

Canaan Budget Committee Meeting
Thursday, November 4, 2021
Canaan Police Dept, Special Operations/Training Unit, Canaan, NH

Attendees: Budget Committee members:, Dan Collins (Select Board liaison via Zoom), Ellie Davis, Nathan Deleault, Stephen Freese, Cindy Neily, Mike Riese, Denis Salvail, Sadie Wells. Not attending: John Bergeron. Town Administrator Mike Samson; Executive Assistant Sharon Duffy; Fire Chief Bill Bellion, Assistant Fire Chief John Hennesy, Bob Scott; resident Monica Lowe. recorded by Roger Lohr

APPROVED MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Committee Chair Sadie Wells called the Canaan Budget Committee meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

2. Minutes Approval

Stephen Freese made a motion which was seconded by Cindy Neily to approve the October 21, 2021 Canaan Budget Committee meeting minutes as submitted. Approved by all voting committee members.

3. Next Meeting and Committee Vacancy

Committee member Karen Wolk was hired by the town of Canaan and Chair Sadie Wells called an additional committee to be held on November 18 at 7:00 PM to elect a replacement on the committee. Canaan residents are invited to send Sadie Wells their interest in being considered as a candidate to join the Canaan Budget Committee. The Committee members discussed the process to elect a replacement.

4. Highway Department – Bob Scott

The Committee discussed the fuel expenses in the budget that will be addressed later in the year and fuel expenses will be allocated to the individual town departments. The total highway expenses are about \$800,000 making it the largest portion in the town budget. The Committee discussed the mechanic position and Samson stated that there is a new strategy to add Indeed and Zip Recruiter to find candidates. The police department has recently received 10 candidates to fill an open position. The mechanic will be offered \$65,000 and health insurance. The town has filled in for the mechanic position with Bob Scott on a part time basis for about 14 months. It was suggested that the town consider comparing the cost of outsourcing the mechanic work to the cost of hiring a mechanic.

5. Canaan Tax Rate

Samson reviewed the tax rate document. The tax rate will be reduced by 21% and valuations have increased to offset that reduction. This will keep the amount of taxes paid to be close to the same as last year. Tax bills will be printed after the tax rate is finalized with the state.

6. Fire Department – Chief Bill Bellion and Assistant Fire Chief John Hennessey

There were 297 fire department calls through the end of October and another 413 calls for the ambulance. The number of calls will be similar to last year. Staffing for the fire department and ambulance were discussed. The increase in salaries is per call and not related to an increase in the number of calls. The equipment variance was explained. In March there will be a transition for the new chief who will run the fire department and emergency management. Benefits for the position are not in the budget yet. There are 25 on the fire department crew and an assistant chief has not been determined yet.

An emergency plan for the town has been developed in the regular five year schedule. Dispatch costs cover fire, police and ambulance. The staff paramedic and the EMT salary were discussed. There will be two full time EMTs for \$88,866. The income side for the ambulance service was described as an enterprise account and the town of Canaan pays \$170,000 toward it. Insurance, special events, fund raising, and private transport are other sources of income. The towns involved with the ambulance include Canaan, Dorchester, and Orange for a total of \$190,000 with Canaan contributing \$170,000 of that amount. The income is projected to cover the \$405,000 expense and the capital reserve amount can be adjusted to help the revenue situation.

7. Town Administrator Review of Budget Changes

Town Administrator Mike Samson updated the Committee on budget changes since the last Committee meeting.

7A. he clarified the police cruisers in the CIP plan last year should have been \$35,000 and was mistaken on the Warrant Article so it was rectified and restored by moving \$6,000 in the CIP opening balance;

7B. the Town Administrator transition is \$35,000;

7C. health insurance was saved last year due to staff vacancies and the budget amount is now estimated at \$440,665; Samson explained the changes in the health insurance for the staff with their sharing more of the cost on a lower premium and an increase in deductibles;

7D. government buildings has \$35,000 for repairs to include a priority for painting the library;

7E. a part time police officer at \$25,520 is included but is still undecided;

7F. recreation for \$10,000 for a part time regional program;

7G. the social service agencies amounts passed in the Warrant Articles are paid in Nov-Dec;

8. Revenue and Other Announcements

The Meals and Rooms Tax was substantially higher than budgeted and it will be advantageous to the town budget for this year. Samson stated that the increase in the budget is 1.23% and that was impacted by about \$450,000 in the unassigned fund balance.

The Committee discussed the SRO and how much the school district owes for it. Samson spoke about the budget process and an interest to inform the residents about it (valuation in April, revenue report in October, school, state numbers received, Canaan Budget Committee and Selectboard roles, tax rate set against valuation).

Samson announced that the lawsuit by the town involving the depot property has been resolved in the town's favor and it is anticipated that the property could be sold for about \$300,000 and some of it can be used for town purposes.

9. Adjournment

Denis Salvail made a motion which was seconded by Stephen Freese to adjourn the meeting. Approved by all voting committee members. The meeting was adjourned at 8:59 PM.

The next Canaan Budget Committee meeting is scheduled for November 18, 2021 at 7 PM. The following Canaan Budget Committee meetings would be December 2 and December 16.