

ASHLAND BUDGET COMMITTEE

JANUARY 3, 2025

Members Present: Hughes, Lyford, Coleman, Fitch, Unangst, Ruell, and Rolloff (by phone)

Others present included Town Manager Welch and Finance Director Gallien

The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m. in the Conference Room on Collins Street.

Hughes and Fitch had met with Welch and Gallien to answer questions asked at our previous meeting. Among the answers were that the Finance Officer's salary was set by contract, that the Transfer Station salaries covered one full time position and two part time positions, that the Parks & Recreation Director had requested the proposed lower figure for her position, that there is no vacation time buyout, that the DPW Director is not under contract yet, that the police overtime was based on the average of the last 3 years, and that the mechanic salary line was for one full-time and on part-time mechanic.

Town Budget Votes.

A motion by Lyford, seconded by Coleman, for \$195,347 for the Executive budget, with \$83,228 for Town Manager Salary and \$42,286 for Administrative Assistant Salary (with Fica and Medicare to be adjusted) failed on a 3 to 4 vote.

On a motion by Ruell, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 4 to 3 to recommend the Executive budget of \$206,275.

A motion by Lyford, seconded by Coleman, for an Election & Registration budget of \$49,458 with a Town Clerk salary of \$22,240 failed on a 3 to 4 vote. On a motion by Fitch, seconded by Lyford, it was voted 5 to 2 to set the Town Clerk Salary at \$22,880 with Fica at \$1573 and Medicare at \$358. A motion by Unangst, seconded by Ruell, to set the Town Clerk Salary at \$23,522, with Fica and Medicare to follow, failed on 3 to 4 vote. On a motion by Fitch, seconded by Lyford, it was voted 6 to 1 to recommend \$49,935 for Election & Registration.

On a motion by Hughes, seconded by Lyford, it was voted to set the Finance

Officer salary in Financial at \$65,625 with Fica at \$6223 and Medicare at \$1456. On a motion by Lyford, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 5 to 1 to set the Tax Collector salary in Financial at \$22,880, with Fica and Medicare to follow. On a motion by Ruell, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 6 to 1 to recommend the rest of the Financial budget, as presented by the selectmen, with Fica at \$6092 and Medicare at \$1425.

On a motion by Ruell, seconded by Unangst, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend \$26,297 for Property Taxation.

On a motion by Lyford, seconded by Ruell, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend \$30,000 for Legal.

On a motion by Lyford, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend \$693,744 for Personnel Administration.

On a motion by Ruell, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend \$18,737 for Land Use Boards.

On a motion by Fitch, seconded by Lyford, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend \$45,861 for General Government Buildings.

On a motion by Fitch, seconded by Lyford, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend \$1 for Cemetery.

On a motion by Ruell, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend \$84,237 for Insurance.

On a motion by Fitch, seconded by Lyford, it was voted 6 to 1 to recommend \$1 for Economic Development Committee.

On a motion by Ruell, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend \$633,588 for Police Department.

On a motion by Fitch, seconded by Ruell, it was voted 5 to 1, with one abstention, to recommend \$190,000 for Ambulance.

On a motion by Hughes, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 7 to 0 to set Mutual Aid Dues in Fire Department at \$31,046. On a motion by Ruell, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 4 to 3 to recommend \$451,704 for Fire Department.

On a motion by Fitch, seconded by Ruell, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend \$42,186 for Building Inspector.

On a motion by Ruell, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend \$7000 for Emergency Management.

A motion by Lyford to set the Public Works Director Salary at \$73,840 did not receive a second. A motion by Lyford, seconded by Coleman, to set the PWD Salary at \$75,970 failed on a 3 to 4 vote. On a motion by Fitch,

seconded by Unangst, it was voted 4 to 1 (with two abstentions) to set the Public Works Director salary at \$80,873. On a motion by Ruell, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 6 to 1 to recommend the rest of the Public Works budget as presented by the selectmen, with corrections to Fica and Medicare.

A motion was made by Fitch, seconded by Unangst, to recommend \$276,468 for Highways & Streets. It was voted 7 to 0, on a motion by Lyford, seconded by Unangst, to amend the original motion by moving \$6543 for a pickup truck purchase, from Street Improvements to Equipment. The amended motion was then approved on a 6 to 1 vote.

On a motion by Lyford, seconded by Unangst, it was voted 5 to 1, with one abstention, to set the Mechanic Salary at \$75,679 and the Assistant Mechanic Salary at \$16,640. On a motion by Fitch, seconded by Ruell, it was voted 6 to 1 to recommend \$109,172 for the Town Mechanic account.

On a motion by Ruell, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 5 to 2 to recommend \$256,259 for Transfer/Recycling Facility.

A motion was made by Ruell, seconded by Fitch, to recommend \$3431 for Health Officer. Fitch withdrew his second after Hughes, who is the Health Officer, said that he did not want the raise for that position as proposed by the Selectmen. On a motion by Fitch, seconded by Lyford, it was voted 6 to 0 (with Hughes abstaining) to recommend \$2355 (the same amounts as in 2024) for the Health Officer account.

On a motion by Fitch, seconded by Lyford, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend \$1133 for Animal Control.

A motion by Lyford, seconded by Coleman, to set the Director's salary in General Assistance at \$9737, failed on a 2 to 5 vote. On a motion by Ruell, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 5 to 2 to recommend \$31,226 for General Assistance.

A motion made by Lyford, seconded by Fitch, to set the Director's salary in Park & Recreation at \$29,417, was withdrawn. On a motion by Lyford, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 6 to 0, with one abstention, to recommend \$29,988 for that Director's salary, with the required adjustments to Fica and Medicare. On a motion by Ruell, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend the remainder of the first section of the Park & Recreation budget as presented by the Selectmen.

On a motion by Fitch, seconded by Ruell, it was voted 6 to 0, with one abstention, to recommend \$17,449 for Park & Recreation-Campground.

On a motion by Lyford, seconded by Coleman, it was voted 6 to 1 to set Beach salaries in Park & Recreation Summer Vacation Programs at \$21,055, with Fica and Medicare to be adjusted accordingly. On a motion by Fitch, seconded by Lyford, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend the rest of the Park & Recreation Summer Vacation Programs as presented by the Selectmen. On a motion by Lyford, seconded by Unangst, it was voted 7 to 0 to set Salaries in Park & Recreation After School Program at \$24,710, with adjustments to Fica and Medicare as needed, and to recommend the other line in the account as presented by the Selectmen. On a motion by Fitch, seconded by Lyford, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend \$760 for Memorial Park.

On a motion by Lyford, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 6 to 0, with one abstention, to recommend \$105,961 for the Library.

On a motion by Ruell, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend \$1201 for Patriotic Purposes.

On a motion by Fitch, seconded by Unangst, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend \$1 for Conservation Commission.

On a motion by Ruell, seconded by Fitch, it was voted 7 to 0 to recommend \$1 for Tax Anticipation Note.

Some questions were asked about the utility budgets, notable how to determine the Water & Sewer salaries for individuals. There was also brief discussions of the unassigned fund balance, cash flow, warrant articles and future meetings.

The next meeting will be at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, January 8, in the Collins Street conference room to consider utility budgets and warrant articles. The committee will meet on Thursday, January 9, at the school to consider the School budget.

David Ruell, acting secretary