

APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE MILFORD BOARD OF SELECTMEN AND BUDGET ADVISORY
COMMITTEE BUDGET REVIEW WORK SESSION
January 3, 2024

PRESENT: Gary Daniels, Chairman Lincoln Daley, Town Administrator
Chris Labonte, Vice Chairman
Paul Dargie, Member
Tim Finan, Member
Dave Freel, Member

1. CALL TO ORDER, BOARD OF SELECTMEN INTRODUCTIONS & PUBLIC SPEAKING INSTRUCTIONS:

Chairman Daniels called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Budget Advisory Committee members in attendance were Chris Pank, Chairman, Karen Mitchell, Vice Chairman, and Mike Thornton, member.

Summary of Meeting:

The Select Board, Town Administration, and the Budget Advisory Committee reviewed the 2024 Budget and warrant articles.

Administrator Daley said the work session goal was to ask questions about the budget and warrant article and discuss and identify any concerns and or issues. Included in the conversation will be the surplus that has been identified. It was a challenging process with the budget presented tonight and sacrifices were made by staff. The proposed budget for 2024 is \$18,290,535. At the last Board meeting, the Selectman voted to authorize the removal of \$500,000 from the fund balance and the use of an additional \$330,000 from the surplus and apply it to the proposed budget number. The increase is 4.7% over 2023 which includes the current warrant articles.

Director Calabria, Finance Director, said per the Board's direction to spend the surplus, trucks were purchased for DPW and the Fire Department. The Town prebought salt, gas, and diesel fuel. Additional plow blades were purchased for DPW along with two copiers. We also bought ammunition and tasers for the Police Department. Money was transferred into a non-lapsing account to fix the roof on the scout house and pool furniture was bought for the town pool. Administrator Daley said the default budget is \$18,043,468 which is about \$247,000 difference from the proposed budget which is in line with the past few years. Additional funding was found for \$40,000 to fund one more Police position. There was additional discussion about what was spent last year in surplus and half funding positions.

Chairman Daniels commended the Town Administrator and Department Heads for their hard work. They started at over 14% and are now 4.7% including warrant articles. There was some discussion about fund balance, how to fund capital reserve accounts, and phasing things in.

Warrant articles were discussed:

Reconstruction of Town Roads warrant: The BAC is concerned that if there is a year that we don't get the block grant, where would we get additional money for upgrading roads? We usually keep around \$300,000 in the budget, not including the block grant, and we should be adding more. The Selectmen's goal is to keep increasing the amount up over the next few years. There was discussion about potential materials that might be used from the gravel operation once it gets back on track.

Wadleigh Library Electrical Upgrade warrant: The Library was getting another quote to reduce the amps and will have it for the next Board meeting. There was additional discussion about what was needed. Selectman Freel doesn't think this is a safety hazard and he doesn't feel it needs to be done this year. There was a lot of speculation of what was or wasn't needed and the library is still waiting for answers to a few questions. Selectman Dargie recommended leaving it on the warrants for now and figuring out what we would need later. There was discussion about whether any additional money could come from the Library Trust Fund. Selectman Finan said this is an example of phasing in a project, which is what we asked them to do. The BAC has concerns that the library is always pushed aside for another time. Katherine Kokko, Jay Duffy, and Mike Thornton, all Milford residents, advocated for the library's electrical upgrade.

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Social Services warrant: Selectman Dargie said in future years, we should increase this number.

Non-emergency Community Transportation Bus Services: Selectman Dargie said in the future, this should be included as part of the budget. It's been supported by taxpayers every year. There was concern about adding multiple items to the budget and the amount of increase in taxes.

Information Technology Infrastructure Capital Reserve: There was no discussion about this.

Fireworks: Selectman Labonte said the reason to leave it on the ballot was to let the taxpayers decide, it was not necessarily supported by the Board.

Summer Band Concerts: There was no discussion about this.

Memorial, Veterans & Labor Day Parades, and Recognition Support: Selectman Labonte would like to know what each department spends on the parade for support. He would like to see parade support incorporated into the budget. There was confusion about having two warrant articles for parades.

Jay Duffy, Co-Chairman of the Labor Day Committee, said it's always been presented like this. Flags are recycled until they can no longer be used. He requested 300 new flags this year.

Annual Labor Day Parade Support: This parade funds the bands for the parade and the Labor Day Committee supplements it by fundraising. Mr. Duffy said parades cost between \$12,000 and \$14,000 to fund a parade. We are the oldest parade in the state and our 80th year will be in 2026. The current balance in the Labor Day Parade account is \$9,500. Selectman Labonte repeated that he would like to see parade support incorporated into the budget. There was additional discussion about how the details would be paid for if they went into the budget. Administrator Daley said he doesn't feel comfortable looking for additional money in the budget at this time. It was a challenge to find other monies that the Board wanted him to fully fund one of the two open positions budgeted for the Police Department. Department Heads do a great job of funding their departments.

Arene Berry, Recreation Director, said this conversation is difficult to listen to. Department heads have spent the last 4 months on this budget cutting it down to a bare-bones budget and now you are saying, "find \$7,000 more". If the Chief had \$7,000 in his budget that he could find, it would have been cut 3 months ago. Karen Blow, HR Director agreed with Ms. Berry. If you put it in the budget, it's not just a detail, now it's overtime, and now subject to NHRS. She recommends leaving it to the voters.

There was more discussion with different scenarios discussed. Selectman Labonte wanted the Department Heads to know that the Board has also spent hundreds of hours reviewing the budget. Selectman Finan said the two warrant articles should be separate because they are two different things.

Mr. Thornton asked how many officers work the parades who are not on duty already. Chief Viola said all his officers work the parades. Chairman Daniels said if you want to combine the warrants, we can discuss it when we do the budget for next year.

Discontinue Osgood Pond Capital Reserve Trust Fund: There was no discussion about this.

There will be a couple of warrants coming in by petition.

Wade Scott Campbell, Pumpkin Festival Committee Chair, said they discussed a warrant article for the pumpkin festival. The festival increased from \$23,000 to about \$39,000 over the past few years and most of that is from

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the town services side. They will be raising our vendor prices this year. They haven't decided if they are going to request a warrant article, they are just thinking about it.

Selectman Dargie recommends putting a warrant article on the warrants for the Pumpkin Festival for \$20,000. There was additional discussion. Chairman Daniels said he would rather remove the \$15,000 from the fireworks and put that towards the pumpkin festival. Selectman Freel agreed. Selectman Finan wants to see detailed numbers. Mr. Campbell said he isn't asking for taxpayers' money. Selectman Labonte asked to have the information for details before Monday's meeting. Selectman Finan feels we should cap the expenses.

The consensus was to have Administration write a pumpkin festival warrant for \$20,000.

Administrator Daley asked the Board if they would consider the increase of \$30,000 for 20 employees that the Compensation Committee identified as needed increases. If they are not on board with that, would they consider the \$14,000 that was identified for Ambulance employees?

Selectman Labonte is not in favor, he felt there are different options they could do like raise the per diem rate. He also didn't feel that some of the wage increases were not that far off. Selectman Dargie though it was going to be more to do the whole year. Director Calabria said the \$30,000 was just to cover January through March, they were just trying to get to the COLA. Selectman Dargie said if it was the whole year, it would be around \$150,000. Selectman Labonte said he's completely against it.

Administrator Daley asked about the part-time person to help out in HR. Selectmen Labonte thought that the payroll opportunity would take some of those responsibilities. Administrator Daley said it would be more for the on-boarding and paperwork itself. Ms. Blow said they don't even know if the Board will approve a payroll company this year. The volume of ins and outs has not slowed down, and requires a lot of administrative time. Ms. Blow asked if there was an opportunity for the Board to consider \$10,000 to act as a placeholder. If she doesn't use it, it goes into surplus at the end of the year.

There was additional discussion about the payroll analysis and if it would slow Ms. Blow down by having to train someone. Ms. Blow said it depends on the level of experience. She had \$8,000 in her budget for a part-time person last year but didn't have time to interview. The money was removed from her budget. It would be between \$18 to \$20 per hour and about 15 to 20 hours per week. They wouldn't get any compensation pay.

Selectman Freel said we should have a floater to help with all the departments. There was talk about interns from the high school helping. Administrator Daley said HR needs some level of discretion. Selectman Freel said if this position was needed, it should have stayed in the budget. There was some heated discussion about previously adding money to the budget for a person to help with both HR and Finance.

Director Calabria said the budget that was run on December 11, 2023, included \$18,720 which included a part-time position for HR. At that time, the budget was over \$18,900,000. We made an effort to lower the budget to just under \$18,100,000 because of the huge increase over last year. The position was removed at that time.

Director Blow said we were directed by the Chair and Co-Chair to put out what we needed to run our department and run it well. We put in \$20,000 to cover both HR and Finance for a part-time person and it was made clear in the previous presentation. Administrator Daley said the position is needed, but we also needed to identify things that could be reduced to bring the budget to a more viable level. Department Heads made a number of sacrifices to make our current number work.

Ms. Kokko asked that when there are changes to the budget, and things are taken out of a line item, she would like to see the changes. It's needed to keep everyone on the same page.

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Selectman Finan said HR needs the help, she should get her money, having this conversation is ridiculous.

Selectman Finan made a motion to add \$10,000 to the budget for a part-time position to help out in HR. Seconded by Selectman Freel. The motion passed 4/1 with Selectman Freel opposed.

Selectman Daniels made a motion to remove the fireworks warrant article from the budget. Seconded by Selectman Labonte. The motion passed with Selectmen Finan and Dargie opposed.

2. ADJOURNMENT: Selectman Labonte moved to adjourn at 8:00. Seconded by Selectman Finan. All were in favor. The motion passed 4/0.

Gary Daniels, Chairman

Tim Finan, Member

Chris Labonte, Vice-Chairman

Dave Freel, Member

Paul Dargie, Member