

**TOWN OF ASHLAND
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2024
FIRE STATION
9 MAIN STREET, ASHLAND**

1
2
3
4
5
6
7 **I. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Fitch opened the meeting with Selectmen Ann
8 Barney, Meghan Semiao, Chris Janosa and Charles Bozzello present. Budget
9 Committee Member David Ruell was in attendance, no other Budget Committee
10 members were in attendance.

11
12 **II. NEW BUSINESS**

13
14 a. **BUDGET REVIEWS** –

15 **Election Budget** – Town Clerk/ Tax Collector Rebecca Hartley presented the
16 proposed budget for 2025. Increases were seen in salary for the clerk and the
17 Deputy Clerk, the training line increased by \$100, advertising, clerk expense and
18 postage increased due to rising costs. Mrs. Hartley added that she will be doing
19 additional mailings for reminders for people to register their cars which will
20 contribute to the increase in postage. Ballot coding increased for the one-time
21 purchase of the new ballot machine. Finance Director Marissah Gallien provided
22 the budget information for the Supervisors of the Checklist portion of the election
23 budget, the numbers provided reflect that there is only 1 election in 2025.

24 **Finance Budget** – Mrs. Hartley presented her portion of the finance budget as it
25 pertains to the Tax Collector. Increases were seen in salary for the Tax Collector
26 and the Deputy as well as in postage and expenses which includes a new
27 computer for the Tax Collector. Ms. Gallien presented the remainder of the
28 finance budget which includes a salary increase for the Finance Director,
29 decreases were seen in the consulting line and the audit line due to contacted
30 costs. Software increased for the implementation of the new finance software that
31 was approved earlier this year by the Selectmen.

32 **Personnel Administration** – Ms. Gallien presented the budget which houses the
33 health insurance line, Healthtrust increased by 13% for 2025, NHRS (NH
34 Retirement System) is on a fiscal year change, rates decrease as of July 1 for both
35 employees and Police.

36 **Insurance** – Ms. Gallien presented the budget that covers the Town's insurance,
37 Primex went up for property & auto by 9%, and increased worker's comp by
38 10%, and unemployment decreased by -9.9%.

39 **Public Works** – Craig Moore presented the proposed changes for 2025, Increases
40 were seen in salaries, and in the monthly computer fees. The highway portion of
41 the budget increased in total by \$2,933, most of which is from the change in the
42 Highway Block Grant the Town receives each year. In the Mechanic budget,
43 increases were seen in salaries, and in general expense for the one-time purchase
44 of a new computer. And in the Transfer Station/Recycling budget, increases were
45 seen in salaries due to now having a full time employee and allowing to have 2
46 part time employees. General expense increased due to more electronics being

47 turned in, this amount is offset by the fees collected at the station. Hauling also
 48 increased due to usage, this line also gets offset by the revenue from the station.
 49 Selectmen Janosa asked Mr. Moore if he had considered getting a credit card
 50 reader at the transfer station, Mr. Moore informed the Board that there is no
 51 internet connection which would be needed for credit cards, but that he hasn't
 52 seen an issue so far by only accepting cash and checks.

53 **Parks & Recreation** – Ann Barney presented the proposed budget for 2025.
 54 Increases were seen in salaries, internet, building expenses and field expenses.
 55 The Campground budget increased to actuals for the cleaning contract. The
 56 Vacation/Summer Camp budget increased in salaries, first aid supplies, and
 57 training. The telephone decreased to actuals. The After School budget increased
 58 salaries by 3%.

59 **Library** – Alice Staples presented the budget for the library, wages increased and
 60 general expenses increased, Ms. Staples shared that the general expense line is
 61 based on the prior year and that the increase is mostly due to contractual
 62 increases.

63
 64 **b. DRAFT LETTER TO THE CAMPGROUND -**

65
 66 **MOTION:** Andy Fitch

67 *To approve the letter to the Edward Doggett Campground campers regarding the tax*
 68 *bill for 2024*

69 **SECOND:** Meghan Semaio

70 **VOTE:** 4-0-1 (A. Barney abstained)

71 **MOTION PASSED**

72
 73 **c. PEMI-BAKER SOLID WASTE DISTRICT ALTERNATE**
 74 **REPRESENTATIVE –**

75
 76 **MOTION:** Andy Fitch

77 *To approve Shelly Thompson as the alternate to the Pemi-Baker Solid Waste District*

78 **SECOND:** Meghan Semiao

79 **VOTE:** 5-0

80 **MOTION PASSED**

81
 82 **d. WATER ORDINANCE** – The Board received a draft of the proposed Water
 83 Ordinance; the only remaining item is the appendix which Town Manager Fred
 84 Welch said he would submit as soon as it was complete. The Board will consider
 85 adopting the ordinance at a later date at a public hearing.

86
 87 **e. PROPOSED WATER RATES** – Water & Sewer Superintendent Andrew
 88 Benton gave a presentation for consideration by the Board to increase the Water
 89 rates. Mr. Benton presented information about the prior year rates, which an
 90 estimated loss of \$1.9 Million over the past 20 years. Mr. Benton also showed
 91 how he arrived at the proposed rates which includes the fixed and variable costs
 92 of the department, and a place holder of \$75,000 to help pay for the anticipated

bonds for the current water projects. Mr. Benton had also shared his Capital Improvement Plan which goes until 2030 which covers the aging infrastructure for certain lines in Town, the estimated costs based off of today's rates brought the CIP in at roughly \$9 Million. The Board will consider what Mr. Benton presented and hold a public hearing to accept the new rates.

- f. **SALE BY PUBLIC AUCTION OF TAX TITLE LAND 8.8 ACRES, N. ASHLAND RD** – Chair Fitch asked the Board their thoughts on selling the property by sealed bid or by auction.

MOTION: Meghan Semiao

To approve the sale of the 8.8 acres on N. Ashland Road tax map & lot 201-18 by auction

SECOND: Andy Fitch

VOTE: 5-0

MOTION PASSED

- g. **REQUEST FOR A SIGNATURE TABLE ON FRONT OF TOWN HALL BY AND FOR CADY** – The Selectmen considered a request from CADY in Plymouth to have a table at the Town Hall during election day.

MOTION: Chris Janosa

To decline to have CADY have a table at the Town Hall or Transfer station and any other future petitioners.

SECOND: Charles Bozzello

VOTE: 4-1

MOTION PASSED

- h. **LAKES REGION PLANNING COMMISSION LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE BUDGET REQUEST FOR 2025** – The Board received a copy of the request for 2025 budget which has already been included in the proposed budget.

- i. **CAMPGROUND ITEMS** – The Board discussed some items for review from doing work at the campground. One was the suggestion of taking down the pine trees, putting up site ID's, and making defined positions for RV's and cars. The removal of pine trees is estimated to cost \$80,000 which the Board did not make any motion to approve at this point. It was also discussed that there should be a revolving fund made for the campground so that a portion of the campground fees are kept for maintenance of the grounds. The revolving fund would need to be a warrant article and voted on.

- j. **SPEED LIMIT REDUCTION REQUEST – RIVER STREET** – Town Manager Fred Welch discussed a complaint he received about speeding on River Street. Mr. Welch suggested putting up yellow signs at a lower speed (however it would not be enforceable by law) to caution drivers of going too fast. Selectmen

139 Janosa suggested having speed patrol there.

140

141 k. **POLE ATTACHMENT REQUEST** – Mr. Welch discussed that he has been
142 working with the Electric Department to find the olde pole agreements so that
143 they may once again be billed.

144

145 l. **COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS** -

146

147 **MOTION:** Meghan Semiao

148 *To appoint Benoit Lamontagne to the Economic Development Committee*

149 **SECOND:** Charles Bozzello

150 **VOTE:** 5-0

151 **MOTION PASSED**

152

153 m. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES** – Mr. Welch reminded the Selectmen that they need
154 to review the prior non-public minutes to determine what can be unsealed.

155

156 **III. OLD BUSINESS** –

157 a. Selectman Semiao spoke about the proposed power purchase agreement with
158 Kearsarge Energy, she has been working on getting the price down to account for
159 the wheeling charge from Eversource.

160

161 **IV. SELECTMENS ITEMS** - None

162

163 **MOTION:** Meghan Semiao

164 *To enter into a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3*

165 **SECOND:** Andy Fitch

166 **VOTE:** 5-0

167 **MOTION PASSED**

168

169 **MOTION:** Andy Fitch

170 *To seal the minutes of the non-public session*

171 **SECOND:** Meghan Semiao

172 **VOTE:** 5-0

173 **MOTION PASSED**

174

175 **MOTION:** Andy Fitch

176 *To adjourn the meeting*

177 **SECOND:** Ann Barney

178 **VOTE:** 5-0

179 **MOTION PASSED**

180

181