

Budget Committee Town of Sandown, NH

November 29th, 2023

Meeting Date: Wednesday, November 29th, 2023

Meeting Location: Town Hall, Upper Hall

Members Present: Chairman Leslie Kruithof; Vice Chair Steve Brown, Assunta Ternullo, Dave Solomon, Amanda Knight, Leif Aubrey, Ben Sharpe – ex-officio

Also Present: Finance Director Gayle Hamel

Assunta Ternullo and Ben Sharpe will be running late.

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

There are no minutes to review.

Building Inspection #4241-20

Paul D'Amore, Building Inspector / Code Enforcement Officer, presented this budget. This budget is level funded. Paul explains that this year his permitting is up, but revenue is down and he cannot figure it out. He has a little more siding, sheds and roofing, which are lower in revenue. As far as buildings go, there's 40 on Ferguson, 40 in Wells Villages, more down Little Mill, and some coming up on Snow Lane. It's hard to estimate what's going to come next year. Paul states he probably has a lot of revenue sitting out there still, but it's hard to know. The building inspection leads the other inspections with its master permit. Steve asked if this position is stipend, and Paul states the code enforcement side is, whereas the building inspector is paid per inspection. Lief asked about the cost of the permit, and Paul answered it is per inspection and it is \$50 per type of permit and the other part is on square footage, and is about \$0.20/ft², and is comparable to surrounding towns.

Motion by Steve Brown to accept the Building Inspection (#4241-20) budget with gross expenses of \$24,908, revenue of \$25,000 and net expenses of -\$92, pending further review.

Seconded by: Dave Solomon

In Favor: Leif Aubrey, Steve Brown, Amanda Knight, Leslie Kruithof, Dave Solomon

Motion passes 5-0-0

Code Enforcement #4241-21

Paul D'Amore, Building Inspector / Code Enforcement Officer, presented this budget. The only line item is payroll, and it has the 4% increase for the town raise.

Motion by Steve Brown to accept the Code Enforcement (#4241-21) budget with gross expenses of \$4,310, revenue of \$0 and net expenses of \$4,310, pending further review.

Seconded by: Amanda Knight

In Favor: Leif Aubrey, Steve Brown, Amanda Knight, Leslie Kruithof, Dave Solomon

Motion passes 5-0-0

Plumbing Inspection #4241-22

Paul D'Amore, Building Inspector / Code Enforcement Officer, presented this budget. Mike Hartnett is the town plumbing inspector, he's worked with us for 20 years and does a great job, and does plumbing, gas, and mechanical. This position is paid per inspection. Paul states his department is self-funded. Leslie clarifies that the net expenses are just a matter of a timing difference of when the expense is made and the revenue comes in. These budgets get reviewed again at public hearing because it's just a best guess estimate based on when the inspections are completed and paid for.

Motion by Amanda Knight to accept the Plumbing Inspection (#4241-22) budget with gross expenses of \$30,128, revenue of \$15,000 and net expenses of \$15,128, pending further review.

Seconded by: Steve Brown

In Favor: Leif Aubrey, Steve Brown, Amanda Knight, Leslie Kruithof, Dave Solomon

Motion passes 5-0-0

Septic Inspection #4242

Paul D'Amore, Building Inspector / Code Enforcement Officer, presented this budget. Paul mentions that because people are working from home more often, septic systems are failing more often, and that's where most of the revenue is coming from. On Ferguson, there's 4 or 5 big septic fields, and a big one at the Dox, compared to the older homes in town with their own septic systems, and the number of systems is determined by the number of bedrooms. Paul clarifies the fees he collects can only cover his costs, they can't support the town.

Assunta Ternullo arrived, 6 board members are now present.

Motion by Steve Brown to accept the Septic Inspection (#4242) budget with gross expenses of \$10,795, revenue of \$10,000 and net expenses of \$795, pending further review.

Seconded by: Amanda Knight

In Favor: Leif Aubrey, Steve Brown, Amanda Knight, Leslie Kruithof, Dave Solomon, Assunta Ternullo

Motion passes 6-0-0

Electrical Inspection #4241-23

Tom Tombarello, Electrical Inspector, presented this budget. It's a level funded budget. The revenue is up because Ferguson paid upfront a lot of the permits. The fees for Tom's budget partially cover town administrator costs. Tom also does Plaistow's electrical inspection and we have the same prices as the surrounding towns.

Motion by Leslie Kruithof to accept the Electrical Inspection (#4241-23) budget with gross expenses of \$16,700, revenue of \$14,000 and net expenses of \$2,700, pending further review.

Seconded by: Steve Brown

In Favor: Leif Aubrey, Steve Brown, Amanda Knight, Leslie Kruithof, Dave Solomon, Assunta Ternullo

Motion passes 6-0-0

Parks & Recreation #4520-36

Becky Francis, Recreation Director, alongside [Darren Hudgins](#), Ex Officio, and George Blaisdell, Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Committee. This year the Recreation Building and the Parks & Recreation (Summer and Special) budgets have been rolled into the single Parks and Recreation budget. To combine these budgets, some line items have been moved to other budgets, such as recreation building electricity to the Government Buildings budget. There are also line items, which are grayed in our sheets, that are from the other two budgets and are only here for reference. For example, there's a line item "rec building phone" that's grayed out, and underneath is the "telephone" line item. The rec building phone line shows what was in the Recreation Building budget, and the telephone line shows the combined line item. By doing this, the Recreation department is down about \$3,000 from last year. There's an additional page detailing exactly what was combined together. Steve asks if they get estimates for mowing, and Becky answers that they go up for bid every 3 years. Assunta asked about revenue, and Becky states that this budget's revenue is set at \$1 because any program that comes out of this account does not create revenue. Things like the Monster Mash, or the home school club, there is no admission and it's free to the community. Any other workshops or programs that take in revenue, such as the summer camp, come out of the revolving account.

Dave states he does not support a taxpayer funded recreation department, and would rather see it run on private donations or admission fees, and taken care of by volunteers, and steps should be taken to have it be self-funded. Assunta mentions the revolving is carrying \$46,000 for the year. Becky says that's a safety net for the department, she has cut lines where she could, there's a 3% decrease in the budget, despite the community growing. They're struggling to find volunteers, but they always try. In order to keep programs low cost/free, they still need this budget's support. Dave would like to see the Recreation Commission to come forward with a warrant article asking for the town's support for all of their programs. Dave states the Sandown Baseball and Softball leagues are non-profit, have fundraising, entry fees, and are run by volunteers, and he would like to see the Recreation department move to this model.

Motion by Dave Solomon to reduce Parks & Recreation (#4520-36) budget by \$106,817 from \$112,386 down to \$5,569.

Seconded by: Leslie Kruithof for discussion purposes

Discussion: This would leave money to mow the rec building and pay for the recreation admin's payroll so the recreation commission's meetings can still take place and be recorded. Assunta is on board with reducing the budget, but not by that much, and she would like more documentation about the state of the revolving fund. Darren Hudgins mentions this revolving fund is not entirely

composed of program fees, it also includes contract fees. George Blaisdell mentions they're also saving money for other projects, such as a pavilion, parking expansion at Miller. Assunta says she agrees with Dave about those things being asked for via warrant article. Dave states the town has to get a new ambulance contract and plowing contract, and these things should be prioritized, and the town shouldn't keep asking for more and more money. George states the Recreation budget has not gone up for several years, with Darren saying it's been reduced. We're managing fields and rentals and the rec building, George asks if we're going to have volunteer lifeguards. Gayle mentioned the net income for 2022 was \$5,538.97 (up until October), and 2021 was \$10,829.28. Leif mentioned a lot of these programs listed target our older residents, giving them a value when much of our taxes doesn't go to bringing them value. Becky mentioned they saw an increase with 1,200 individuals coming to their events this year, and that's just with the tracked programs through RECDESK. Another 200, for example, came to this year's Monster Mash. Lief asked about grants, and Darren answered they keep an eye out for them with the help of the police department but they're not reliable enough to budget for it. Becky gave an example of Movie Night, which is free to residents, they try to keep costs low, partnering with the library to get the license. Leslie asks which line item(s) the huge list of programs the rec runs comes out of. Becky answers the list isn't separated, but some programs come from the revolving fund, some from community programs, senior recreation. Assunta mentions she'd like to see, along with the list of programs, which are free to residents, which have fees, what are the fees, etc.

Ben Sharpe arrived, 7 board members are now present.

In Favor: Dave Solomon

Opposed: Leif Aubrey, Steve Brown, Amanda Knight, Leslie Kruithof, Ben Sharpe, Assunta Ternullo
Motion fails 1-6-0

Assunta mentions she'd like to see more details about the state of the revolving fund. Darren clarifies the fund is for building infrastructure, and cannot be used for offsetting operating costs. Gayle states when there is a user fee, it can only cover the program it's used for. Gayle says most of these line items are just taking care of town property: the rec building, Seeley beach, Miller field, etc. The only line items that aren't just taking care of town property are things like the community programs and senior recreation line items, totaling \$7,700. Leif asked why we hire an outside company to do mowing, and Darren says he thinks if the highway department could handle taking that task on, they'd do it, but they don't have the bandwidth and manpower to do it. Assunta asked Becky about her job in summer camp and if anything can be crossed over, and Becky answered her job with summer is minimal, it's booking field trips and doing billing, everything else is done with the summer coordinators. Assunta asked for clarification about what the training and seminars line item is for, and Becky answers it's for her to work towards getting a parks and recreation certificate, to be up to date with laws and regulations, as well as lifeguard training. Steve asks how much TYSL (Timberlane Youth Soccer League) pays to use our fields, and Becky answers, off the top of her head, around \$800 a season. Steve asks if this is enough and Becky says it's a fair amount to make sure kids can afford to participate in the league, and Becky states their job is not to make money, it's to provide value to the community. Ben states the Sandown Baseball team doesn't pay to use Miller Field because all participants are from Sandown. Becky talks about their senior recreation program, saying their biggest program is the Senior Luncheon, open to all residents but

seniors get a discounted ticket, and the proceeds go to work with Meals on Wheels to provide gifts to seniors without family. It also covers heavily discounted trips for seniors, partnering with Plaistow and Atkinson. It's open to everyone but it's mostly seniors. Next week they're going to Breaker's House in RI. They try to balance a reasonable price to users with a reasonable price from the town.

Motion by Leslie Kruithof to accept the Parks & Recreation (#4520-36) budget with gross expenses of \$112,387, revenue of \$1 and net expenses of \$112,386, pending further review.

Seconded by: Ben Sharpe

In Favor: Leif Aubrey, Steve Brown, Amanda Knight, Leslie Kruithof, Ben Sharpe, Assunta Ternullo

Opposed: Dave Solomon

Motion passes 6-1-0

Fire #4220

Mike Devine, Fire Chief, and Jon Goldman, EMS Captain, presented this budget. Steve starts out by asking about the per diem line item. The Chief mentions he currently has two positions for 10 hours a day (7am-5pm), 5 days a week, and that comes in at \$93,000 with a max rate of \$25/hr, Thursday-Monday, and this position is held by fire fighters and or EMTs. Outside of these hours, we have to rely on volunteers. Last year, because the Chief was struggling to get people to take the hours, with actuals 20% under, he asked to increase the rates he was paying instead of asking for more hours. This helped with coverage a lot, and they were able to fill a lot more shifts. Dave asked, for 2023, how many individuals claimed per diem pay and if any of those people claimed a rescue stipend. The Chief answered 14 people and yes they did, and clarified these are separate. The proposed \$140,000 is to bring it up to 7 days a week coverage. Gayle states the current actuals for the per diem line is at 83% right now, and Assunta asked if the \$140K was approved if the Chief could fill those shifts, and the Chief responded he's going to have to hire more people. There's 14 eligible people and 9 of them take regular shifts. Some people are more seasonal, for example people who don't work their regular job during the winter pick up more shifts during the winter. The schedule is set every two weeks, and people take shifts, and some people cover vacancies if they can, and every time that isn't covered, the town relies on volunteers. Jon says the volunteers idea is a bit of a farce, because most of the eligible people don't live and/or work in town anymore and aren't always available. There's a rise in people who work from home, but it's not enough to cover this. If we don't have the people, or need more than 2 people, we have to call in for mutual aid. Mutual aid doesn't cost more, but it's a mutual expectation. Jon calls the 5pm-11pm timeframe a crapshoot, because the per diem hours ends, EMS has a night shift position from 11pm-6am. Some of the people taking those hours are only EMTs, not fire fighters. Ideally, we'd have people with both disciplines, but that's not always the case. Jon states if there is a true emergency, at night, they will get people, using mutual aid if they need to. Assunta asked how often we used mutual aid, the Chief answered, this year we gave mutual aid 31 times, and we received it 30 times. Last year we gave aid 31 times, and received it 38 times. The year before that we gave 30, and received 26. This year, they have responded to 554 calls, so mutual aid is a small percent. Jon states the per diem coverage is less about fire coverage and more about EMS. It also provides a great opportunity for continuous training for the EMTs/firefighters, and testing equipment. Assunta asked why this per

diem line is in the Fire budget, and not Rescue. Jon explains, it can be moved, but the justification is for years these departments were separate, and that was allowed in RSAs, but when the tone goes off, it's an emergency. These departments are only separate today for budgeting purposes. Payroll was just historically in the Fire budget. Jon foresees combining these budgets in the coming years. This per diem line increase includes the two more days of coverage, as well as the 4% pay increase, and some extra days for the Chief to take some more time off.

Motion by Dave Solomon to reduce Fire (#4220) budget by \$42,331 from \$140,000 down to \$97,669.

Seconded by: Leif Aubrey to ask questions

Discussion: This would keep the same amount from last year but include the 4% matrix increase. Leif asked if the Chief was confident he could fill the hours with the \$140K. Jon says this has already been broken into steps; they started with 1 per diem at 40 hours a week, then to 2 people at 50 hours (each) per week. It started with our original volunteer fire department members covering the per diem shifts, as they were testing out the new system, and tweaking the policy. They didn't want to start out with what are considered mercenaries, the people who will drive across the state to work 80 hours a week at 4 different fire departments. This is just the next step of this process. We're working towards hiring more regular full time people dedicated to our town.

Dave is concerned that if we don't cut more of this year's increase, it's going to be less likely the operating budget is going to be approved in March, and if it's not, how are we going to find the ~\$100,000 for the Trinity contract. Steve states he think it's not going to make a big difference to voters, they're probably not going to go from a "No" vote to a "Yes" vote because we took out \$42K for more per diem coverage. Jon states, as a former selectman, it's the Board of Selectmen's job to put forward a good budget, and the Budget Committee's job to make sure there's not a lot of "fat" it in the budget, and the voter's job to be educated about that. Jon states, the ambulance contract is going to be paid for, whether the budget passes or not, it was signed for this year and will be included in the default budget. Jon states a \$40,000 proposed cut isn't going to make too much of a difference, but the lack of coverage at the fire department on a Tuesday is. Dave states he thinks the difference has to come from multiple motions across many departments. Jon states there's going to come a time the town needs 3 24/7 shifts. We don't need career firefighters right now, we have a good system in place for now.

In Favor: Dave Solomon.

Opposed: Leif Aubrey, Steve Brown, Amanda Knight, Leslie Kruithof, Ben Sharpe, Assunta Ternullo
Motion fails 1-6-0

Steve states the rest of this budget is "spot on" and he'd like to vote on it, if no one has any questions. No one does.

Motion by Steve Brown to accept the Fire (#4220) budget with gross expenses of \$352,404, revenue of \$100, and net expenses of \$352,304, pending further review.

Seconded by: Amanda Knight

In Favor: Leif Aubrey, Steve Brown, Amanda Knight, Leslie Kruithof, Ben Sharpe, Assunta Ternullo

Opposed: Dave Solomon

245 **Motion passes 6-1-0**

246 **Rescue #4215**

247 Mike Devine, Fire Chief, and Jon Goldman, EMS Captain, presented this budget. Leslie asks
248 Jon and Mike to talk about the Trinity contract. Jon states there are 13 EMTs on the fire department,
249 some being firefighters and EMTs and some are just EMTs, with 4 being advanced EMTs and 9 being
250 basic. Basic is straightforward, and an advanced EMT (AEMT) is considered part of the ALS
251 continuum, and a step below a paramedic. Rescue works alongside the Fire department, vehicle
252 maintenance comes from the Fire side. Since EMS was created in town, we have contracted with a
253 private ambulance company to do ambulance transports. Sandown Rescue is considered first
254 response. At the time of a call, both Sandown Rescue and the private ambulance company will
255 respond, and Sandown Rescue will get there first (being closer) and provide support while waiting
256 for the ambulance to arrive. In some occasions, the private ambulance is not available, we have
257 more than one patient, we have multiple calls, or the patient is that critical and we cannot wait for
258 the private ambulance to come, and these reasons are why the town has its own ambulance. For
259 years, Southern NH Ambulance was operated out of their home in Danville. Back in the day, AMR
260 (American Medical Response) operated one paramedic ambulance for 6 towns, Sandown, Atkinson,
261 Hampstead, Plaistow, Newton, and Danville, based out of Hampstead behind Acropolis Pizza.
262 Sandown has always had its own ambulance because those contracts could always disappear. AMR
263 said "we're out in 30 days." We, as a town, never paid for these contracts, but they, being a for-profit
264 company, made their money by billing patients and insurance companies. We considered doing it
265 ourselves, but no way could we do it, we struggle with staffing still today. Trinity EMS is really big in
266 the Lowell, Lawrence, Dracut area, they had moved into the Haverhill area, they came in with a 0
267 bid contract back in 2009. 18 months ago, Trinity said "the contract is up for renewal, and it's not
268 going to be a 0 bid contract anymore." It's gotten to a point where ambulance companies expect to
269 have a retainer. The 5 towns, (Plaistow opted to do their own ambulance coverage), discussed for 6
270 months what they were going to do. They considered working together to create their own
271 ambulance system as a consortium, but that wasn't going to be feasible. Together, they put out an
272 RFP, and the only other bid was a company that was more expensive with less services, and no
273 experience in the area. So the towns opted to go with Trinity. The cost for all 5 towns is \$675,000,
274 and the costs are divided equally between the 5 towns, with our cost being \$130,000. There is a
275 benefit, Plaistow has about 1200 to 1500 calls annually. With not sharing an ambulance with
276 Plaistow, there will be more ambulances available.

277 The other big change to this budget is the stipend line item, with a proposed \$89,479 up
278 from \$34,729 this year. The per diems from the Fire budget leave at 5pm. After 5pm, there's a bit
279 more of a gamble. People can't drop everything they're doing and quickly respond to calls in the
280 evening for a number of reasons. Around 12 years ago, they started paying for duty nights, 11pm to
281 6am. They struggle to fill these shifts, especially Friday and Saturday nights. Jon asked the crew
282 how to help our staffing. Jon and the crew settled on a plan of \$100 a night, 8pm to 6am, for 2
283 people. This increase represents this new plan from April 1st to December 31st, and Jon had
284 budgeted for filling 75% of the shifts. We'll see how successful it is at getting the appropriate
285 staffing.

Dave asked if the contract with Trinity is going to change, and Jon answered aside from the billing part, no. Jon said a few years there was a warrant article that passed that allowed the town to try to bill patients for ambulance transports. That year the town did 18 transports, they were working with a billing company, and could only collect on 2 of the 18 transports. We, Danville, and a few other towns were “fired” from Comstar because we didn’t have enough volume of transports. Jon has looked into other agencies to work with, but we’re just too small to reasonably do this. Jon thinks the best option is to look into doing ambulance transports and billing ourselves.

Everything else in this budget is just about level funded, with another \$500 in supplies.
Motion by Ben Sharpe to accept the Rescue (#4215) budget with gross expenses of \$241,479, revenue of \$0, and net expenses of \$241,479, pending further review.

Seconded by: Steve Brown

In Favor: Leif Aubrey, Steve Brown, Amanda Knight, Leslie Kruithof, Ben Sharpe, Dave Solomon, Assunta Ternullo

Motion passes 7-0-0

Library #4550

Elaine Aubin, chair of the Library Board of Trustees, Brittney Bergholm, the new director of the library, and Melissa Tiney, one of the Library trustees, presented this budget. Steve Brown makes it clear, he is a trustee of the library as the treasurer. He’s going to participate in the discussion because there is no financial benefit if this budget passes or doesn’t pass, unless anyone has an objection. The board has no objections.

Elaine begins by stating the former chair of the board and director left in August, and three of the trustees are brand new. The member who’s been on the board the longest is Melissa, at three years. It was very difficult to put together a budget with such a new team, but they did the best they could. Brittney’s first day was the selectmen’s meeting. The only increases from last year’s budget is the 4% increase to payroll. The overall budget went up 1.6%. Leslie asks if there is any material changes from last year. Melissa stated the cost of utilities was anticipated to be a little higher, and it was decreased to reflect the actual costs. Leslie stated the utilities actuals are much lower, and Elaine states the heating is about to go up for the winter, and Brittney said the HVAC bill is going to come in at the end of the year. Dave mentioned the maintenance line item keeps going over, he knows it’s an older building, but is wondering if there is a 5 or 10 year plan to update the building. Steve says he doesn’t think there is one, because they’ve discovered that a lot of things were left unattended to in previous years. There’s painting, alarms that need to be updated, plumbing that doesn’t meet code, and basic repairs to the library. Because the team is so new, they don’t quite have a plan in place yet. Ben mentions maybe we should increase the maintenance line item, since the library keeps going over. Leslie mentions the actuals from the past are from the October point, not year end, and reiterates this is a bottom line budget, the money can be moved around. Steve states that because there were a few months without a director, they will have some extra money left over to do some of the repairs this year, so Steve says to wait until public hearing to see if we need more money in the maintenance line. Dave states he would like to see a list of projects needed to be done at public meetings before supporting that.

327 **Motion by** Assunta Ternullo to accept the Library (#4550) budget with gross expenses of
328 \$361,733, revenue of \$0, and net expenses of \$361,733, pending further review.
329 **Seconded by:** Dave Solomon
330 **In Favor:** Leif Aubrey, Amanda Knight, Leslie Kruithof, Ben Sharpe, Dave Solomon, Assunta
331 Ternullo
332 **Abstain:** Steve Brown
333 **Motion passes 6-0-1**
334

335 **Election & Reg-Supervisors #4140-03**

336 Gayle Hamel, Finance Director, presented this budget. This is a level funded budget with the
337 exception of the 4% increase to the supervisor's payroll line item.
338
339 **Motion by** Ben Sharpe to accept the Election & Reg-Supervisors (#4140-03) budget with gross
340 expenses of \$4,329, revenue of \$50, and net expenses of \$4279, pending further review.
341 **Seconded by:** Dave Solomon
342 **In Favor:** Leif Aubrey, Steve Brown, Amanda Knight, Leslie Kruithof, Ben Sharpe, Dave Solomon,
343 Assunta Ternullo
344 **Motion passes 7-0-0**
345

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

347 Gayle Hamel, Finance Director, presented this budget. 2023 was only the town election and
348 2024 will have 4 elections, so this is why it is so much higher, it just follows the election cycle.
349 There's discussion on whether to move this budget to next week so Kevin Major, the town
350 moderator, can answer any questions. Amanda mentions she's a ballot clerk in case anyone has any
351 questions. Because there's likely to be questions about the machines, the board decides to table this
352 budget until the next meeting. Leslie states the next Budget Committee meeting will be Wednesday
353 December 13th, and they need to pick a date for the public hearing. The deliberative session is set
354 for Saturday February 3rd, 2024. The public hearing is set for Wednesday January 10th, 2024, with
355 a snow day of Tuesday, January 16, 2024. Assunta mentions she won't be present at deliberative
356 due to a scheduling conflict.
357
358 **Motion by** Leslie Kruithof to adjourn the meeting.
359 **Seconded by:** Assunta Ternullo
360 **In Favor:** Leif Aubrey, Steve Brown, Amanda Knight, Leslie Kruithof, Ben Sharpe, Dave Solomon,
361 Assunta Ternullo
362 **Motion passes 7-0-0**
363 The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:03pm.
364
365 Submitted By:
366 Amanda Knight