

# Town of Gouldsboro

## Joint Budget Committee & Select Board Meeting

Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, 28 April 2021 — PH Women's Club

### **Attendees**

- Dwight Rodgers
- Ray Jones
- Deb Bisson
- Jay Bricker
- Fred Cook
- Roger Dean (via Zoom)
- Becky Follette
- AJ Higgins
- Eve Wilkinson
- Paul Stewart (Alternate)
- Dave Seward (Alternate)
- Andrea Sirois (Town Manager)
- Kim Shay (Town Office Manager, via Zoom)
- Marc Perry (Tax Assessor, part of the meeting)
- Letitia Baldwin (Ellsworth American)
- **Select Board Members:** Dana Rice, Ernie West, Chris Urquhart

### **Absent**

- Mary-Ann Higgins (Alternate)

### **General Discussions**

- Meeting called to order at 6:00 pm. Minutes from April 21, as amended, approved.
- Still a minor difference between official Town budget numbers and Roger's. Andrea & Roger to resolve tomorrow.
- Significant department discussion items shown below. Detailed comments in Excel worksheet.

### **General and Administration**

- Andrea reminded attendees that the health insurance costs had been adjusted to reflect a worst-case condition in which all employees chose the MMA health insurance option
- **The proposed budget of \$383,800 was approved unanimously.**

### **Services and Committees — Assessor**

- Andrea noted that the salary & related lines had been adjusted previously to reflect the original 3/10/21 numbers.
- There was a brief discussion by the Select Board & Budget Committee regarding postponing a proposed town-wide revaluation until next year. Assessor Marc Perry agreed that this would be acceptable.
- There was a discussion about a likely town mil rate for the coming year.
  - Andrea notes that there are still a lot of unknowns with respect to likely mil rate.
  - Marc Perry observed that the town mil rate is a simple calculation based on the total town valuation and the approved budget. The Assessor has no real input into calculation of mil rate, other than determining valuation.
  - Marc also noted that he has no firm handle as of today as to what that valuation could be at the end of this FY. There are building permits still being processed and, with COVID there is no deadline for people to apply for various exemptions. Using last year's valuation would give a conservative number. He also noted that depreciation of properties will low valuations but that, overall, new construction would offset that depreciation.
  - Continuing the discussion, Marc noted that the assessment is always a "rolling" assessment. Marc offers he could pick a date for establishing a working baseline; Dwight suggests 15 May and Marc counters with 1 June. While 1 June pushes an estimate of the town mil rate close to the date of the Town Meeting, the consensus was that was probably about as good as we could hope for and the Committee accepted the 1 June date.

- Eve suggested that the Land Purchase reserve could be used as a “buffer” if the town estimates too low for a valuation. Ray suggested establishing a special warrant article to permit this, if necessary.

### **Legal Reserve**

- Andrea suggested raising amount to take care of cost of legal mediator for Police Dept issue resolution. From \$11,400 to \$19,400. Select Board members present concurred. ***Motion presented and passed with one dissent.***

### **Town Property**

- Andrea commented that the two fire station propane lines and the transfer station heat line were in error on Roger’s working spreadsheet and that the original adjusted numbers were accurate.

### **Charitable Contributions**

- There was an extended discussion about how to divide the approved number of \$3000.
- A question arose as to what, exactly, this line item is for.
  - The official answer is “Health, Safety, & Welfare,” which is all agreed is a broad criterion. Jay commented that this money should be for true charity organizations only, and not organizations that are businesses that can set their own costs.
  - Roger suggests that henceforth we limit this budget item to true charity only. He made a motion to define the category more specifically as charity; after discussion on the motion he withdrew his motion.
  - Ray commented that he believes taxpayer money should not be used to cover any charity.
  - Fred notes that we have a working definition of “charity,” but we still need to decide some limits.
  - Dwight suggested we leave our working definition of who qualifies alone for this year but revisit at the start of next budget season to establish a clearer understanding of what sorts of organizations should be included for consideration.
- Deb suggested that the Committee limit consideration only to those requests submitted on time, and then decide whether they meet the category’s criteria. She further noted that the clinic & hospital have requested that their request for \$375 (each) be decided by town warrant.
- After limiting consideration to only those with on-time requests, the Committee determined that all requestors (from the 4/17/21 3<sup>rd</sup> party request list) qualified as ‘charity’ except for Ellsworth Library, Maine Public, Sunrise Little League, YMCA. But Eve noted that Downeast Transportation is really the Island Explorer Schoodic Shuttle and we have never funded them before, and therefore the Committee agreed to eliminate them from consideration.
- After all deliberations regarding which organizations will be included in our charitable contributions, seven qualified requestors remained:
  - Community Health & Counseling Services
  - Downeast Community Partners
  - Eastern Area Agency on Aging
  - Emmaus Homeless Shelter
  - Families First Community Center
  - Hospice Volunteers of Hancock County
  - Lifeflight
  - WIC Nutrition Program
- Then the discussion turned to how to apportion money among those eight, equally divided, prorated by amount requested, or by committee preference. ***Motion to distribute evenly among eight requestors passed with one dissent and one abstention.***

### **Closing Comments**

- Recommendation that the Budget Committee for a warrant article to take up to \$100K from unspent funds to offset taxes. **Motion passed.**
- Terms for Ray & Roger are up this year; both are willing to serve again. Dwight will offer a new name for a permanent member at some point.
- Dwight observed that this was possibly the last Budget Committee meeting for this year., depending on what happens at Select Board meeting tomorrow.
- At the end of the review, Dana Rice thanked the Committee for its work. He lauded Committee for finishing its work a month earlier than past years.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 pm.

