vehicles, in addition to periodic maintenance on other vehicles, repairs to a plow, etc. Perry anticipates keeping the 09 truck just one more year as a sanding/plow truck.
- Increase tires by \$2,000 to \$3,500. This line also has been overspent and Perry explained that tires for heavy equipment range from \$500 to \$2,000 apiece.
- Keep subcontractors unchanged at (\$2,000 for rental equip + \$4000 for snow-related). Now that the department is fully staffed with 3 personnel, Perry anticipates needing less contracted plowing this winter.
- Keep supplies the same at \$7,000. This line was overspent and Perry explained that a \$1,639 bill for repairing an AC unit in the tractor was allocated to supplies. BAC members pointed out that this should be allocated to the repairs and maintenance budget.
- Leave training and seminars the same at \$200. Perry suggested reducing this to zero since it had not been used in 2023, explaining that many of the seminars are up north. The BAC recommended keeping it \$200.
- Keep asphalt and paving the same at \$2,000 to cover patching pavement.
- Keep facilities repairs the same at \$2,000.
- Raise winter salt to \$29,000 from \$22,000. Nearly \$25,000 has been spent so far in 2023. Mike Darnell asked whether there is an alternative to salting the roads, citing environmental concerns. Perry said alternatives would require retooling equipment at a prohibitive cost.
- Keep sand the same at \$25,000 (\$10,782 has been spent so far in 2023) and keep gravel the same at \$25,000 (\$25,150 has been spent so far in 2023).

- Keep signs the same at \$800. \$1,217 was spent in 2023, but Perry explained this was due to the need for special signage not anticipated next year.
- Reduce culvert line from \$4,000 to \$2,000. No culvert work was performed in 2023 and nothing major anticipated.

The total highway budget request came to \$343,208, a 10.8% increase over last year's budget.

2. Cemetery Budget Request

Road Agent Kent Perry reviewed budget requests for the Cemetery. Scholl brought up the issue of correcting how burial fees are allocated. Perry said he is working with the Town Office staff to fix the way these funds are accounted for against the cemetery budget.

The only increase Perry requested was in the hired maintenance line, from the \$1 placeholder to \$2,000 to cover the cost of surveying a 100' x 100' plot to expand the cemetery.

BAC members and Perry discussed the stone wall along Cemetery Road which is collapsing in sections. The cost for repairing this would be significant and not something to address now.

Total request for Cemetery is \$9,308, a 27.3% increase over last year's budget.

3. CIP Request for Highway Department

CIP committee members reviewed the capital expenditure requests for the Highway Department.

Brush Chipper: Perry has been searching for a used chipper to replace the department's old chipper, which is no longer serviceable. He has in conversations with Balcom Bros. in Milford to acquire one of their rentals but so far has been unsuccessful. He will continue looking for a good used unit, noting that a new unit could cost \$70,000.

Road Paving: Continuing with the Town's multi-year highway paving plan, Perry is planning to repave the following roads at a total cost \$144,437.40:

- Mountain View Drive apron
- Glen Farms Road
- Gambol Brook Road
- Hedman Lane
- Boutwell Road
- Memorial Highway apron (Rte 45 to Hadley Hwy)
- Fire Station Driveway
- Mansfield Road

CIP member Tim Fiske questioned whether all of the roads planned required repaving, suggesting that crack sealing and sand sealing would be sufficient and likely less costly. Perry disagreed, noting that some of the roads had already been resealed multiple times and that repaving will provide a longer-lasting solution. CIP chair Gail Cromwell requested that Perry provide a cost comparison for paving versus sealing. *NOTE: Perry submitted his comparison post-meeting and it is attached to the minutes.*

Perry is scheduled to return to the December 13 meeting of the BAC and CIP.

4. Conservation Commission Budget Request

Mike Madden reviewed the budget request for the Conservation Commission, unchanged at \$3,351. However, they wish to reduce the misc. supplies line and printing/advertising line by \$250 each and increase the professional services line by \$500 to \$2,000 to help fund a new kiosk.

Peter Allen noted that the Conservation Commission fund has garnered about \$10,000 in interest this year and asked whether this money could be used for operational expenses. Madden explained that those funds are earmarked for major initiatives, such as purchasing conservation rights. The balance in the fund is currently approximately \$225,000.

4. Old BAC Business

Scholl gave an update on a number of budget-related items:

- The writing of the financial procedures manual is in progress. Scholl requested other contributors to add their content suggestions.
- The BAC is working with the Select Board to assess different ways of looking at salaries. Nothing more to report at this time.
- The Community Advisory Committee has requested \$1,000 for 2024. They will attend an upcoming BAC meeting to discuss the request.
- The Town's insurance provider, Primex, has set a rate of \$7,394 for the Worker's Comp Program coverage for 2024, an increase over the prior year.
- Painting for the Town Hall is scheduled for this year, with three sides being painted at a cost of \$8,600. This number will be revised to cover additional painting inside, including the stage and a door.

5. New Business

Property Assessment: The Town received a quote of \$32,880 from incumbent property assessment vendor, Avatar, to conduct the required property re-evaluation scheduled for 2024. Cromwell noted that the Town has not in the past paid on a monthly basis and questioned if there was an advantage to doing this. Other BAC members suggested obtaining bids from other vendors.

Community Power: Bill Ezell noted that the Town is in the process of joining a regional Community Power Agreement with the goal of reducing electricity supply costs for residents. The Temple Renewable Energy Task Force is spearheading the initiative. Ezell said they are in the early stages and that two public forums will be held at some point in the future.

6. Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the October 11, 2023 BAC meeting were approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m. The next BAC-CIP meeting is scheduled for November 8 at 7 p.m.