

Budget Hearing
February 6, 2018

Selectmen present: Lynn Sweet, Chairman, Bryant Scott, Scott Young
In attendance: JoAnn Brown, Greg Messenger, Matt Messenger, David Hartranft, Scott Whitehouse, Paul Stover, John Hall, Donna Reed, Meggan Yeaton, Irving Johnson, Michael Richard, Marcy Whitcher, Donald Coker, Jessie Copeland, Paige Holman, Bruce Freeman, Lindsay Aucella

Selectmen Sweet stated that notice of the public hearing was posted at the Post Office, Town Office and on the Town website.

The public hearing was called to order at 6:00 PM, stating that its purpose was to review the proposed budget and certain warrant articles to be voted on at the March 17th Town Meeting which will commence at 8:30 AM at the Strafford School.

Warrant Article 1 which is the election of Town officials was not read.

Warrant Article 2 for the appropriation of \$380,000 for Capital Improvements (Drainage work, culverts, gravel and paving) of roads was read. Road Agent Greg Messenger addressed the group. His 2018 plans are to pave Ricky Nelson Road, Shiere Way, Province Road from Kooauke Island west to Northwood line, and perhaps some cul de sacs that could use some work. No questions were asked.

Warrant Article 3. for the appropriation of \$573,359 for the operation and maintenance of the Strafford Police Department was read. Chief Richard briefly explained the slight budget increase, resulting from COLA salary increase of 2% and adjustments in health coverage. He explained his plans for selling the old cruiser and purchasing a new one if approved. There were no questions.

Warrant Article 4 was read. It seeks funding for a new police vehicle and associated equipment. \$15,000 is to come from taxation and the balance of \$17,918 from the Police Special Details Fund. Chief Richard gave explanation in addressing Article 2. No questions.

Warrant Article 5 which seeks funding in the amount of \$487,455 for the operation and maintenance of the Strafford Fire Department and Rescue Squad was read. Chief Whitehouse explained that he hoped to improve service to the Town by extending the EMS coverage and offering a higher wage to EMS personnel. No questions were asked.

Warrant Article 6 pertaining to the withdrawal of funds from the Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Fund in the amount of \$10,000 for the purchase of equipment and supplies for the ambulance was read. Chief Whitehouse explained that this is for consumable ambulance supplies and no money to fund this comes from taxation.

Warrant Article 7 was read. It requests withdrawal from the Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Fund \$1,343 for extended warranty coverage and service contract on the Zoll X-Series Defibrillator. Chief Whitehouse spoke to this. This equipment was new in 2017 and the mgf warranty expires in April.

Warrant Article 8 pertaining to funding for the new Crown Point Fire Station was read. The request is for \$49,316 to come from taxation to be added to \$100,684 to be withdrawn from the CFR established for the rehab/replacement of that station to begin design and construction of the new fire station. Chief Whitehouse briefly described the department's plans for the new station. It will stay on the same site; the footprint will be rotated, doubling its size. The current station is lacking in many ways and cannot accommodate the size of a new firetruck. He believes the Town will always have need of a station in that part of Town. Selectman Young pointed out that the resistance was great to eliminating that station several years ago in an attempt to centralize.

Warrant Article 9 was read. The article seeks an appropriation of \$50,000 to be placed in the CRF for the future purchase of a fire truck. Chief Whitehouse spoke to the necessity of beginning to save for a new firetruck. The oldest one the Town owns is a 1992 International whose pump was refurbished in 2011. It is questionable about how long it will be safe to take on the road.

Warrant Article 10 requesting an appropriation of \$4,700 for digitizing the Town Tax Maps and participation in the SRPC's regional on-line Mapego Land-use database was read. Selectman Sweet addressed this. The subject of digitizing tax maps has been discussed for 4-5 years. The Board is of the opinion that the Town should take advantage of this good opportunity. There were no questions or comments.

Warrant Article 11 seeking funding in the amount of \$20,000 to replace the electrical building at the Recycling Center was read. Selectmen Sweet showed the audience pictures of the current cinder block building which houses the electrical equipment that operates the compactors. The building and is rapidly deteriorating and should have been replaced years ago. Drainage issues around the building need to be addressed as well. Funding for this project should not be viewed as optional. No questions or comments.

Warrant Article 12 was read. It requests an appropriation of \$25,000 to be placed in a NCRF for future bridge repair. Selectman Sweet stated that this is the 3rd year they have brought this request before the Town. It is for future replacement of the Barn Door Gap bridge. It will be supplemented by State Bridge Aid when the Town has raised 30% of the cost. No questions.

Warrant Article 13 which seeks the establishment of a CRF for the purpose of Town Hall building maintenance, improvements and/or expansion and an appropriation of \$10,000 to be placed in the fund was read. This article is looking to future costs in maintaining the Town Hall as the building is now 10 years old. No comments or questions.

Warrant Article 14 was read. It requests an addition of \$10,000 to the CRF established for the purpose of Library expansion and improvements. Library Trustee JoAnn Brown addressed this article. She stated that the Selectmen had asked the Library to draw up a 10 year plan. The trustees believe that at some future date the library will need to move to a different location and/or address the current parking problem.

Warrant Article 15 for the appropriation of \$500 to help defray expenses associated with Strafford's Bicentennial Celebration in 2020 was read. JoAnn brown addressed this as well, being president of the Historical Society. The Bicentennial Committee is working on a budget. They will be requesting more money next year, in the range of \$10,000 to \$20,000.

Warrant Article 16 requesting \$1,369,091 for general Town operations was read.

Executive.....	\$ 83,055.
Election & Registration.....	32,920.
Financial Administration.....	96,779.
Appraisal of Property & Tax Maps.....	39,738.
Legal Expenses.....	10,000.
Employee Benefits, FICA, Medi & Unemp. Comp.....	41,065.
Planning and Zoning.....	9,411.
General Government Building.....	35,400.
Auto Permits/Town Clerk Fees.....	35,088.
Insurance.....	52,800.
Advertising and Regional Association.....	4,010.
Strafford Regional Planning Comm. Dues.....	4,833.
Contingency Fund.....	16,000.
Annual CPA Audit.....	10,890.
Emergency Management.....	5,000.
Building Inspection.....	17,540.
General Highway Expenses and Town Maintenance.....	445,500.
Street Lighting.....	5,000.
Solid Waste Disposal.....	265,367.
Animal Control.....	3,800.
Health Inspector.....	200.
Cornerstone VNA (formerly Roch Dstr VNA).....	3,991.
General Assistance and Welfare.....	25,180.
Community Action.....	2,000.
Haven Sexual Assault Support Services.....	992.
My Friend's Place.....	200.
The Homemakers Health Services.....	3,200.
Ready Rides.....	1,500.
CASA.....	500.
Parks and Recreation.....	19,923.
Library.....	87,909.
Patriotic Purposes and Fire Works.....	4,800.
Conservation Commission.....	2,500.
Interest Expense & Tax Anticipation Notes.....	2,000.
TOTAL.....	<u>\$1,369,091.</u>

This article represents funding for general town operations. Road Agent Greg Messenger asked if his road maintenance budget might be increased if the snow continues as it has. The Board assured him it would be addressed at Town Meeting if necessary.

Petition Article 17 was read. The cemetery associations from Center, Crown Point and Caverly Cemeteries are requesting \$6000 as a donation from the Town to be used for the purpose of mowing and maintenance of the 3 cemeteries. John Hall, representing the Center Strafford cemetery addressed the article. Currently, the 3 large cemeteries, Center, Caverly and Crown Point are private, rather than Town owned. Their resources are limited; this will enable them to handle the mowing. The Selectmen clarified that each cemetery was to receive \$2000.

Warrant Article 18 was read as follows, "To transact any other business that may legally come before this meeting." JoAnn Brown, former Selectmen, was glad to see the modest turnout, remembering years when only 3 people attended.

There being no further business to conduct, the budget hearing closed at 6:26PM.