

**Budget Committee**  
**Town of Sandown, NH**  
**December 13th, 2023**

**Meeting Date:** Wednesday, December 13th, 2023

**Meeting Location:** Town Hall, Upper Hall

**Members Present:** Dave Solomon, Amanda Knight, Leif Aubrey, Ben Sharpe – ex-officio

**Members Absent:** Chairman Leslie Kruithof; Vice Chair Steve Brown, Assunta Ternullo

**Also Present:** Finance Director Gayle Hamel

Ben Sharpe ran this meeting, with Leslie being out.

Meeting was called to order at 6:30pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

There are no minutes to review.

**Election & Reg-Moderator #4140-04**

Kevin Major, Town Moderator, presented this budget. Kevin explains his job is the principal election official for the town, and is responsible for conducting the annual town meeting. NH's election cycle changes the number of elections every year. 2024 will have four elections: presidential primary, town election, state primary, and general election. 2025 will have just one election, and 2026 will have three. The election staff includes Kevin and 22 appointed people, and can serve as assistant moderators, ballot clerks, greeters, for example Amanda Knight is a ballot clerk. Kevin has been moderator for 7 years, and before that he served as assistant moderator under Bruce Cleveland. The role of the moderator is to keep up to date with RSAs, attend trainings, maintaining equipment, recruiting and training the staff, test the machines, prepare the election materials such as tally sheets, staffing sheets, etc., after election reporting, and year round coordination with the supervisors of the checklist and the town clerk. The budget largely has a 300% increase across the board with there being 4 elections instead of 1 this year. Not only will there be 3 more elections, but two will be considered super elections, the primary (1/23) and the general (11/5), and Kevin estimates over 4,000 voters will come out to the general election, so the staffing is budgeted accordingly.

Ben asked about the new voting machines, which are expected to be purchased soon, and asked if any of that money is in this budget. Kevin answered no, that is going to come from a warrant article. The money in the budget covers the maintenance of the old machines, which is going to have the same cost as the new machines.

**Motion by** Ben Sharpe to accept the Election & Reg-Moderator (#4140-04) budget with gross expenses of \$30,127, revenue of \$0, and net expenses of \$30,127, pending further review.

**Seconded by:** Dave Solomon

**In Favor:** Leif Aubrey, Ben Sharpe, Dave Solomon

**Abstain:** Amanda Knight

**Motion passes 3-0-1**

Kevin states if anyone in town has questions about elections, they can go to the town website and there's an email for town moderator, and Kevin vows to get back to you. The hours of the upcoming elections are 8am-8pm. The location and times are chosen by the Board of Selectmen, we just have to be open at least 12 hours.

## **Benefits #4155**

Gayle Hamel, Finance Director, presented this budget. Gayle explains this budget covers employee health insurance, NH payroll taxes, NH retirement payments, and personal/sick payout. Because there were census changes to the health insurance, such as switching from individual to family plans. The health insurance rates only went up 6.33% with their insurance company, which was better than other companies that went up double digits. Gayle states the sick/personal payout is an end of year expense, so that's why its actuals are at 0%.

**Motion by** Ben Sharpe to accept the Benefits (#4155) budget with gross expenses of \$985,225, revenue of \$0 and net expenses of \$985,225, pending further review.

**Seconded by:** Amanda Knight

**In Favor:** Leif Aubrey, Amanda Knight, Ben Sharpe, Dave Solomon

**Motion passes 4-0-0**

## **Health & Human Services #4415**

Gayle Hamel, Finance Director, presented this budget. Gayle explains this budget is for the health and human services agencies that send in requests for funding. Gayle included a copy of every request they received in the packet. The only organization that came in with a much higher request is Southern Rockingham Coalition, they usually ask for a per capita amount (\$6,451) and the Board of Selectmen just kept it at the same level at \$1,500. The Retired Senior Volunteer Program is asking for \$9 more, and Rockingham Meals on Wheels is asking for \$25 more, other than that this budget is level funded.

**Motion by** Ben Sharpe to accept the Health & Human Services (#4415) budget with gross expenses of \$19,393, revenue of \$0 and net expenses of \$19,393, pending further review.

**Seconded by:** Amanda Knight

**In Favor:** Leif Aubrey, Amanda Knight, Ben Sharpe, Dave Solomon

**Motion passes 4-0-0**

## **Community Assistance #4445**

Lynne Blaisdell, Town Administrator, presented this budget. Lynne explains this budget is essentially welfare. It is assistance provided to people in town who submit an application, it's for people who have fallen on hard times. There is a large increase this year. For many years, we've

77 been very low as far as numbers of applicants. We've had a lot more assistance from other  
78 resources since covid, but those programs have ended. Lynne says in the 20 years she's been doing  
79 this, she's never seen this much homelessness before. The biggest increases she put in are for  
80 electric and rent, it's called rent but it covers rent, mortgage, shelter. There's been no shelter space  
81 available, and the community motels/hotels that have been able to assist us in the past are not as  
82 amenable as they used to be. The prices went up quite a bit. Other agencies are trying to do what  
83 they can to help. Lynne hopes this will be enough and things start to turn around. In the past, when  
84 she needed to get a hotel, it's been for the weekend or a couple of days, and several times over the  
85 year it's been for weeks or even months. It's potentially \$800/week. Lynne says the numbers for  
86 each line item don't matter too much, it's a guideline. Ben states that the amount the community  
87 actually helps with this is much greater than this budget. The Health and Human Services budget  
88 covers many agencies that help, in addition to other agencies such as Isaiah 58. Last week when they  
89 needed to cover an electric bill, Isaiah 58 covered half and the town covered the other half. The  
90 warrant article for adding Isaiah 58 to the Health and Human Services account failed in the past.  
91 Rockingham County Community Action is another great agency, they help with fuel and electric  
92 bills. This budget is already overspent for this year, the actuals as of right now are \$12,385 (above  
93 the \$11,412 budgeted). Community Assistance and Highway are the two budgets that are allowed  
94 to over expend due to emergency factors per the Department of Revenue. The town does not have a  
95 choice, it has to help its citizens if they are eligible. There are specific criteria applicants have to  
96 meet and limits on how much the town can help, for example how much a fuel bill or mortgage can  
97 be. Technically, we're supposed to give a one time amount every 30 days, but a homeless case needs  
98 more assistance than that. Sometimes we go over, like when the hotel bill is more than we expect.  
99 Applicants have to meet with Lynne, they have to do job searches every week, they have to provide  
100 receipts. This budget is for emergency needs, if someone is not quite eligible, the town tries to  
101 connect them with an agency that can help. Leif asked about state assistance, and Lynne answers  
102 that some agencies like Rockingham County Community Action is through the county and state, but  
103 most welfare aspects come down on a local level though.

104  
105 **Motion by Ben Sharpe** to accept the Community Assistance (#4445) budget with gross expenses of  
106 \$19,688, revenue of \$0 and net expenses of \$19,688, pending further review.

107 **Seconded by:** Amanda Knight

108 **In Favor:** Leif Aubrey, Amanda Knight, Ben Sharpe, Dave Solomon

109 **Motion passes 4-0-0**

## 110 **Executive #4130-01**

111 Lynne Blaisdell, Town Administrator, presented this budget. Lynne explains this budget is  
112 the general business costs of the town, it's the selectmen's budget. It includes line items such as  
113 auditors, tax maps, legal services, grant applications, postage. Some of the bigger line items is the  
114 computer support, the mosquito control program, auditors, and the payroll of the selectmen's  
115 office, the selectmen, and the recording secretary. A breakdown of this budget is included in the  
116 packet. One of the largest increases is for the computer support, some of it comes from moving  
117 some services from the computer software line to the computer support line. There's also an  
118 increase due to a new contract with our IT vendor, which came with some savings for some

services. Microsoft had a 20% increase to its licensing fees, but they were able to save a bit more by paying annually instead of monthly. Some of the stormwater management actuals for this year has been moved out (it is currently \$4,058 over budget). Supplies went up a little bit because those costs have gone up, but Lynne would like to purchase a printer, ink, and cards to make ID badges for town employees, the current person who does them charges a lot of money so we'd like to do it in house. They're getting up to be about \$12/ID. There's \$600 more in the mosquito line item because the Jamestown Canyon virus is showing up earlier in the season.

**Motion by** Ben Sharpe to accept the Executive (#4130-01) budget with gross expenses of \$392,541, revenue of \$2,350 and net expenses of \$390,191, pending further review.

**Seconded by:** Amanda Knight

**In Favor:** Leif Aubrey, Amanda Knight, Ben Sharpe, Dave Solomon

**Motion passes 4-0-0**

## **Government Buildings #4194**

Lynne Blaisdell, Town Administrator, presented this budget. It has the matrixed payroll increase. Electric is up a bit because over the past 3 years, they've had a contract with a 3rd party supplier with a rate of \$0.07/kWh, and in November the price changed to \$0.11/kWh. They are changing out to use a propane-fueled heat pump, so Lynne is expecting a bit of an increase there too. It's going to take about a year to get a good picture of what these costs are going to be. These three lines (electric, gas/propane, and oil) are going to change either up or down. The goal was to be more efficient. There is an increase in the building maintenance line item because we've been holding off on doing some needed projects at town hall because we knew this current renovation project was coming. In 2009, we developed a building infrastructure plan, and it was planned for a \$20,000 amount every year. That was able to be reduced for a couple of years due to the plans for the renovation. This line item includes lawn fertilization, power washing, and pump septic tanks for library, town hall, recreation, and highway. We found that when we were replacing the furnace at the train depot, the propane line that comes in from outside is directly underneath the outside faucet, so that needs to be taken care of. There are some dead trees by the library that need to be removed. The snowblower needs to be replaced. The fire department is having heating and cooling issues that need to be fixed, the window units themselves have to be replaced and they are rotting out window sills, so they're putting in a minisplit system. They did get 3 quotes for that. Lynne gave the Selectmen a big list of projects throughout the town buildings, and they dwindled it into a \$20,000 plan for the year. Ben clarifies the town renovations are from ARPA funding. Lynne says they did really well with keeping up with projects from 2009-2019. Lynne says there's a 10% increase to the equipment maintenance line, largely due to the furnace cleanouts. This line item also includes copier maintenance, water filtration maintenance, generator maintenance, and an annual fire extinguisher inspection.

**Motion by** Ben Sharpe to accept the Government Buildings (#4194) budget with gross expenses of \$104,395, revenue of \$1,000 and net expenses of \$103,395, pending further review.

**Seconded by:** Dave Solomon

**In Favor:** Leif Aubrey, Amanda Knight, Ben Sharpe, Dave Solomon

161 **Motion passes 4-0-0**

162 **Insurance #4196**

163           Gayle Hamel, Finance Director, presented this budget. This is a straightforward budget, the  
164 life insurance changes come from census changes. The packets include invoices of the various  
165 insurance policies.

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167 **Motion by** Ben Sharpe to accept the Insurance (#4196) budget with gross expenses of \$136,057,  
168 revenue of \$0 and net expenses of \$136,057, pending further review.

169 **Seconded by:** Amanda Knight

170 **In Favor:** Leif Aubrey, Amanda Knight, Ben Sharpe, Dave Solomon

171 **Motion passes 4-0-0**

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173           Lynne states the warrant articles have to be completed in time for the public hearing on  
174 Wednesday January 10th, 2024.

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176 The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:09pm.

177

178 Submitted By:

179 Amanda Knight