

APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE MILFORD BOARD OF SELECTMEN and DEPARTMENT HEADS BUDGET
WORK SESSION
October 19, 2023

PRESENT: Gary Daniels, Chairman Lincoln Daley, Town Administrator
Chris Labonte, Vice Chairman Town of Milford Department Heads
Paul Dargie, Member
Tim Finan, Member

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

Lincoln called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m., introduced Board members and Department Heads

Summary of work session: This session was meant to help the Board understand the major changes to the budget. The budget is up about 8.5% from last year. It's an increase of about 1.4 million dollars. The budget being proposed for 2024 is 18.9 million dollars.

The key drivers are:

MACC Base budget (4.18%) = \$24,000

Fire Hydrant rentals = \$58,000 (the fee that we are charged by Water Utilities to maintain our fire hydrants) the total cost to the Town is about \$258,000. This is part of their rate increase for water users and hydrant rentals. This is a normal 5-year increase. Administrator Daley will ask for a deeper breakdown of what the \$258,000 entails. Rates were compared against other communities. There was additional discussion about maintenance and usage.

Voter Registration Cost = \$18,000 Next year will have 4 elections and require more people to process elections. This also included IT services to connect everything.

Health Insurance (9.8%) = \$163,000 This is an estimate until we bring the final estimate to the Board. Selectman Labonte asked what would happen if we went with Sight of Service for everyone. Health Insurance went out to bid this year and we have three potential companies. Sight of Service will have cost savings for the town but needs to be a gradual insertion to the town. They plan to provide a recommendation to the Board at the first meeting in November. Karen Blow, HR Director said out of the 20 communities that were reviewed, two communities increased their insurance by 8% and the other communities increased their insurance by 12% to 21%. The average overall increase since 2016 is about 6%. Director Blow explained the sight of service plan. She will need direction to be made by the Board so she has time to pass on the decision to employees and have time to process all the paperwork before the end of the year. A work session will be scheduled to provide an overview of insurance options before the second meeting in November. 70% of employees are on the Access Blue plan insurance plan and 30% of employees are on the SOS insurance plan.

Assessing = \$73,000 (outsourcing to a third party and adding a part-time assistant to cover the office) This proposes to eliminate the full-time assessing position, hire a part-time person for 28 hours a week, and outsource the majority of the job duties of an assessor. Selectman Freel is concerned about the part-time position eventually becoming a full-time position as well as outsourcing assessing duties. Marti Noel, Assessing Director said that isn't what she envisioned. She could see the part-time person helping in Planning and Community Development as a part-time person. There was additional discussion about services.

Administrator Daley said we have several bids in-house for outsourcing and we will be opening the bids at the end of the month. The RFP includes a contract for 5 years. Training and office supplies will still be needed for the part-time person. Selectman Labonte asked for more detailed information about outsourcing versus having a full-time assessor for the next meeting. Selectman Dargie said Director Noel used to have an assistant and that position was eliminated years ago and she has handled the office by herself. If we hired another full-time Assessor, he feels that that person would need an assistant as well. Director Noel said you don't have to go with the RFPs that come in and if you don't, there will still be time to advertise the position before she leaves. She also reminded the Board that many assessors are retiring and there are not many left to do this job.

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58 **IT = \$25,000** (licensing and software fees) this also includes equipment maintenance.

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60 **Police Administration = \$300,084** (salaries and wages/ fully funding 4 patrol officers and one sergeant) The
61 proposal was for two vehicles and was reduced to one for next year. There was some discussion about what the
62 vehicles costs to include computers in the vehicles. Selectman Labonte asked about looking into different types
63 of vehicles versus what we are used to buying. The Police Department tries to recycle equipment in their vehicles
64 and it doesn't always match in some of the other brands of vehicles. Selectman Freel said you should pick a line
65 and stick with it. There was a discussion about using surplus funds to buy a police vehicle and what happens in a
66 default budget.

67
68 **Police Support = \$8,000** (for supplies and materials) this is ammunition and Tasers (leasing contract). They
69 usually have money in the budget for ammunition but they sometimes go over their budget because they have to
70 pay extra when an officer is at the academy for training. They are buying more ammunition now because they are
71 getting up to staff.

72
73 **Ambulance = \$86,000** (wages and purchase services) Selectman Labonte asked if we are doing away with per
74 diem and bringing them back to full-time. Eric Schelberg, Ambulance Director said we transitioned 96 hours of
75 per diem time into full time. This was due to the proposed 4% inflate increase and some overtime. Administrator
76 Daley said per diem people are becoming harder to locate for both ambulance and fire.

77
78 Selectman Labonte asked at what point we look at privatizing our ambulance service to see if it's cost-efficient.
79 Director Schelberg said to have at it. We looked into it in 2004 and there was a 62% vote against it. Selectman
80 Labonte said at one point there has to be a decision on when to jump. Director Schelberg said with privatization
81 you lose control and it is not guaranteed to provide you with the service you receive now. It's cheaper to add the
82 extra overtime in right now than it is to hire another employee. There aren't people coming into the business.
83 Selectman Labonte said there are other options.

84
85 Director Schelberg said the best thing going forward is the regionalization of specific services. There was discus-
86 sion about using mutual aid and other towns unable to staff their ambulances.

87
88 **Fire = \$123,000** (wages and replacement vehicle for Chief) Ken Flaherty, Chief of the Fire Department said his
89 vehicle failed inspection due to rust. It was over 1,200 dollars to fix just one-quarter panel. There is one area full
90 of Bondo that will fall apart in a couple of months. Repairs will be around \$10,000. This vehicle has 100,000
91 miles on it, and it's a 2009 vehicle. It's used for police and ambulance calls as well. Captain Frye said the fire
92 vehicle is a command vehicle that goes to all calls and it carries 4 or 5 radios in it that can be used for all calls. It
93 needs to be replaced. Technically both police and fire should have one but police have never had a command
94 vehicle. This is an important vehicle for the town to have. There was discussion on the wear and tear of the vehicle
95 being housed indoors or outside. The cost of the vehicle is about \$65,000 with a command center. The current
96 vehicle is worth about \$4,000 and has been totaled once.

97
98 **Government Buildings = \$319,000** (Electricity, oil, and gas) all buildings

99
100 **Road's resurfacing = \$221,000** (to include sand and gravel) At a previous meeting Public Works and Water
101 Utilities forecasted cost estimates to do certain roads and fix infrastructure over the next 4 years. We are proposing
102 \$500,000 in the DPW budget in 2024 for roads as well as a warrant article of \$300,000. Over time we can grad-
103 ually increase the budget for roads and decrease the warrant article. Selectman Dargie and Selectman Finan agree
104 with this. Selectman Freel thinks it should be higher.

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106 Selectman Freel asked about overtime in the DPW budget. Administrator Daley said it was due to staffing issues
107 and having to pay employees to complete the work.

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Administrator Daley asked the Board to consider using the surplus funds for some of the items needed.

2. ADJOURNMENT: Selectman Labonte moved to adjourn at 6:45. Seconded by Selectman Finan. All were in favor. The motion passed 5/0.

Gary Daniels, Chairman

Tim Finan, Member

Chris Labonte, Vice-Chairman

Dave Freel, Member

Paul Dargie, Member