

Nottingham Select Board Meeting

01/03/2024

Budget Workshop Minutes

Approved 1/22/2024

1 Call to Order

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3 **Members present:** Ben Bartlett, John Morin, Tim Dabrieo, Matthew Shirland, and Steve Welch.
4 Others: Town Administrator Ellen White.

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6 **Members of the public:** none.

7
8 **Members Excused:** none.
9

10 **Pledge of Allegiance:** meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Bartlett noted that Matt
11 Curry has been elected as the Fire Chief of the Nottingham Fire Department. He extended
12 congratulations to Chief Matt Curry for his new role and commended the entire Nottingham Fire
13 Department for their outstanding performance over the weekend. Mr. Bartlett specifically
14 highlighted the department's excellent response to multiple emergency calls and expressed
15 gratitude for their dedication and efficient handling of the situations.

16 17 2024 Budget Review

18
19 After a brief recap of the Budget Committee by Mr. Morin where he said about \$164,000 of
20 additional cuts were proposed. Ms. White explained that the worksheet provided to the Board is
21 from December 12th discussion, with an added column indicating changes recommended by the
22 Budget Committee during their meeting on December 28th. She said that she was under assumption
23 that the decision was to return the \$200,000 for road maintenance to the Operating Budget and that
24 is why she has it that way in the spreadsheet. Mr. Morin said that there was discussion about it but
25 he believed that there was no such decision made.

26
27 The discussion continued with a breakdown of specific budget lines and considerations for moving
28 certain amounts to warrant articles. There was a particular emphasis on preventing road-related
29 issues by keeping necessary funds within the budget rather than risking them in warrant articles.
30 The members emphasized the potential consequences of underestimating the community's support
31 for road maintenance in the event that a warrant article fails to pass.

32
33 Then the discussion expanded to the allocation of funds between social services and roads, with a
34 concern that cutting social services could impact the community. The members mentioned the
35 challenges of balancing different department needs, such as the Recreation Department striving
36 for self-sufficiency and the Library seeking increased funding. There was a debate about whether
37 the Recreation Department's rates were already in line with surrounding communities and how
38 much more they could raise them before affecting program participation. The Library's request for
39 a 24% budget increase was also mentioned and the challenges of finding common ground between
40 the Town's needs and the Budget Committee's suggestions.

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42 The debate touched on the topic of Selectmen's pay in comparison to other Towns and Mr. Bartlett
43 noted that he did not take a paycheck this year and is not planning to do so next year. Mr. Dabrieo
44 confirmed he will not either.

45
46 As the conversation progressed, the discussion turned to the use of encumbered funds from 2023,
47 that were designated for road projects and will be carried over to 2024 (\$143,000). The availability
48 of these funds and the potential additional \$600,000 (however these are split between the budget
49 and the warrant articles) earmarked in the Capital Improvement Plan were highlighted.

50
51 The discussion continued, addressing specific line items in the budget, including highway
52 equipment, maintenance, and fuel costs. The rationale for cutting certain amounts, such as the
53 maintenance budget, was based on year-to-date actuals and a more favorable fuel pricing trend.
54 The conversation also touched on the age and maintenance of the Highway Department's vehicles,
55 as well as the potential benefits of using a single fuel supplier. There was a mention of concerns
56 regarding the placement of a fuel tank near the river and the potential for spillage, prompting a
57 discussion about safety measures and considerations. The debate over whether to go through the
58 same supplier for fuel and the overall budget approval process remained open, with the possibility
59 of revisiting certain items later in the discussion.

60
61 The Merit Compensation Pool line item sparked a conversation about the generosity of raises in
62 the previous year, the need for gradual adjustments, and differing opinions on the frequency and
63 sustainability of merit-based compensation. The Lake Advisory and newsletter budgets faced
64 scrutiny, with discussions about reducing the newsletter's print copies and potential impacts on the
65 readership. There was agreement to consider adjustments based on overall budget decisions.

66
67 The next discussion centered around the Planning Board's budget for the Regional Planning
68 Commission membership. There were considerations about the benefits of being an RPC member,
69 such as access to resources and advice. There was an opinion that it may be better use of resources
70 to pay for the RPC circuit rider/planner who reviews subdivision plans. Some members expressed
71 uncertainty about the impact of cutting RPC membership, questioning if it would result in paying
72 more out of pocket for planning services. The debate also touched upon the Planning Board's
73 involvement in the Master Plan, with some members suggesting that it might not be ready for
74 review in the coming year. The consensus seemed to lean towards supporting the cut, with the
75 intention of reallocating funds to the highway department for road-related expenses.

76
77 Then members discussed the mowing line item but no decision was made.

78
79 Next members discussed line items related to Highway Equipment, plowing, maintenance and
80 contracted equipment. Members debated the fluctuating historical spending, potential impacts of
81 the winter season, and the current halfway point of the budget cycle were taken into account. The
82 decision was not finalized during the discussion, and the final decision might be revisited during

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subsequent meetings or budget hearings. The discussion touched on factors such as the historical spending on highway maintenance, the necessity of certain expenses, and the impact of a potential cut on road maintenance. Ultimately, there was a consensus to make cuts from each of the lines – 264 (Equipment Parts) and 266 (Equipment Maintenance) to make their total budget at \$35,000.

In the discussion of Culverts line item concerns were raised about the necessity of this cut, considering the importance of culvert replacements for road infrastructure. The discussion emphasized the impact of culverts on road conditions, and there was hesitation to make significant reductions in this area. Some participants expressed the need to assess the condition of culverts before deciding on cuts, and there was a suggestion to revisit this discussion later.

While discussing the Sand/Gravel/Stone line, considerations were made of historical spending, the current needs, and the fact that usage of these materials tends to increase during the winter months. The Board debated the possibility of cutting the proposed \$10,000 from the budget, with some expressing discomfort with any cuts and others suggesting a compromise figure of \$55,000 instead of the proposed \$65,000.

The discussion on Park Field Maintenance Mowing (Line 339) involved considerations about purchasing two zero-turn mowers and potentially hiring inmates from Brentwood for mowing fields. The members discussed the costs associated with commercial-grade lawn mowers, including maintenance expenses. The suggestion to buy the machines was countered with concerns about the associated maintenance costs and the proposal to hire inmates for field mowing.

The discussion then shifted to Beach Maintenance, focusing on whether the allocated budget covered only mowing or included other activities. Some members expressed discomfort with cutting funds for Beach Maintenance, while others emphasized the need for more information on outstanding invoices.

The conversation also touched on Recreation Department salaries, where a decision was made not to cut the proposed salary line item. The discussion about Recreation Department Programs acknowledged the department's efforts to cater to various age groups in the town. Representatives of the Recreation Department were present to answer Board's questions about their operations.

Discussion focused around the balancing act of maintaining essential programs while being mindful of the financial sustainability of the Recreation Revolving Fund. The Recreation Director highlighted the importance of securing salaries in the budget for long-term stability, especially considering the uncertainties surrounding program participation and revenue. The discussion touched on the idea of a potential fee increase, but the feasibility and potential impacts were not fully explored. Members discussed funding levels and cuts to the Recreation Department as follows: Rec Programs (Line 342) to be funded at \$12,000, Rec Office Supplies (Line 345) – at \$3,500, and to allow a \$500 cut to Rec Equipment (Line 346).

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The members took a five minute recess from 7:55 PM to 8:00 PM.

The next discussion involved proposed cuts to the Social Services budget. The Budget Committee's proposal was to drop all the line items to a dollar except leaving \$5,000 in miscellaneous fund, which would then cover rental or mortgage assistance, utility assistance, and food or fuel assistance as needed. The proposal was to maintain the Welfare Coordinator's salary at \$1,700. Concerns were raised about the adequacy of the \$5,000 miscellaneous fund given historical spending patterns and the potential needs of individuals requiring assistance. There was a suggestion to increase the miscellaneous fund to \$7,500 to provide more flexibility.

Additionally, there was a discussion about consolidating various Social Services expenses into a single warrant article. This would involve listing all supported charitable organizations in the warrant article. The sentiment leaned towards cautious decision-making, considering the uncertainty of individual needs for assistance and the potential impact of reducing funds in this area. The idea of a warrant article for Social Services was generally accepted, with some members expressing a preference for holding off on decisions until more information was available.

Attention then shifted to Library Operations, where the discussion centered on a \$2,870 increase. This increase was seen as fair compensation for hourly staff rates and a step toward achieving a full-time librarian position. The sentiment was generally positive, and the proposed change was accepted.

Then members discussed the Conservation Commission budget, there was agreement to cut both items (364 and 365), with the understanding that the amounts were relatively small in the context of the entire budget. Additionally, there was a broader suggestion to consider potential changes in how funds from current use taxes are utilized by the Conservation Committee in the future.

Then members reviewed the budget line items again to see where additional cuts may be found.

The Board discussed the proposed cuts and adjustments to the budget, including the cuts to the Merit Pool budget (Line 5), Highway Department Culvert (Line 268), and General Assistance miscellaneous (Line 313). Opinions varied regarding the cut to the Merit Pool line.

Then Ms. White presented the spreadsheet with a list of Warrant Articles that were discussed with the CIP Committee as well. The list of articles as discussed is below. The ~~stricken through~~ were removed for 2024. The rest Warrant will be discussed further.

Police Department

Technology Fund \$10,000

Fire Department

~~Flooring Replacement & Repairs~~ – Deleted until bid results are available

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~~Base Radio Replacement~~ – Deleted until bid results are available
Chief Salary – need wording for the WA \$60,000
FD Equip & Breathing Apparatus CRF \$100,000
Ambulance service \$40,000

Recycling Center

~~Baler~~ – Deleted

Highway
Department

Subcontracted Road Reconstruction/Paving – reduce to \$500,000
Highway Department Equipment CRF - \$100,000

Town Buildings

Gym Floor Replacement – \$25,000
Library Parking Lot & Culvert Replacement - \$20,000
~~Repave Ext Basketball Court / Add Pickleball~~ – Deleted
Investigate New Police Department Location - \$40,000
Community Center Back Building Reno's - \$50,000
Add to Building Maintenance ETF - \$150,000
~~Rec / Conf Room Relocation~~ - deleted
A/V Updates - \$50,000

Other

Social Services - \$24,375.0
Pawtuckaway Lake Advisory - \$5,000
Invasive Species Control Efforts (Milfoil) - \$10,000
New Ballot Counting Machine - TBA
Revaluation CRF – \$20,000

Adjournment:

*Mr. Dabrieo moved to adjourn; Mr. Welch duly seconded. Motion carried by a 4:0 roll call vote.
Mr. Bartlett– aye, Mr. Dabrieo – aye, Mr. Welch – aye, Mr. Morin - aye.*

The meeting adjourned at 9:16 PM.

Submitted by Alvina Snegach