

Town of Gouldsboro Budget Committee

Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, 7 April 2021 — PH Women's Club

Attendees

- Dwight Rodgers
- Ray Jones
- Deb Bisson
- Eve Wilkinson
- Fred Cook
- Becky Follette
- AJ Higgins
- Roger Dean (via Zoom)
- Jay Bricker (via Zoom)
- Mary-Ann Higgins (via Zoom)
- Paul Stewart (Alternate)
- Dave Seward (Alternate)
- Andrea Sirois (Town Manager)
- Kim Shay (Town Office Manager, via Zoom)
- Jim McLean (Guest)

Absent

- None

General Discussions

- Meeting called to order at 6:04 pm. Minutes from March 31 approved.
- Objective of tonight's meeting is to review each department, insofar as time allows, and vote for a recommended budget.
- Some insurance costs are still estimates. Andrea will review all town health insurance costs.
- Significant department discussion items shown below. Detailed comments in Excel worksheet.

Service Charge Line

- The line is, for example, if a bank charged late fees for anything.
- This line could represent a significant surprise to the Town budget if, for example, the Town were late paying county taxes. Kim commented that this shouldn't be a problem going forward because Town now pays BH Bank in person rather than relying on the mail.
- Andrea states that this one line covers all departments. Eve questions whether each department should have its own service charge line. Consensus is that it is fine the way it is.

General and Administration

- **Salaries:**
 - BoS agreed to establish a target salary of \$80K for the Town Mgr budget, with an additional \$20K being a warrant article at Town Meeting to set the ceiling salary at \$100K.
 - Dwight notes that the retirement line only account for those employees who choose to participate. Concern is how to handle benefits should staff change and new staff elect to participate. If we do consider all employees as participating (regardless of whether they actually do), any funds left over (because today not everyone does participate) would go into the general fund. Eve suggest we must budget for full participation. **Motion approved to raise number to \$5483.**
- **Advertising:**
 - There was a lengthy discussion regarding whether this line should include the \$6400 MMA fee for managing the search for a new Town Manager. Andrea notes that the expense has nothing to do with advertising and should only be a one-time expense. We have no guidance from the BoS as to what they had in mind for funding this expense.
 - Eve suggests the cost should come out of the Legal Reserve fund. Ray suggests leaving it in advertising.
 - Andrea suggests establishing a new line item for new employee recruiting and vetting. Roger suggests establishing a separate reserve account for this.
 - Ray notes that the current expected costs for a new Town Manager should be in FY21. But Andrea observes that a nation-wide search for a new Town Mgr could take up to eight months.

- Mary-Ann asks how MMA bills for its recruitment management services. But then supports the idea of a separate reserve account.
- Andrea comments that a separate reserve account is a bad idea. Ray suggests the town expand the definition of the Legal Reserve Account to include this. Approved by consensus.
- **Insurance:**
 - Dwight comments that any line lacking solid numbers has been set to include an estimated to reflect a 7% increase over past year, determined jointly by Andrea & Dwight.
 - There was an extended discussion over the fact that the health insurance lines only reflect the costs for those employees who have elected to participate, rather than for the full complement of Town FT employees. Right now they only reflect four employees. There was a consensus that the health insurance lines need to be adjusted to full participation. Andrea will estimate cost for full participation.
 - Policies on insurance benefits for FT employees need clarification. One policy says FT employees are entitled to family plans, another says no. There was a consensus that this must be elevated to the BoS for resolution.
 - Mary-Ann questions how much employees contribute to their insurance coverage. Dwight notes that we are not in the position of discussing policies, just trying to set the budget.
 - Dwight suggests inflating FY21 budget to estimate FY22 budget to establish a health insurance costs for all Town employees; suggests \$56K. We'll use that number as a placeholder; Andrea will provide a realistic estimate.
- Dwight: We are at a point where we can agree on a General Administration budget pending decisions on the retirement and health insurance lines. Agreed by consensus.

Services and Committees

- The BoS has decided that we will not do anything with respect to a town-wide revaluation for this coming year, so that line is zeroed out for this coming year.
- The Recreation Committee budget is still zero. However, there is some interest by residents in establishing some programs. They will approach the BoS for consideration. There is about \$7000 in the Recreation Reserve Account, which would be enough to cover anticipated costs for the coming year.
- All other budget numbers are OK; the approximately 15% overall increase is due to small increases in various accounts. Biggest impact is for the Comprehensive Plan. Motion to accept budget of \$94,744 approved.

Town Property

- No open items other than propane costs. There are still outstanding invoices. Town owns the propane tanks at FS3, the transfer station, and the Rt 1 site.
- Heat cost at the transfer station will be overrun this FY.
- Budget motion approved at \$117,722.

Public Safety

- **Police Dept**
 - In accordance with a recent BoS decision, the salary & benefits lines are based on 3 FT officers, including overtime.
 - Auto insurance needs to increase by \$300.
 - Jim McLean questions need for fuel budget to increase from FY21 YTD to \$11.5K. Committee expresses concern over currently increasing gas costs. Might be some room to adjust. Any unspent money would go into the Police Reserve. Motion made to leave at \$11.5 K. Passes with three "no" votes.
 - Must revisit health insurance budget numbers before we can recommend a budget.

- **Fire Dept**
 - The question of the separation of stipend expenses between FD and EMS is still open. Impact is in retirement lines. We will discuss this again with Tate before establishing budgets for these lines.
 - A question arose regarding whether stipends are eligible for retirement benefits? The BoS needs to resolve this before we can establish a budget estimate. Consensus is to leave this alone until the BoS decides.
- **Ambulance**
 - No updated revenue figures are available.
 - Roger asks what happens to the Ambulance budget if the number of calls exceed estimated. Consensus is that it would have to come from somewhere else, since we have no control (really) over the number of calls or the reimbursement percentage.
 - Dwight speculates that a more realistic estimate of revenue might be \$100K (rather than \$150K), which would reduce the independent contract costs. Motion to reduce the original \$12,600 to \$9500; passed with two “no” votes.
 - We must revisit fuel costs with Tate before any making any budget decisions.

Dwight comments that Larry Peterson will be asking for \$8000 for the Historical Society, Dwight will take it to the BoS for a warrant article. Money would offset unexpected 4th Qtr expenses plus defray 2022 expenses. 2022 expenses would include developing a strategic plan, adding communications capabilities at Society HQ, pay existing annual insurance costs, defray utilities costs, and cleaning and maintenance of buildings.

Dwight also notes that Northern Light Health has requested \$375 each for the Clinic and the Hospital.

Objective is to finalize the main portions of the budget next week and then take up everything else in the following week.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm.

