

**TOWN OF JAFFREY
BUDGET COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
February 5, 2022**

Members Present: Norm Langevin, Bob Schaumann, Frank Sterling, Kathy Batchelder, Peter Maki, Charlie Turcotte, Sam Greene (late 9:17am)

Staff Present: Town Manager Frederick, Finance Director FitzGerald, Department Heads, Administrative Assistant Zola

Residents Present: There were many residents attending via Zoom and in person.

Meeting opened: 9:00 am

Chairman Langevin asked the public to be respectful and mute their microphones. When wishing to speak, he asked that they “raise” their hands via the Zoom and wait to be recognized by him and then to identify themselves for recording purposes. In person attendees were also asked to raise their hands and to identify themselves for minute recording.

The annual budget process was then explained to the public. TM Frederick met with all department heads to review their budgets before coming to the Budcom with the final proposed budget.

2022 Operating Budget Review

Operating Budget requested is \$6,867,391 which is increased 5.74% from last year. Some issues that affected the Operating Budget were:

- New Hampshire Retirement employer contribution rate increases
- Increased fuel costs
- Inflation

Water and Sewer Budgets are separated from the General Operating Budget. They share operating expenses based on users, and receive money from the property tax base.

Strategic Goals

- **Operating Budget-** The Budget Committee directed the Town Manager to present a budget to maintain operations and keep expense increases under control while mindful of the impact of our inflationary economy.
- **Maintain long-term road paving plan without debt.**

- **Water & Sewer Utilities are self-funded with rates adjusted as needed to maintain operations and adequate fund balances-**
 - Cold Stone Springs alternate water source in 2020
 - Sewer budget is recovering. Budget built with 10-year rate and fund balance recovery plan
 - Sewer rates increased 8% in January. Water rates remain steady.

Budget Summary

TM Frederick was complimented on his presentation to the Budget Committee. There is an increase of \$372,898 (+ 5.74%) in this year's budget.

The 2022 budget including Operating Budget, Warrant Articles & Petitions with revenue offsets would increase the tax rate \$.35 to \$10.51 per thousand (+3.41%).

Departmental Budgets

The Budget Committee has taken a tentative vote on all of the departmental budgets. After this Public hearing, the Budget Committee will meet in a work session to take a final vote. Both Budget Committee and Select Board votes will be presented to Town Meeting.

Executive: 3.17% Increase.

No questions or comments from the public.

Election & Registration: 8.93% Increase.

No questions or comments from the public.

Finance: 6.49% Increase.

No questions or comments from the public.

Judicial/Legal: This budget is level funded.

No questions or comments from the public.

Personnel Administration: .50% Increase.

No questions or comments from the public.

General Government Buildings: .69% Increase.

No questions or comments from the public.

Insurance: 13.70% Increase.

No questions or comments from the public.

Building Inspection: 3.74% Increase.

No questions or comments from the public.

Health: .79% Increase.

No questions or comments from the public.

Welfare: .28% Increase. General help and heating assistance were up, but Carrie Traffie is very good at monitoring these balances.

No questions or comments from the public.

Patriotic Purposes: Level Funded.

No questions or comments from the public.

Conservation: This budget is level funded.

No questions or comments from the public.

Debt Service: 18.71% Increase. This includes water/sewer bonds, leases, Broadband, road loans and long-term loans and notes.

No questions or comments from the public.

Recreation Department: 14.23% decrease due to program wages.

No questions or comments from the public.

JRMA Ambulance: 4.88% Increase.

No questions or comments from the public.

Fire Department: 21.81% increase due to new per diem staff position, that was recommended after the MRI staffing study was done.

No questions or comments from the public.

Emergency Management: 2.34% increase due to mutual aid dispatch.

No questions or comments from the public.

Library: 3.31% Increase. This budget was presented by the Library with a 6.59% increase. The Select Board decreased this increase to 3.31% to keep in line with all other department requests. John Stone, Library Trustee along with other Trustees pleaded their case for the increased amount, stating that the Trustees fund a great deal at the Library that saves the taxpayers. Some trust fund money is limited to use of only the interest and not the principal. Costs of maintaining the building are increased due to the age of the building and increased staff wages are due the increased hours that they are open. They have remained open during Covid and many supporters in attendance feel the budget should be reverted to the original request because that amount would ensure a continuance of the level of services provided. Chairman Langevin explained that this budget was reviewed in detail line by line prior to this hearing and that it was tentatively approved at the lower amount. The Committee will review this budget again and final voting will take place after the budget hearing presentation is completed.

Planning/Zoning: 14.08% increase. They are presently working on updates to the Master Plan
No questions or comments from the public.

Economic Development: 2.96% increase.
No questions or comments from the public.

Property Records: 2.75% increase. We are currently in year 2 of 5 for assessing.
No questions or comments from the public.
Highway: 8.73% increase.
No questions or comments from the public.

Bridges: This budget is level funded. These funds are used for bridge inspection and repairs.
No questions or comments from the public.

Street Lighting: 20% decrease due to LED street light conversion town-wide.
No questions or comments from the public.

Transfer Station/Recycling: .34% increase due to wages and utilities.
No questions or comments from the public.

Parks & Commons: 6.07% increase due to contracted services.
No questions or comments from the public.

Cemeteries: 4.09% increase due to contracted services.
No questions or comments from the public.

Police: 2.22% increase. The department is now fully staffed.
Resident Joanne Buck asked if there has been any increase in crime here in Jaffrey. Chief Muilenberg stated nationally the crime rate has increased, but not here in Jaffrey.

Prosecution: 2.66% increase due to wages.
No questions or comments from the public.

Animal Control: This budget is level funded. Is used for stray cats and dogs.
No questions or comments from the public.

Capital Outlay: \$25,000 request will go for road construction.
No questions or comments from the public.

Water Department: .7% increase.
No questions or comments from the public.

Sewer Department: 10.01% increase. Last year capital maintenance was decreased to level the budget. Line and capital maintenance must be done to maintain the system.
No questions or comments from the public.

Warrant Articles

\$8,248,980 was tentatively approved by the BOS and Budget Committee.

Stone Arch Infrastructure Improvements: \$40,000 - This would not have any impact on the tax rate.

No questions or comments from the public.

Cold Stone Springs Supplemental: \$4,300,000 - This would not have any tax impact. TM Frederick explained that Jaffrey needs to do a gross appropriation, but their actual amount would be \$1,522,100. We currently have 4 grants and they would cover that balance.

No questions or comments from the public.

Stratton Road Sewer Main Replacement: \$1,500,000 - This would not have any impact on the tax rate.

No questions or comments from the public.

Road Paving CRF: \$575,000 - this yearly amount keeps the 10-year plan on schedule. The Budcom and Select Board highly recommend the approval of this request.

No questions or comments from the public.

Highway Equipment CRF: \$200,000 is required to maintain steady funding. There is a 20-year plan in place to help the Town purchase equipment without incurring debt.

No questions or comments from the public.

Highway Equipment (Sweeper): \$225,000 - Causing no tax impact on residents.

No questions or comments from the public.

Town Office CRF: \$50,000 – This has been the annual contribution since 2017 for the design and acquiring property for the new Town Office.

No questions or comments from the public.

Fire Department CRF: \$60,000 – This is the annual contribution toward the 30-year plan of replacing equipment.

No comments or questions from the public.

Fire Engine One Replacement: \$750,000 - This would not have any impact on the tax rate.
No questions or comments from the public.

Fire Tanker Repairs: \$25,000 - This would not have any impact on the tax rate.
No questions or comments from the public.

TIF Downtown Infrastructure CRF: \$60,000 - This money is used for improvements/enhancements to the Route 202 downtown area that are outside of the project itself. This comes from the TIFD, with no impact on taxes.
No questions or comments from the public.

Land Acquisition Capital Reserve: \$5,000 - This is used for buying conservation property.
No questions or comments from the public.

Cemetery Trees/Gravestone/Meetinghouse: \$ 9,000 - This is a level request.
No questions or comments from the public.

Municipal Building Maintenance Trust: \$150,000 - This is needed to maintain municipal buildings.
No questions or comments from the public.

Bridge Rehabilitation: \$120,000 – This is a level request.
No questions or comments from the public.

Police Cruiser CRF: \$50,000 – There is a 10-year plan being followed with a cruiser replaced every 2 years.
No questions or comments from the public.

Jaffrey 250th Celebration: \$7,500.00 - This is a level request. The 250th celebration will be held in 2023. To help support, the website is jaffrey250.org.
No questions or comments from the public.

Recreation Equipment CRF: \$25,000 is a level funded request. The current van will not pass inspection and will need to be replaced in 2022.
No questions or comments from the public.

Retirement Buyout Expendable Trust: \$10,000 is needed for the next 5 years to fund this fund, so that the General Fund will not have to be used to fund retirement buyouts.
No questions or comments from the public.

Petition Articles

Chairman Langevin explained that the Petitioner process of getting signatures and presenting their petitions to the Budget Committee.

Home Healthcare & Hospice: \$ 17,000 - No questions or comments from the public.

MCELC: \$ 8,000 - No questions or comments from the public.

Community Kitchen: \$ 5,000 - No questions or comments from the public.

Monadnock Family Services: \$ 6,650 -No questions or comments from the public.

SWCS: \$ 6,637 – No questions or comments from the public.

Jaffrey Civic Center: \$ 4,000. No other questions or comments from the public.

CVTC: \$ 5,000: No questions or comments from the public.

The River Center: \$ 2,000 - No questions or comments from the public.

Hundred Nights: \$ 5,000 – No questions or comments from the public.

Reality Check: \$13,193 – This amount was not recommended by the Select Board (2-1).

Selectman Belletete stated that the request from Jaffrey is not also requested from other communities. Selectman Chamberlain stated that Jaffrey's share is disproportionate to Rindge and surrounding towns. The Select Board doesn't have anything against the program, just the amount that is being asked of Jaffrey. Resident John Stone asked if it was \$2.50 based on per capita. It's based off the census numbers.

Future Planning

- Road paving and gravel road rehabilitation
- Route 202 dogleg reconfiguration project
- WW Cross remediation and development
- Cold Stone Springs well development
- PFAS Turnpike well
- Assessment of solar for the Landfill
- Lagoon closure at the WWTP.
- Funding of Capital Reserve Funds to reduce future debt.

There were no additional questions or comments from the public.

Chairman Langevin praised TM Frederick for a job well done to maintain finances.

At 10:21am the Budget Hearing was recessed.

At 10:42 am the Budget Hearing was re-convened.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Turcotte, seconded by Batchelder, the minutes from January 18, 2022 were approved (7-0).

- The DRA signature sheet will not be ready today. The Committee members will have to coordinate times with Administrative Assistant Zola at the Town Office to come in to sign.

Discussion

Library Budget- Selectman Sterling stated that the Select Board did recommend a 3% increase to keep the Library inline with all other departments. Other department requests were reduced also such as:

Recreation - reduced 40%

Fire Department - reduced \$70,000

Streets/Highway - reduced \$3,000

Police Department - reduced \$13,000

The Library isn't being singled-out by decreasing their budget request. He noted their salary increases are always above the other departments due to the trustee funding.

He urges the committee not to increase the request.

Batchelder feels the amount should be restored to the original requested amount in recognition of what the Library does for the community.

Schaumann stated that the number of residents that benefit from the Library is more than other non-profit organizations that we support.

Turcotte stated that the Library has had salary increases as high at 14%, while other Departments have been held to 3% or less. The Budcom has always approved prior requests, but with the uncertainty of the school portion of the tax rate, he feels the reduction is necessary.

After discussion a motion was made by Batchelder, seconded by Schaumann to increase the Library's Budget request back to the original amount of \$357,096. (3-yay, 4-nay) Motion does not pass.

Sterling stressed that all departments are important and the whole town needs to make an effort to contain costs and limit spending.

Voting

Operating Budget: Motion was made by Sterling, seconded by Greene to approve the Total of the Operating Budget amount as presented \$6,867,291. Vote was taken – All in Favor (7-0)

Water Budget: Motion was made by Batchelder, seconded by Maki approve the water budget amount of \$1,092,218. Vote was taken – All in Favor (7-0)

Sewer Budget: Motion was made by Greene, seconded by Turcotte to approve the sewer amount of \$2,001,384. Vote was taken – All in Favor (7-0)

Downtown TIFD: Motion was made by Batchelder, seconded by Greene to approve the Downtown TIFD amount of \$186,989. Vote was taken - All in Favor (7-0).

Stone Arch TIFD: Motion was made by Sterling, seconded by Turcotte to approve the Stone Arch TIFD amount of \$70,134. Vote was taken - All in Favor (7-0).

Warrant Articles & Petition Warrant Articles: Motion was made by Maki, seconded by Batchelder to approve all the warrant articles, to include Petition articles totaling \$5,471,080 Vote was taken – All in Favor (7-0)

Discussion

- The Committee discussed Reality Check's request. Mary Drew is willing to amend the amount at Town Meeting in response to the Select Board's vote to not recommend. The Budcom decided to keep their vote in favor of the requested amount (7-0).
- They also discussed making one allocation for all the petitioner requests. This would make them a budget item as a set amount. The requestors would still need to apply and come before the boards with their requests. This will be discussed at a meeting following Town Meeting.

Town Meeting is Saturday, March 12th at 9am at Pratt Auditorium. Members should be there by 8:30am.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Greene, seconded by Batchelder- Vote was taken - All in favor (7-0)

Meeting was adjourned at 11:32am.

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