

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
March 16, 2023

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, March 16, 2023, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

Present: Denise Banister and William Sayre

Absent: David Mathers

Also present: Nick Caccamo (Town Administrator), Jason Connell (Fire Chief), Koby Gardner-Levine (McGovern staff), Jim McGovern (U.S. Representative), Nathan Rosewarne (Treasurer), Ken Taylor (Fire Department), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

1. Treasurer – Budget – Treasurer Nate Rosewarne discussed his budget. He is requesting a \$6,000 salary increase for himself, with reference to recent wage studies in the area, and a smaller increase for the Assistant Treasurer. The Fire rescue truck isn't due till 2025, which helps. Some other things are beyond the town's control, such as retirement contributions and health insurance. He estimates the benefits add 6% on top of salary, depending on the type of health insurance. He would like to increase the OPEB contribution (Other Post Employment Benefits) from \$5,000 to 10,000 because other lines are going down. Workers Comp insurance has been over-funded and is being reduced by \$21,000 (\$36,000 down to \$15,000), though that will be looked at again. In terms of salary, a Selectman noted that it's time to take care of employees who are not being compensated fairly.

Report – His office is going very well, never better. The best possible scenario is if nothing goes wrong. The bond for the public safety complex had some setbacks but it was accomplished, and better than it might have. He does not need new software. He is syncing well with the accountant. The new Collector has put everything in great shape in record time. He does regular training for continuing education and continuing certification.

2. Highland Ambulance – Selectman Denise Banister, liaison with Highland Ambulance, noted that while the main assessment went up a lot (\$18,000), other lines went down, for a net increase of only \$4,000. Someone left a nice bequest, which paid off the building. Salaries have increased in order to get the help they need. Fuel, insurance, and medical supplies have all gone up.

3. Fire – Budget – Fire Chief Jason Connell presented his budget requests. Admin labor line – He recommended an increase to make it the same hourly rate as the police admin line. Chief salary – As discussed previously, he proposed transitioning it to a full-time position starting January 1, currently \$37,451, \$56,176.50 for FY24 and \$74,902 for FY25. Training line – This line hadn't been given a cost-of-living increase the past two years, so he added that amount. Labor line – Emergency events are hard to predict, and the labor line has run over the past couple of years. They are about to run out for this year. He recommends an increase of \$9,000 to \$42,000. Submitting payroll more often than once a quarter takes a lot of administrative time, including for the treasurer, Expense line – He is asking for an increase of \$4000, to \$42,000, because turnout gear has gone up almost \$2000, and he wants to put a new monitoring program into all the vehicles, for \$2700 total, to notify of warning signals, and to track mileage, idle time

and fuel consumption, along with providing video in case of an accident, and GPS. The Town Administrator noted that this type of software is common and is considered best practice.

Vehicles and capital requests – Trailer – They would like a trailer for the UTV, for \$6,000-10,000. They have a too-large trailer and a too-small trailer, both bought by the Williamsburg Firefighters Association. Highway will take the smaller one, and the larger one can be surplus. Chief's vehicle – The 2012 vehicle has rust and gets low mileage. He is leaning toward a crew cab pickup with bed cover, probably a hybrid. The Chief's vehicle carries a lot of equipment because he responds to a lot of calls. The current car could last a couple more years, but it might take a while to get a new vehicle. Proceeds from selling Engine 3 – He would like the \$8,600 from the sale of Engine 3 on Municibid to come back to the department to purchase equipment for the new rescue truck that was not feasible originally. There was a concern that earmarking money received is technically not possible, and also that money shouldn't be spent just because it's around. It was suggested that the Chief might propose an article for an equivalent amount, to be spent on the new rescue truck, and to speak to it at Town Meeting, explaining where the money came from what it is for.

Wage study – It was suggested that it would be helpful for the Board to sit down with each department and look at the wage study, see where the department stands in the region, and help decipher the large amount of data, rather than leaving it to a department to come in and ask for an increase. A Board member suggested a joint meeting with the three major department heads, highway, police, and fire. It was noted that the town's labor policy and pay rates are extremely fragmented. The wage study recommended a range of pay rates depending on performance and experience.

Budget discussion – There was discussion of the role of the Finance Committee, e.g., how much it goes into the details of a department's request or procedures. The Finance Committee develops the budget, the Selectmen put it on the warrant, and ideally there is consensus. Board members were leaning toward most of the Chief's requests but they don't know yet where the finances are and have not made any decisions.

4. Congressional visit – The Board met with U.S. Representative Jim McGovern for a general discussion of the town, the town's needs and how Rep. McGovern might help. Rep. McGovern is from Worcester, was elected in 1996, is chair of the powerful Rules Committee, and because of redistricting has become the town's representative. He is particularly concerned about the needs of rural communities. Discussion included rural development, money for infrastructure (Inflation Reduction Act), use of formulas in apportioning money, East-West Rail, remote work opportunities, increase in home prices, support for tourism, ARPA funds, and farm policy for the 50 states. Issues closer to home were the Public Safety Complex, FY24 budget especially school costs, the Mill River Greenway, fire fighters, and elementary school lunch data. He plans a Town Hall gathering with residents this Saturday, March 18.

Documents used

Budget and budget requests

Government bylaw committee description

Adjourned at approximately 12:30 p.m.

Approved:

Clerk