



**Office of the Board of Selectmen
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NEWTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

DATE: Tuesday November 21, 2023

TIME: 6:00PM

**LOCATION: NEWTON TOWN HALL, 2 TOWN HALL ROAD and
ZOOM CONFERENCE CALL**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Zoom Conference phone number 929-205-6099

Meeting ID 818 7979 5674

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81879795674>

1. Call to Order

Chairman Marchand called the meeting to order at 6:06 PM. Selectmen in attendance were Chairman Robert Marchand Jr., Vice- Chairman Michael Connolly, Matthew Burrill, Daniel Guide, and Joseph Simone. Also in attendance were Interim Town Administrator (ITA) James O'Mara, and Selectmen's Executive Assistant (EA) Robyn Sparks. The non-public meeting was scheduled for after the public session and the minutes were typed and transcribed by ITA James O'Mara. The public meeting minutes were transcribed and typed by EA Sparks.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Citizen's Input

No discussion.

4. Administration

4.1 Announcements

Chairman Marchand announced that Town Offices-including the Transfer Station would be closed in honor of Thanksgiving, this coming Thursday and Friday.

5. Staff Reports

5.1 Budget Presentations 2024

• Tax Collector

Mary Jo McCullough, Newton's Tax Collector stated she is requesting budget increases for the training and travels lines. She also stated that her salary for Tax Collector has been the same since 2007 and is requesting an increase of \$5,000.00.

Selectman Burrill moved to accept the Tax Collector's draft proposed budget for inclusion in the overall default budget as written. Seconded by Selectman Simone . 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

• Town Clerk, Election

Please check subsequent minutes for approval of and/or amendments to these minutes

Mary Jo McCullough, Town Clerk is proposing small increases for training and travel on the clerk portion of the budget. She then stated she is focusing on the election line, because there are four elections this coming year. The Clerk is requesting an increase in election salaries to \$15.00 hourly.

Town Clerk stated the Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector is required to take certifications and specialized education classes in which require payment. In turn this also increases her knowledge and the monetary value she brings to the table. The Town Clerk is requesting an increase in the Deputy Clerk's salary line to align with the wages in neighboring towns, emphasizing this a combined position of Deputy Tax Collector and Deputy Town Clerk.

Selectman Burrill asked about the idea of hiring an additional person?

Town Clerk stated the workload is well managed but needs to be in line with the compensation.

Selectman Burrill moved to accept the Town Clerk's draft proposed budget for inclusion in the overall default budget as written. Seconded by Selectman Guide. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

ITA O'Mara introduced Interim Police Chief Rich Kane to the Selectboard. Further stating Chief Kane is contracted by Municipal Resources Inc and will be performing administrative duties at the Newton Police Department.

- **Police Department**

Chief Kane presented the 2024 proposed Police Department Budget, which he prepared with the help of the Office Manager. Chief Kane has tried to level fund most lines, however the overall budget has increased \$35,500.00, which is a 3.9% increase. In 2024, Newton Police Department will begin covering some of the comfort dog's expenses, which could vary from food costs to vet invoices.

Computers and software programs are due for an update and some need to be replaced, which will present a cost. The office supplies along with postage are level funded.

Chief Kane stated that the recruiting line item has increased by 73%, which breaks down to \$1,100.00. There are currently two full time officer positions vacant. The Chief is requesting to increase employees' salaries using a New Hampshire Police Chief Association wage study, in which he compared towns of similar size. Newton's Administrative Assistant salary would also increase over the course of the year by 17.7% .

The salary line was also adjusted using the same statewide matrix, totaling \$480,625.60, which is a decrease of \$6,864.00, from the current default budget. Chief Kane stated he was not sure how the 2023 salary line was constructed. He was not able to understand the previous calculation. He was able to make several allowances and still came in at a lower number than 2023. The salary line will include paying 6 full time officers along with the part timers . Part-Time and Full Time Officers are to be paid at an increased hourly rate. The wages would be increased to the following: Full- Time Officers: \$27.45, Lieutenants: \$38.85, and Sergeants: \$34.38.

The Chief is requesting an increased to the vehicle maintenance line and strongly suggested keeping up with maintenance and repairs. This will prevent larger costs and repair bills in the long term.

The Selectboard discussed the competitive wage scale in municipalities and the importance of retaining employees.

Selectman Burrill moved to accept the draft Police Department proposed budget for inclusion in the overall default budget as written. Seconded by Selectman Guide . 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

- **Road Agent**

Mike Pivero Road Agent (RA) proposed an increased Highway budget of 40% from the 2023 proposed budget. He stated that he is suffering from similar circumstances affecting other departments, such as hiring, retention, and increased costs. The increase of materials and finding people to employ effects productivity.

RA Pivero is trying to retain and attract operators for the winter months in a competitive market. RA Pivero's primary concern is the road repair and maintenance / paving needed. He estimated with the provided budget and required repairs it would take 17.5 years to complete. RA Pivero is requesting a large increase to the paving line.

RA Pivero stated he only has one employee, which is unsafe. He needs to employ another employee, requesting a salary line increase to \$125,000.00. Neighboring towns of similar size employ 3-4 town employees.

Chairman Marchand suggested increasing the paving line an additional \$100,000.00, which would allow the Highway Department to better maintain the roads. Vice-Chairman Connolly agreed and added that the salary line should also be increased. RA Pivero stated although he has reservations, he will increase the line items as suggested. He also stated that the Highway will now have to pay for phone and internet, which will also increase the overall budget.

RA Pivero wanted to discuss to additional items, first being equipment. The Highway Department currently rents the equipment from the RA Pivero's personal company. He stated it would be beneficial to the town to start to not only purchase equipment but maintain it. This would require budgetary money to be issued for this purpose. The Selectboard asked for guidance in coming to an actual figure. Selectman Burrill stated this information should be in the Capital Improvement Plan.

Lastly RA Pivero stated he wanted to discuss is putting a warrant article for a Road Improvement Bond. The amount would be discussed with the town engineer. RA Pivero stated that he has the plan but lacks the funds to repair the roads, which the bond would solve.

Selectman Burrill moved to accept the Highway draft proposed budget for inclusion in the overall default budget as written. Seconded by Selectman Guide. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

- **Tree Department**

Mike Pivero the General Foreman for the Tree Department is going to level fund the budget.

Selectman Guide moved to accept the Tree Service draft proposed budget for inclusion in the overall default budget as written. Seconded by Selectman Simone. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

Vice Chairman Connolly asked who would be responsible for overseeing the Capital Improvement Plan. ITA O'Mara stated by statue it would be the Planning Board. Discussion ensued around the Capital Improvement Plan and how to make progress with the plan.

- **Emergency Management**

Trisha McCarthy, Emergency Management Director (EMD), presented the proposed 2024 budget. She is requesting an increase in the salary line , which has been minimal since 2009. She

provided a statewide occupational employment list, which listed the average director position starting pay at \$25.78.

EMD McCarthy stated that the telephone and training line has decreased, while requesting an increase in the clothing line. She stated that a portion of her time is spent in sourcing potential grant money for any and all departments.

Selectman Burrill moved to accept the draft Emergency Management proposed budget for inclusion in the overall default budget as written. Seconded by Selectman Simone. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

RA Pivero wanted to state the importance of obtaining grants. He then stated the Highway's budget total is not corrected as listed. The total does not include October and November costs.

- **General Government Buildings**

ITA O'Mara stated that he has great admiration for the previous administration. However, struggles to comprehend how budgeting was previously conducted. He said that General Government Building has been used to pay for various department's costs, which should be included in their own budget.

ITA O'Mara stated the drinking water line has seen a large increase and he can only speculate reasons as to why. The volume has increased by adding drinking water to the Bulter building and services during a heat wave. This is similar to the large increase in electricity, in which he can not justify at this time.

ITA O'Mara is seeking a reduction in the improvement line because he is unclear of the purpose, as there is an existing repair and maintenance line.

ITA O'Mara stated that in 2022 the departments received notice to prepare to pay for their own internet services. However, this expense was not included in the default budget for the current year.

ITA O'Mara believes that the oil line is overdrawn because of an accounting error. The invoices were pulled from oil instead of propane.

The repairs and maintenance are to be level funded. In the coming year, the Facility Maintenance Technician will be responsible for expending this line town wide. The Facilities Maintenance Technician will have to balance and deal with departments directly. He also suggested creating a threshold for a repair or purchase, in the range of \$3,000.00 to \$5,000.00.

ITA O'Mara is seeking to level fund the stormwater/well testing line, recognizing the agreement the town is under to test the water around the Transfer Station.

He stated that the large increase is due to an increased cost of healthcare. He then stated that the departments may have encoded some incorrect invoices which could also affect the projected balance on the line items. There are some larger increases when it comes to provided benefits for town employees. A letter was received from Primex stating the following increases: Workers Compensation 14.6%, Unemployment 5% and Property and Liability 17.86 % . In addition, Health Trust who provides health benefits to employees is increasing 15.6%.

- **Other General Government**

ITA O'Mara stated that the Accident and Health line in Other General Government, is currently doubled. He thinks this is attributed to a mis-coded invoice. The increases are a result of being a smaller member of a larger service provider, such as Primex. The FICA, which is a standard deduction, is seeking a decrease to \$62,261.00. He is unclear as to why the Medicare line exists because it is typically included in FICA.

ITA O'Mara stated the NH Retirement was able to be decreased, because there are existing job vacancies within the town. Short term disability which is provided via HealthTrust is increasing 15.6 %.

ITA O'Mara is decreasing the legal line as it is trending down. The pest control line is seeking an increase due to the demand in Town Hall. The West Nile Virus treatment has been reduced considering the town lines need to be mutually maintained by neighboring towns to be effective. The Principal and Interest should be separated in future budgets, so you can clearly see what the figures for each. ITA O'Mara stated the community would benefit from seeing the interests and rates.

- **Executive**

ITA O'Mara presented the Executive 2024 budget and requested an overall increase of \$10,755.00. The Consulting line has increased by \$10,000.00, stating that the new year will require some help with payroll. The Office Supplies Line has a miscoded invoice which will be corrected and when updated it will not be over expended. He is requesting to level fund office supplies.

The postage line has not incurred any costs and ITA O'Mara is unclear as to why. Selectman Simone stated it could be a prior large purchase and stock left over.

ITA O'Mara has level funded all of the salary, training, and travel lines. He also suggested paying mileage to employees who use their personal vehicle.

- **Financial Administration**

ITA O'Mara presented the 2024 Financial Administration with a \$29,425.00 increase. Small increases are being requested for Office Supplies, while the payroll line is being level funded. The postage has been decreased as there have been no costs to date. The salary has been increased to \$85,000.00, to align with the vacant Finance Director position.

Selectman Simone stated the salary line for the Trustee's is now \$1,200.00, which was a passed by warrant article.

Vice Chairman Connolly wanted to provide insight on reconciling the electrical invoices. He mentioned there are independent companies that will perform an audit. The proceeds that they find can be split to be used as payment. ITA O'Mara stated he is concerned with paying for streetlights on a State Highway.

Vice Chairman Connolly moved to accept General Government Buildings, Other General Government, Executive, and Financial Administration, draft proposed budgets for inclusion in the overall default budget as written. Seconded by Selectman Guide. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

ITA O'Mara stated that he recently reviewed the accounts at the North Shore Bank. He suggested the town release the funds being held for the private cemetery. Selectman Simone volunteered to work with the Trustees to do so.

ITA O'Mara also suggested the Treasurer look into obtaining better rates on revolving accounts.

6. Approvals

6.1 Invoice Fence Pro

Selectman Burrill moved to instruct the Trustees of the Trust Fund to withdraw \$ 3,613.00 from the Town Buildings Capital Reserve Funds to pay the invoice from Fence Pro. Seconded by Selectman Simone. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

6.2 Manifest

Selectman Simone moved to approve a withdrawal in the amount of \$1,537.39 from the Police Special Detail Checking to pay the invoice from Wex Bank. Seconded by Selectman Burrill. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

Selectman Simone moved to approve Vendor Manifest in the amount of \$9,350.89 with a pay date of November 21, 2023. Payment made to Card Member Services for various departmental charges. Seconded by Selectman Burrill . 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

Selectman Simone moved to approve Vendor Manifest in the amount of \$146,382.40 with a pay date of November 21, 2023. Payments include \$17,845.00 to Eastern Seaboard Concrete Construction Company and \$43,052.00 to Northward Environmental Services for payment for Household Hazardous Waste Day. Seconded by Selectman Burrill . 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

Selectman Simone moved to approve payroll manifest in the amount of \$58,671.16 for pay period October 5th-18th 2023, with a pay date of November 22,2023. This manifest includes \$82.68 in ARPA administrative costs. Seconded by Selectman Burrill . 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

6.3 Minutes

Selectman Simone moved to approve the public meeting minutes dated November 8th, 2023, as written. Seconded by Selectman Connolly. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

7. Action Items New/ Old Business

7.1 275th Anniversary Celebration-Update

No update provided.

Selectman Burrill moved to go into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II (b) -hiring of a public employee. Seconded by Selectman Simone. 5-0 with a unanimous vote.

Chairman Marchand declared the meeting adjourned at 8:39pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Robyn Sparks

Robyn Sparks
Executive Administrative Assistant