



# Budget Committee Meeting

## Draft Minutes

December 19, 2024, 7:00 PM

### Open the Meeting and Roll Call

Chair Cutting opened the Budget Committee meeting at 7:01 PM.

**Budget Committee Members Present:** Michael Cutting (Chair), Ray Martin, Harold Blanchette, Rick Bixby, Bill Hanson, Faith Minton Selectbord Rep. and Alfred Hanson.

**Absent:** Robert Blake

**Select Board and Others Present:** Mike Smith (via Zoom), Kathy Frenette Town Administrator, Judy Newman-Rogers Selectboard Administrator Assistant and Clyde Carson Finance Director.

### Approval of Minutes • 12/5 and 12/12

12/5/24

**Harold Blanchette made a motion seconded by Alfred Hanson to approve the December 5, 2024 Budget Committee meeting minutes as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.**

12/12/24

**Alfred Hanson made a motion seconded by Rick Bixby to approve the December 12, 2024 Budget Committee meeting minutes as submitted. Motion passed, Harold Blanchette abstained.**

### Review of proposed 2025 Total Operating Budget

Alfred Hanson questioned if the employees receive a monthly statement regarding the town's contribution towards their retirement account. Judy Newman-Rogers noted the statements are available on line. Clyde Carson concurred.

**Select Board budget:** increased by \$21,961, 8.91%

**Managed IT Care:** Culver Technologies has been selected to provide services for the Town of Warner. The Select Board accepted the quote provided in the amount of \$30,302 for one year. Kathy Frenette reviewed the contract for Managed IT Care and soon will provide a breakdown of each department's share. John Leavitt questioned how a security breach would be handled. Kathy Frenette stated that Culver Technologies will be monitoring for any cyber security threats and will eliminate those threats. John Leavitt asked if there was any guarantee that there would be no cost to the Town. Kathy Frenette stressed that there is no such thing as a guarantee. She explained that the Town has protection through Culver Technologies but any successful breach would cause a loss for the Town that would be a claim with Primex.

**Election budget:** decreased by 27% as a result of fewer elections.

**Computers/Software:** line item is \$2,400, Accessibility software (state mandated) \$2,100 and the E-Poll Pads is \$300 per election. Total Election budget is \$5,997, a decrease of \$2,250.

Mike Cutting asked about a recent change to the COLA from 2.5% to 3%. Faith Minton explained the Select Board rationale was because of the increase in the employees deductible. She stated the per person deductible increased from \$3,000 to \$7,150.( Total out of pocket increased to \$14,000) She stated that the half a percent to 3% is estimated to add less than \$10,000 to the budget.

**Finance budget:** decreased by \$426. The Select Board has not selected an auditor, but based on a quote previously received annual cost is estimated at \$25,000.

1 **Tax Collector budget:** decreased by \$2,844, 6.77%. Alfred Hanson spoke about the issues that were  
2 mentioned during the presentation of the Tax Collector's budget. He stated the budget committee should  
3 not hear those issues, they should be discussed between the department and the Select Board. Harold  
4 Blanchette asked for clarification on the computer hardware line item.  
5 John Leavitt agreed that negotiations between the Tax Collector and the Select Board is between them and  
6 not the Budget Committee. He further noted that this is the Budget Committee's budget and it will be  
7 presented as written to the voters. Mike Cutting explained why he allowed that conversation, he felt it  
8 was important that the Budget Committee be aware of issues.

9  
10 **Town Clerk budget:** increased by \$984, 1.7%.

11  
12 **Trustee of Trust Funds budget:** no change.

13  
14 **Assessing budget:** increased by \$44,045 93%. \$32,000 for outside services pays for the licensed assessor  
15 who comes in once a month and completes all the work that must be done by a certified assessor.  
16 Software support increased by \$10,000. Alfred Hanson questioned the difference between the revaluation  
17 expense and the amount in the department's operating budget. Judy Newman-Rogers explained that the  
18 town wide reval is one price separate from the yearly assessing contract cost of \$32,000. There was a  
19 discussion on how the 2023 surplus and ARPA funds were used to pay for assessing services.

20  
21 **Legal budget:** increased by \$5,000, 20%. Current budget is \$25,000, 2025 budget is \$30,000. There are  
22 three legal expense categories; General \$15,000, Eversource/utilities \$10,000 and 91-A Requests \$5,000.  
23 Kathy Frenette stressed that the 91-A amount could increase depending on the number and scope of  
24 requests submitted. Mike Cutting question if money is set aside for a possible Eversource settlement.  
25 Clyde Carson explained any settlement would be paid through the Town overlay.

26  
27 **Benefits budget** (social security, medicare, health insurance): increased by 20.4%. Bill Hanson  
28 questioned the amount for flex spending (prior year claims). Kathy Frenette stated the increase is  
29 attributed to the increase in health care cost.

### 30 31 **Government Buildings**

32 **Town Hall budget** decreased \$772, 2.6%. Mike Cutting questioned the electricity reduction for town hall  
33 but the community center remained the same. Transmission cost are changing and the tenants are using  
34 more of their building than they did in the past. John Leavitt believes the line item should be reduced and  
35 he disputed the reasoning of budgeting worse case scenario. Mike Smith stated the Welfare Department is  
36 operating three days a week in the community center. Alfred Hanson asked if there are any grants  
37 available to assist the Town with the operation of the services provided by the tenants. Ray Martin stated  
38 that most grants are not available for operating expenses. Kathy Frenette explained that she has suggested  
39 to the tenants several avenues to look into for ways to help offset their expenses.

40  
41 **Old Fire Station budget:** increased by \$400 (heating)

### 42 43 **Outside Services:**

44 **American Legion/outside services** for the town cemetery budget is \$3,000 but only \$1,400 has been  
45 spent to date. Kathy Frenette stated the winter months could bring down more trees.

46  
47 **Fire Department budget:** wages increased from \$88,000 to \$90,000  
48 There was a discussion regarding the 3% COLA for all employees and the payment structure for stipend  
49 individuals.

1 **Building Inspector budget:** increased \$1,515 a 5.8%. Total budget is \$27,410. Mileage line item  
2 increased for the building inspector and the compliance officer.

3  
4 **Emergency Management budget:** increased 1.95% total budget is \$10,577.

5  
6 **Highway Department budget:** increased \$81,518, 7.36%. The budget includes funding for the one  
7 vacant position and the wage splitting for the mechanic.

8  
9 **Street lights** has increased by 3.25%.

10  
11 **Transfer Station budget** has increased 16.75%. Kathy Frenette stressed the need for additional  
12 manpower. Mike Smith explained that they are looking to hire a part-time person willing to work on the  
13 weekend and another full time person. He stressed that the Town needs to take steps to reduce the number  
14 of accidents that have been occurring.

15  
16 **Health officer budget:** no change.

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18 **Welfare budget:** increased 21% due to direct assistance increasing from \$20,000 to \$30,000.

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20 **Parks and Recreation budget:** increased 4.18% due to part-time seasonal wages.

21  
22 **Library budget:** increased by \$5,000.

23  
24 **Conservation Commission:** budget decreased slightly.

25  
26 **The total budget** has increased 8.09%.

27  
28 Next meeting is December 26, 2024 to review the Capital Budget.

29  
30 **Adjournment**

31 **Ray Martin made a motion seconded by Harold Blanchette to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed.**

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33 The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM  
34 Respectfully submitted by Tracy Doherty  
35 Edits by Judy Newman-Rogers, Selectboard Admin Asst.