



**SELECTMEN'S OFFICE
TOWN OF GILMANTON**

PO Box 550, Gilmanton, NH 03237

Ph: (603) 267-6700

Fax: (603) 267-6701

Website: www.gilmantonnh.org

APPROVED

Board of Selectmen Meeting

October 4, 2023 - Academy Building – 3:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER – ROLL CALL

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Present: Chairman Mark Warren, Vice-Chairman Vincent Baiocchetti, Selectmen Evan Collins, Town Administrator Heather Carpenter, Finance Specialist Cathy Pounder

Board of Selectmen – Budget Workshop

Chairman Warren has done some research to assist in guiding the members and presented them with an article from NHMA on best practices in local government budgeting. NHMA recommends that priorities are addressed. The three priorities that he recommends are, employee retentions, employee transitions, and what is a reasonable percentage increase.

- To put language to that; to fund the new Public Works Director position. They may not need to increase the project funding because there will be a transition year of learning the Town and creating structure.
- Look at increasing benefits to create a competitive edge knowing that our municipality cannot always compete with the pay of surrounding communities; and determine the amount of time needed to help with employee transitions with PD, FD, and Highway.
- How each percentage of increase to the Town portion of the municipal budget will affect our property taxes based on the average of Gilmanton properties using the 2022 tax rate of \$5.17, which is the correct number.

Chairman Warren noted that Zillow has the Town average median household at \$396,803, but the Community Development Director told him that median assessed property value is \$189,000 and that is what the \$5.17 of the Town portion of the tax rate is based on. He presented the Gilmanton rates from the State from Town, Municipal, School, State, Education.

Vice Chairman Baiocchetti stated that as a municipality, Gilmanton is the 6th lowest in the county, but because of the school, we are the first in the county due to the tax rate.

Chairman Warren stated some considerations. The Selectboard will be going through property evaluations in the upcoming year. This will make the Town tax rate go down, but it doesn't affect what the residents are paying, which is the price per thousand. He stated that on the revenue side, that the Community Development Director stated that \$5 million was added in valuation this year through new construction.

Vice Chairman Baiocchetti does not disagree with the priority list, but doesn't believe they are in the correct order or priority. He believes employee retention and employee transition should be number one. The employees are the largest asset, will cost the most to replace. There are two vacant positions at the Police Department, if they fill the position with an uncertified individual it's going to cost about \$200,000 in training. The Fire Department has a vacant position. The Transfer Station needs to hire at least one employee. And the DPW Director. The Town has always come second to the School and Town budget has always been cut. Selectman Collins agrees and for him the priority is employee retention, but finding a palatable way to present it to the residents.

TA Carpenter stated that the school is looking at establishing a maintenance fund. This is something she would like to do as well due to unforeseen issues that have occurred. The building maintenance fund is something she had brought forward in a warrant article in the past and it always gets cut. She is not asking to put money into the fund this year, but at least get one established for all the Town buildings.

Chairman Warren stated that the question will be how is it different then the infrastructure fund and then what is done with the current buildings fund for the Transfer Station.

TA Carpenter stated that the Infrastructure Fund was inherently started for roads, however, it was a larger picture of infrastructures. This can be listed that the Infrastructure Fund will cover everything.

Vice Chairman Baiocchi would like to see two Infrastructure lines; one for roads and one for buildings. Chairman Warren asked if the separated funds for the building should be all consolidated to a building infrastructure line with roofs, septic, wells, etc. Infrastructure fund can be roads and culverts.

Fire Department -

Discussed was the Fire Department position and whether to present it as a warrant article instead of an additional position.

Cathy Pounder stated that if the Fire Department line 01-4220-119, position #6 was removed it would decrease the budget \$111,205. She stated the Selectboard needed to also look at 01-4220-120 because if 01-4220-119 is cut he added \$61,000 to the part-time, so he would have \$112,000 in there. Fire Chief stated that if 01-4220-119 was cut, he was going to pull \$61,000 out of the \$112,000.

Selectman Collins stated he would not move forward with either of the position.

Chairman Warren deferred to Vice Chairman Baiocchi and asked whether or not the Fire Department needed all the funding for overtime.

Vice Chairman Baiocchi stated the Fire Chief was supposed to have a recruitment and retention policy.

Cathy Pounder stated so far, \$54,219 has been spent on overtime wages this year.

Selectman Collins noted that line 01-4220-118 has not been hired so that would off set the overtime line.

Vice Chairman Baiocchi stated that the Fire Chief had stated that he would need 8 full-time staff to run 24/7 coverage.

Further discussed was the recruitment program and the potential to have call people so they could pick up shifts and Fire Chief should have a program to increase recruitment and call personnel.

TA Carpenter is bringing forward a full-time hire recommendation and the Fire Department will have all current open positions filled.

Selectman Collins suggested \$81,000 instead of the \$112,000, TA Carpenter stated that Fire Chief would need the \$112,000 if the new position he was requesting was cut.

Chairman Warren stated the actual is \$54,000, but budgeted \$49,000. But was understaffed most of the year.

So, he believes the \$54,000 can go down if the Fire Department is fully staffed and would be able to operate at the same level as he did this year, because he will not require as much part time help.

Selectman Collins does not believe that the money that has been spent does not equate to what is being asked for.

Chairman Warren stated that with the rough numbers, to put \$90,000 into the part-time wages instead of \$112,000.

TA Carpenter stated this will result in a reduction of the Health Insurance cost, not an increase.

Recommendation: The recommendation is to cut out line 01-4220-119.

Place \$90,000 into part-time wages instead of \$112,000.

Highway Department – This will become the new DPW

Chairman Warren stated this will be combining a little bit of both positions. Discussed were how many positions would be needed and the budget for DPW will be coming from three budgets, Parks & Rec, Transfer Station, and Highway Department. There will be a DPW Director, Foreman for Transfer Station and Highway Department is needed, 2 additional Highway Positions. Currently, 01-4311-116 and 01-4311-120 are vacant.

Chairman Warren would like to reduce line 01-4311-120 to \$1 and keep the line open.

TA Carpenter discussed adding this line to another position and suggested the Park Attendant position and create a viable position for DPW between the two lines.

Vice Chairman Baiocchi asked if the Park Attendant position, 01-4520-115 could be added to 01-4311-120 and make it \$15,000, moving all the positions under Highway Administration. He also stated Transfer Station should moved under Highway Administration as well.

TA Carpenter stated she needs to look at the chart of accounts first.

Vice Chairman Baiocchi stated just the salaries and benefits, because that would give them a true picture of the DPW.

Chairman Warren agrees with TA Carpenter and taking a look at how that gets structures first.

The Selectboard revisited the number of positions needed to fill the DPW roles, 2 additional positions have been requested in addition to the staff they already have for a total of 6 positions.

TA Carpenter recommended the Selectboard concentrate on the DPW Director, which is the priority and let the DPW Director decide how much staff will be needed.

Vice Chairman Baiocchi stated that the pay should be increased, TA Carpenter was in agreement, but would like to have the wage scale discussion next year.

TA Carpenter stated that the current Road Agent's position was left in the budget at a prorated amount until July 1st but asked if the Selectboard would like to leave the lines as two separate positions or do an overlap as they have done with other departments.

Chairman Warren would like this left as two lines to avoid confusion. Cathy Pounder added these positions as 6 months for the Road Agent, and 9 months for the DPW. TA Carpenter clarified that a proration amount was added for the health insurance for the positions.

TA Carpenter requested clarification from the Selectboard, under Road Betterment, there was \$100,000 and the previous recommendation was to put that \$100,000 into a Warrant Article and not in the budget.

Recommendation – Move Parks and Rec line 01-4520-115, \$9,000 and put into line 01-4311-120 under Highway Administration – DPW.

Request a Warrant Article for Road Betterment in the amount of \$100,000 (Remove from line 01-4319-731).

Police Department -

Discussed was the transitional period for the Executive Secretary and new hire for the position. The Selectboard felt that 6 months is a long transition period for this position and further discussed options.

TA Carpenter recommended no more than 3 months, giving the new hire a month and a half of training, and then have the current employee available for questions thereafter, and work on written processes, with the understanding that she is not familiar with their office or exact needs.

Discussed were starting wages and expected duties of the Executive Assistant. The Selectboard further discussed beginning at a lower grade and step for the new position. Selectman Collins suggested leaving the position as is, and post for what they think it should pay, if they cannot hire then they will already have the funding available.

TA Carpenter discussed line 01-4210-681, \$12,500. This was reduced because a grant was received from the State for the body worn cameras.

Recommendation – 3 months cross over training from current Executive Assistant for new hire, \$29.30/hr., \$14,064. This will save on wages and benefits.

Transfer Station –

An additional full-time employee is needed at the Transfer Station. The current hybrid position is only working at the Transfer Station on Wednesday and Sunday. They require 4 employees at the Transfer Station on the open days with Wednesday being the busiest but could possibly reduce to 3 employees on the weekend. TA Carpenter stated there is cleaning being done currently, where previous staff indicated they did not have the ability to clean or maintain the facility on non-operational days.

It was suggested to remove the part-time line, 01-4324-112. Further discussed was the role under the new DPW and the viability of a part-time employee. Selectman Collins suggested leaving this position.

Also discussed was the \$1,500 stipend given to the Highway Department for Solid Waste Operation Certifications to cover DPW and whether it was a one-time payment or yearly payment to maintain the certification. A yearly stipend was not added to the budget.

Wages and Benefits –

Chairman Warren addressed TA Carpenter's increase and asked if their intention was to have her on the wage scale. On the scale is \$95,950, Grade 22, Step 8; if they do not want her on a step it will be \$95,000. Discussed was the proposed wage scale that Vice Chairman Baiocchi has tried to present – this will be further discussed at a Selectboard meeting.

Currently, Health insurance is at 80/20. Chairman Warren asked what a COLA would look like. Cathy Pounder clarified that covering 80% of insurance cost at \$730,368.27 plus giving employees a 4% COLA would cost the Town \$1,016,474.68. She also presented the insurance cost with the Town providing 80%, 90%, and 100%, as well as 3 months at 80% & 9 months at 100%. TA Carpenter stated that the Personnel Policy is almost complete so they added the increase to the buy-out options this year. She discussed the increase to health insurance over the last two year but that it does have the potential to decrease over time, but the employees will be paying three months of an increase from January to March and then the Health Insurance would be paid 100 percent. The following year it will be 100 percent paid.

Vice Chairman Baiocchi and Selectmen Collins like the option where the employee pays the higher cost of health insurance for 3 months and 9 months is 100 percent paid by the Town.

Vice Chairman Baiocchi asked what was going to be done for part-time employees and whether they would receive a 4 percent increase.

Recommendation – Add TA Carpenter to the wage scale at \$95,950, Grade 22, Step 8.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector-

The Deputy position is currently vacant and needs to be filled. There are also two assistant positions.

TA Carpenter stated that the Assistant II position was removed last year. This office seems to function with just the Town Clerk/Tax Collector and Deputy position and has done this for the duration of 2023. There is no increase in the Tax Collector's line, this remains the same. Health insurance for this position is the only increase to this line.

Chairman Warren asked if there were any projects that they may be needing the Part-time position for. TA Carpenter stated that there is always work that needs to be done but part-time positions are not viable. The intention is to hire for the Deputy position and remove the Part-time position.

Recommendation: Remove the Part-time TC/TX assistant position, line 01-4151-115 for \$21,840.

Vice Chairman Baiocchi wanted to revisit the Part-time positions. TA Carpenter stated that it was only a 4 percent increase requested. This was not added to the budget.

Vice Chairman Baiocchi stated that they supply their own equipment so they do not need to worry about that.

TA Carpenter stated that the request is \$7,490 which is the same as last year, so 4 percent needs to be added to this.

TA Recommendation: If 4 percent is going to be added to cemeteries Part-time positions this will need to be increase across the board for all Part-time positions. The Part-time positions are Pete Kotsakis, Cemeteries, and the Park Attendant, but this position was just added to line 01-4311-120 and this has not been filled yet.

Vice Chairman Baiocchi suggested reducing the Part-time PD line by \$10,000.

Chairman Warren and Selectman Collins are in agreement. TA Carpenter stated there is a candidate that will be working, but not \$26,000 worth of hours. Line 01-4210-120 will be reduced by \$11,000. \$15,000 will remain in this line.

TA Carpenter noted that Household Hazardous Waste went up 40 percent. And Cathy Pounder noted that the Insurance rates have not come in yet.

190 Vice Chairman Baiocchetti would like to create a pie chart and display it in the Town Hall with a School and Town
191 comparison. He would like it to list State Education and County, and what you get for municipality and how
192 much you get for the school.
193

194 Chairman Warren stated that this is a 13 percent increase, but within that is the DPW Director, staffing
195 transitions, and at no control of the Town is Healthcare which has increase 15 percent. There may be some
196 changes, as within the budget are vacant roles that need family plans budgeted for. This may adjust when the
197 roles are filled. TA Carpenter \$362,361.80 is the cost of health insurance. Discussed was the narrative and how
198 to form the descriptions for the ease of understanding.
199

200 Chairman Warren asked what happens in a situation with a default budget and the increasing cost of health
201 insurance that they have no control over. TA Carpenter clarified that the cost would have to be found within the
202 budget and it is not considered a contractual obligation, neither are wages.

203 Vice Chairman Baiocchetti stated that if the budget defaulted that it would be significant problem and the
204 budget is so thin already. There are currently two less Police Officers, two less Fire Fighters, and two less
205 Transfer Station attendants.

206 TA Carpenter stated that \$40,000 was also requested for Welfare this year, where last year it was only \$25,000.
207 This could potentially be reduced, however there is also the offset from the Capital Reserve Fund.

208 The Legal line currently has \$56,000. TA Carpenter stated that this could be reduce by \$20,000 unless the
209 \$56,000 is not able to cover the PSNH court case costs.

210 Vice Chairman Baiocchetti stated that this could be left up to the TA to reduce if the \$20,000 was a reasonable
211 number. Chairman Warren is in agreement with this.

212 ☐ **Action Item:** Review what the payout was for PSNH the last time to evaluate if a \$20,000 reduction in
213 the legal line is appropriate.
214

215 Discussed was the 80 percent, plus a 3 percent raise and what that would look like. TA Carpenter stated that it
216 is under the value of where CPI would be. Currently, the rate is 3.5. Talking point, 3 percent COLA and merit
217 increase. TA Carpenter stated that the pie chart Chairman Warren is creating is primarily health insurance cost,
218 but there will be adjustments to this potentially if the family plans adjust.

219 ☐ **Action Item:** Do the comparison with a 3 percent increase.
220

221 Chairman Warren inquired what the increase does to the resident's taxes. It is increasing to .67 per thousand.
222 The Town is up for revaluation and average home is \$189,000. The Town is increasing 13 percent and the school
223 is three times that rate. TA Carpenter clarified that the school's unassigned fund balance can only retain so
224 much money. They reduce the payment that is required by the Town. She also stated that school has always
225 been really great at planning and longevity because they have a facility coordinator that tracks information for
226 them and they only have one building and property.

227 ☐ **Action Item:** Information pertaining to what the school returns back to the budget, 10-year comparison.
228

229 TA Carpenter stated that what they have put together cumulatively between all of the departments is based off
230 a need. She stated the other option they have is not one she advised because the Town will lose employees, but
231 they could choose not to do a 4 percent increase. The only Department Head that did not receive a lot of cuts
232 was the Highway Department. TA Carpenter stated that there is only so much that can be done on the Towns
233 side to offset the tax rate.

234 Chairman Warren stated that they were trying to stay below the 10 percent increase, but does not think that is
235 feasible this year while they are trying to equip longevity and proper functioning within the Town.

TA Carpenter stated that the Selectboard can look at the Part-time position in the executive office, Line 01-4130-116 but she does not recommend cutting that at this time due some changes that will be occurring within the office. There could be potential to reduce that line later.

TA Carpenter stated they will update the numbers and provide new sheets to the Selectboard. Chairman Warren believes that they approached the budget with the wishes of the Town and cost effectiveness of employee retention. TA Carpenter stated there is an eb and flow with the insurance costs that does benefit the Town with employee retention.

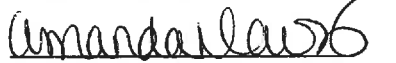
Chairman Warren stated they have to look at revenues and those should be coming in soon. TA Carpenter did not present Default Budget, but she has some questions for legal.

Chairman Warren requested to have the plan to adjust pay scale added to the next agenda for the Selectboard meeting on 10/23/23.

☐ **Action Item:** Add pay scale discussion to 10/23/23 agenda under Selectboard Items.

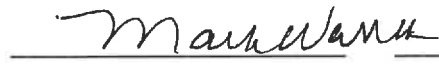
Adjourned 6:49 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,



Amanda Davis, Administrative Assistant

Approved by the Board of Selectmen



Chairman Mark E. Warren



Vice-Chair Vincent A. Baiocchetti



Selectmen Evan Collins