

BUDGET COMMITTEE MINUTES

January 2, 2025

Members Present: Carl Hagstrom, Andrew Wood, Jennifer Cesaitis, Barbara Brooks, Susan Silverman, Nancy Carney, Selectman's Representative & Debbie Favreau, Town Administrator

Members Absent: Bill Davis, & Ben Thomas

Guests: Suzanne Gray, Barbara Young, Rhonda Sheets, Bucky Sheets, & Tom Rothermel

Chairman Hagstrom opened the meeting at 7:00 pm.

Suzanne Gray, Planning Board Chairman, was here to share with the committee her concerns on the ever increasing legal costs. She provided a table showing the costs over the last 5 years, increasing over 50%. Once a case goes to the Zoning Board of Adjustment, legal costs begin. Ms. Gray admitted that she does not have a solution and that there may not be a solution, but taking a more in-depth look at this does no harm.

Code Enforcement: Nancy Carney began by stating the budget requested is increasing \$34,359. The goal is to hire a part time Building Inspector working a maximum of 25 hours/week. This person must be familiar with and have experience with state building codes. Rhonda Sheets, Administrative Assistant, normally providing 5 hours/week to Code Enforcement, will now be providing 10 hours assistance per week. Building codes will need to be adopted, as Fitzwilliam has never had a building inspector before. This is a starting point and things may need to be tweaked as we move forward. Identification, such as an ID badge, and car emblem may be needed. Also needed is a tablet \$250 (line 629 equipment purchase) and \$350 for state code books (line 670 books/periodicals). Training (line 830) and mileage (line 825) in the amount of \$500 each will be added. Total requested is \$44194.

Executive: Debbie Favreau presented and stated that the Part Time Salary (line 120) of \$29,526 was eliminated as the Administrative Assistant position was approved to be full time, with Rhonda Sheets now working 35 hours/wk. Ms. Sheets has additional duties now which include grant writing, Highway Admin, increased code enforcement, and building permit admin. Ms. Favreau remarked that Ms. Sheets came to this position with much experience and she is a

great asset to the town. This change increased the Full Time Salary (line 110) by \$43,202. Line 318 Labor Contracted Services is increasing by \$4000. This is for the Computer Technician to be on a managed plan, monitoring equipment on a regular basis for security. Another large increase, \$4800 is in Line 560 Dues/Subscriptions. The payroll subscription through QuickBooks is now charging a monthly cost based on the number of checks issued. Ms. Favreau will be looking into other sources, such as a payroll service to lower these costs. Total requested for this budget is \$238,702, showing an increase of \$36,765.

General Government: Debbie Favreau stated this budget includes the expenses for the Town Hall and the Public Safety building. Line 120 Part Time Salary is decreased by \$2000 because the snow shoveling is budgeted under the DPW. Cleaning of the Town Hall is the only cost for this line item. Also increasing is line 640 Custodial/Housekeeping. This \$700 increase is for supplies at the Public Safety building because the Ambulance services have gone to full time. This \$57,426 budget request is \$817 less than 2024.

It has been noticed that there has been no representation from the Fitzwilliam Village Water District at these meetings so far. Ms. Favreau stated Representative Ben Thomas is working towards retiring from the FVWD. She has sent reminder emails to Mr. Thomas and Mr. Turnbull, Treasurer, that their budget is due at the next meeting. Ms. Favreau will check with the DRA on this matter.

Susan Silverman would like to see more information and transparency in the Tax Anticipation Note (TAN) as many people, she feels, do not understand this. Ms. Favreau added that it has come close to needing it when there is a delay in getting the tax rate.

Minutes: Ms. Brooks made a motion to accept the minutes of December 19, 2024. Mr. Wood seconded and **all voted in favor with Ms. Silverman abstaining (5- yes; 0- no; 1- abstained).**

Ms. Carney shared that she will not be in attendance at the next meeting, due to a school board meeting, and that Selectman Tom Rothermel will be filling in for her.

With nothing further to discuss, Mr. Wood made a motion to adjourn with a second by Ms. Brooks. All voted in favor (6- yes; 0- no; 0- abstained).

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm.

Minutes submitted by Marion Wheeler