

Advisory Budget Committee

Minutes

October 31, 2023

This meeting was at the Barrington Town Hall with remote participation available.

Members Present: Steve Saunders, Scott Shepard, Dannen Mannschreck, and Bill Irving

Alternate Members Present: Peter Royce (acting member)

Others Present: Conner MacIver, Amy Doherty, Kimberly Kerekes, Liz Bolton, Susan Gaudiello, Jessie Tennis, and Dale Sylvia

Steve Saunders called the meeting to order at 4:30pm.

Steve Saunders makes a motion to approve the prior week's minutes from October 10th and 17th. The motion passes.

The group discussed the Cost-of-Living Data for the 2024 budget. Scott Shepard suggested that the New England and northern states value aren't indicative of our area and should be looked at in more detail. The current details are listed here: [Cost of Living Methodolgy Data.xlsx \(nh.gov\)](#)

Peter Royce discussed the Richardson Pond Dam. Conner MacIver explained that the engineering firm said the cost to reconstruct or tear down the dam is estimated to cost \$300,000 currently. The town is waiting to see if the wetland would be considered destruction or restoration. The Board had had preliminary conversations regarding the percentage of cost payment. Bill Irving would like a cost estimate on long term costs of keeping the dam and what would the value be to the Town to keep the dam intact. Dannen Mannschreck mentioned that the Whinnie the Pooh trail is a very popular trail. Conner MacIver mentioned another option to make the dam non jurisdictional which would dramatically reduce the long-term costs of keeping the dam. Scott Shepard suggested not putting forth a warrant article without having all the information. The group will revisit this when more information is available.

Kim Kerekes discussed the Town Clerk and Election budget which can be found on the town website www.barrington.nh.gov/2024budget. Scott Shepard asked about the printing contract. Conner MacIver explained the contract and that each department pays for their own. Kim explained that the DMV printer's useful life is 3-5 years, and she has budgeted for replacement of those this year. Kim explained that she would like to wait for grant money to become available before purchasing new ballot counting machines. The group would like Kim to find out the lead time to purchase new machines. The group thanked Kim for her attendance.

Jessie Tennis and Dale Sylvia discussed the Recreation budget which can be found on the town website www.barrington.nh.gov/2024budget. Steve Saunders asked Jessie to point out staffing funding and how it relates to programming. Jessie discussed that the

Administrative Assistant position has always been 25 hours paid for from the General Fund. Since that position was created, the current programming has increased and the need for more hours for the Administrative Position. The Recreation department is looking to reallocate their funding to help pay more for programming. It's a \$24,000 request to have the General Fund pick up the cost. Steve Saunders pointed out specific items from the job description that he feels should be paid from the Recreation Revolving. Dale Sylvia explained that this position has always been disputed. He also explained that Recreation Revolving had created and paid for two new positions. Peter Royce explained that when the position was created, it was advertised as fully funded by the Recreation Revolving Fund but that times have changed, and the program has grown. Scott Shepard asked for data supporting the growth of the department. Jessie explained that their participant numbers have doubled in the past few years from approximately 4,000 to 8,000. The group would like Jessie to put together a report showing the programming increases to help support the financial increases. Conner MacIver discussed that the Recreation Revolving Fund removed the majority of the Operating Budget expenses from Recreation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Steve Saunders asked what the long-term scope and direction of the Recreation Department is. Jessie and Conner described that there are many different ways the program can evolve and that there was a needs assessment and strategic plan completed and the residents survey conveyed they want park space. The group discussed revisiting the MOU between the Recreation Department and the Town after this budget cycle.

The group discussed the warrant article request for the Recreation Department. Steve Saunders suggested that the warrant article request doesn't include maintenance costs at all or specifically outlines that maintenance costs will be generated in future years. Conner MacIver explained the benefits to a capital reserve fund versus an expendable trust fund. The group discussed removing the maintenance costs and putting them into an expendable trust fund. Jessie explained to the group that they have a list of financial projections and future development. Future developments listed are a band stand, pavilion, community pavilion, pump track, outdoor basketball/blacktop, walking trail, and disc golf. Peter asked for clarification on the projected numbers and Jessie explained that they are just estimates and the Q3 Bill 2023 does not include the van despite the description in the notes.

Conner MacIver discussed a grant opportunity for \$1 million that the Recreation Department is pursuing. The structure of the grant is a forgivable loan, and the voters must approve bond funding. A bond article will need to be approved by the Selectboard. The group would like to see a list of cost benefits to move forward. Scott Shepard asked for clarification on the community center aspect of the library and the recreation department. Conner MacIver explained that both departments would utilize the vacated library space as a community center space. The group discussed the different ways to present the vision successfully to residents.

The group thanked Jessie Tennis and Dale Sylvia for their attendance.

Liz Bolton and Susan Gaudiello reviewed the library budget which can be found on the town's website www.barrington.nh.gov/2024budget. The library is decreasing the library building and maintenance line due to the highway department doing their plowing. Book collection and maintenance, advertising and public relations, dues and fees, postage, and digital

materials are increasing due to inflation. The group discussed the increase in electronic /downloadable programs usage and costs. Susan discussed the renaming of a position to get interest and hire for it. To retain the current employee, they are suggesting increasing the hourly rate from grade 5 to grade 6.

The group discussed the questions and answers for the library building project. The Q&A provided by the library is listed below:

**Barrington Public Library Building Project -
Response to ABC Questions (10/31/23)**

[Questions submitted via email from John Morris, 9/8/23]

Q: What is the purchase price of the building including all costs. P&S, closing costs, environmental studies, traffic studies as this is off 125, ect.?

A: List price is \$1.1 million. Negotiations are underway. The Town is exempt from transfer tax, so closing costs are limited to attorney's fees, title search/insurance, and recordings. There is no environmental study planned unless forthcoming inspections warrant additional review. There is no traffic study required or planned as this site will use an existing driveway off of Route 125.

Q: What is the estimated Warrant Article dollar value?

A: TBD – will include purchase of the building, construction and related costs, and also renovation of the existing library space into Rec offices and community center rooms.

Q: What is the loss of tax revenue associated with this becoming a town building as I assume HCA as a for-profit entity owns the building and currently pays taxes?

A: Taxes since the property was acquired by HCA are \$24,000 (approx.) per year. Previously, when owned by the non-profit Frisbie Hospital, a PILOT payment of half the property tax rate was paid to the Town. Given the new appraised tax valuation for 2024, the impact on the tax rate would be 1.3 cents per thousand.

Q: What are the intentions of the existing library if this were to pass? Sale? Additional town use? Potential costs of repurposing of this building?

A: As noted above, the intent is to repurpose the library space to serve as offices for the Rec department and community center meeting and program space. Cost to renovate the space is being estimated.

Q: What now happens with the existing land on Ramsdell Lane if the library is not located there?

A: The land will be used for recreation purposes and as a park.

Q: Will the proposed 2024 budget for the library include costs related to the new building that are outside of a normal budget?

A: There are no costs related to the new building in the 2024 library budget proposal. Costs related to the new site will be reflected in the 2025 budget, assuming the library would move to the new site in late spring or summer of 2025. Costs such as technology, phone system, moving expense, and security system will be included in the warrant article, not in the library operating budget.

Q: What are the values of cash on hand from donations? What are the additional funds that are pledged above the true cash on hand for the project?

A: The cash on hand held by the Library Foundation is approximately \$310,000 as of October 1. In addition, the Foundation holds pledges of \$162,653 including in-kind pledges (services) of \$28,000. The Foundation is launching a new round of fund-raising once the P&S is finalized, so the pledge numbers will likely increase.

Q: What is the proposed timeline for P&S, construction, and opening of the building?

A: The Town expects to complete the negotiations for purchase of the building this fall. Upon passage of the warrant article in March 2024, final design work will move forward, then the construction management firm will bid out the work, and construction should commence in fall 2024. We would expect to open by summer of 2025.

Q: What is the project bond duration and based on a non-favorable market, what type of rate are we looking at?

A: We anticipate a 20-year bond. The bond will likely be sold by the NH Municipal Bond Bank and in July 2023 their rates were:

5 year: 3.26%

10 year: 2.99%

15 year: 3.35%

20 year: 3.65%

29 year: 4.09%

Updated rates will be obtained prior to finalization of the warrant article.

Q: Projected additional cost per year to operate building? This would be a net total including additional staffing requests, materials as needed to fill shelves, savings from a building that might be potentially more efficient, etc?

A:

- *Custodial*

- *The low end of the range cost per sq. ft. is \$0.05. That could be once per week or all the duties split so a fraction was completed each day. If the scope was weekly it would be about \$23,400. The current library custodial budget is \$11,167 (employing a part-time worker 11 hrs/week).*
- *Facilities Manager*
 - *The Town has about 40,000 sq. ft. of facilities which are used regularly (excluding some buildings at 224/226 Smoke Street). That makes the new library about a 20% increase. 20% of the Facilities Manager position is \$16,180.*
- *Winter Maintenance, Grounds Maintenance, and Utilities (reported by HCA)*
 - *Winter maintenance--HCA reported spending an average of \$5,400 per year for 2021-23. We anticipate that the town would handle snow removal for the Library.*
 - *Grounds maintenance—The property has mature landscaping and the Library does not plan to add or alter the landscaping. We anticipate the town will handle lawn mowing and raking of the property.*
 - *Data provided by HCA on recent utility bills vary widely from year to year. We are continuing to research these costs to provide a reliable estimate.*
- *Pavement*
 - *The Road Agent estimates that if the current parking lot is patched, cracks filled, sealed and repainted, it could last for another five years. The cost of that work would be approximately \$12-15,000 and is included in the project budget. Overlaying the present lot is not an option. If the current parking lot is replaced as part of the building renovation in 2024-25, it would need to be sealed and repainted periodically. The recent patching and sealcoating at the Public Safety Building cost about \$8,500.*
- *Staffing*
 - *No additional staffing is anticipated in 2025 or 2026, with the possible exception of increased janitorial (see above).*
 - *Depending on increased utilization of library services, it is possible an additional part-time children's librarian may be needed at some point in the future.*
- *Materials*
 - *The Library will continue to purchase new materials and weed older materials not circulating, but does not plan to increase the size of the collection.*

Q: Will this potentially conflict with a warrant article for upgrades and renovations to the Public Safety Building?

A: *The Public Safety Building construction project will not be on the 2024 ballot; instead a request for funds to undertake a full design during 2024 will be on the ballot in March 2024.*

The group reviewed the “A New Barrington Public Library” pamphlet. The HVAC and roof are potential maintenance items to be found during inspection process. The total cost of the project is expected to cost \$3,746,235. The group discussed different ways to present the project to the community.

The group thanked Liz Bolton and Susan Gaudiello for their attendance.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.