

Town of Farmington  
Board of Selectmen Public Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, January 5, 2023  
Selectmen's Chambers  
356 Main Street-Farmington, NH 03835

**Board Members Present:**

Gerry Vachon, Chairman  
Charlie King, Vice Chairman  
Ann Titus  
Doug Staples  
Penny Morin

**Others Present:**

Ken Dickie, Town Administrator  
Kelly Heon, Finance Administrator

**1). Call to Order:**

Chairman Vachon called the meeting to order at 5 p.m.

**2). Pledge of Allegiance:**

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3). Town Budget Workshop:**

Mr. Dickie said after the last budget presentation before the holidays he listened to the thoughts from the board and then amended this budget they have in front of them. He said he took out most of the adds with the exception of the 2 Police and flat lined the Fire Dept. with no more full timers just the per diem.

He said with the Police he was looking at "peanut buttering" the adds they wanted to add on so by the end of the year they would have the 13 officers they are looking for with the first one potentially half way into the year and the other one at  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way into the year to lessen the burden on the tax rate but to keep in mind that by doing that they will recognize the full burden of the 2 officers next year.

He said that even with doing everything he scrubbed the bottom line is still sitting at about \$1.19 per \$1,000 tax rate increase.

He said based on the first electric bill they got they had to go back and look at all the hours and the bill from the sewerage treatment plant that typically runs around \$4,500 a month was a little over \$9,000 for one month.

Mr. King said they need to address the water and sewer rates sooner rather than later because that increase in the water and sewer rates should be picked up by the users and that increase alone if it continues is \$50,000 a year. He said from some discussion before he believes the water/sewer rate is already upside down and needed to be adjusted and it's going to be a minimum increase of 15% in electricity alone.

He said depending on how much the rate should have gone up so that it was paying for itself

this is potentially another 15% and that may not capture all the fuel also so that may be more than 20% on the sewer rate so it may need to go up by a one third. He said he didn't know where the water rate is and if it's affected by the electricity rates but they should have a separate meeting to adjust those rates sooner than later.

Mr. King asked if they do that if they would be showing that as anticipated revenue and if it would drop the bottom line increase.

Mrs. Heon said this is the operating budget and is not the water/sewer.

Mr. Dickie said it would not affect the bottom line of this budget and the increase to that would be on top of what they do here.

Mr. King asked if they had additional cuts they wanted the board to consider past this.

Mr. Dickie said he went down through it and he would entertain what the board thinks. He said he eliminated the part time position (from the Executive budget) so it will be him, Mrs. Heon and someone at the front desk. He said his thoughts were to keep the current part time position with the Building Inspector and Planning Dept. with the potential for Farmington to grow and he didn't want to hurt that area.

Mrs. Heon said there are not enough hours in the day.

Mr. King asked if that was really a wise move.

Mr. Staples asked if it's smart to cut their part time position if they don't have enough hours now.

Mrs. Heon said that is considering if they even can find somebody to fill the position it's not taking away somebody they already have. She said they need to post for an Assessing Clerk and a part time Planning Dept. Secretary.

Mr. King asked what they were doing for the Welfare Dept.

Mrs. Heon said they have to figure that out.

Mr. King said he didn't think based on anything they could come up with that they even have a remote chance to get this below \$1 (tax rate increase).

Mr. Vachon agreed.

Mr. King said so whether it ends up being \$1.25 or \$1.32 they need to make sure they are prepared to go to the Budget Committee with what these increases are that they have no control over saying this is where we were, these are the increases so say it's \$1.32 there is nothing they can do about 85 cents of that and these are the other things.

He said Mr. Dickie talked to him about the Fire and Police Depts. and his initial comments to him were that is cutting the PD too deep and it sounds like we can stagger some of the new hires in but we need to hire people when we can hire them and if we don't take the opportunities when we can we may not get back to full staff and we have set the bar pretty high for Scott (Chief Orlando) and if we tie his hands behind his back we're not giving him the support to accomplish those goals. He said there are 2 officers migrating to the School Resource Officer program so there's a lot of transition and if you're short staffed at the same time...

Mr. Dickie said Chief Orlando also has 2 officers that are out on the Family Medical Leave Act. Mr. King said historically their full staff was at 13 plus the 2 for SRO positions but that is separate because it is 100% funded by the school district. He said at one time it was going to be 14 and then it was back to 13 and at 13 we had a part time dog officer and additional part time administration. He said the Prosecution is being handled differently and it's not like that dept. has expanded it's just not been fully staffed through the past few years and he didn't want to lose the opportunity to get to full staffing because if we don't try to get to full staffing we probably will still have some employee turnover over the next year.

Mr. Dickie said he just put it together to present it to the board to show that even with doing everything they talked about it's still over \$1.

Mr. King said the Fire Dept. deserves some discussion too because when we brought on the 2 officers by vote at Town Meeting...

Mrs. Heon said they have 3 additional full timers and Chief Reinert has always been full time and she thought there was a promise to do a 4<sup>th</sup> this year.

Mr. Staples said they asked for a 4<sup>th</sup> full timer.

Mr. King said some of those costs were borne last year and now we're seeing the total fee.

Mrs. Heon said they all started half way through the year.

Mr. King said they said there was going to be some savings from per diem and now there is no savings from per diem and we're seeing an increase in the budget of 20% with the full time officers and the pay and benefits loading. That's a significant increase he said.

Mr. Vachon said that's a \$261,000 increase from the \$907,252 last year to the proposed \$1.168 million for 2023.

Mr. King said that is one of the biggest increases and the proposed Police Dept. budget started at 17% and the Police Chief made some additional reductions and he didn't know what that came down to but Chief Orlando said it was around \$60,000. He said this staggering of personnel looks like about \$100,000 and they should fully fund it because he didn't think they would hit that because they are not going to be able to hire people on time.

He asked if there was a happy medium where they were able to hire people within a one month window how is that different than the staggered approach and if it was \$70,000. He said with the lead time and hiring time they may not be able to get 2 officers in by May and asked what that realistic number is without saying you can't hire somebody until Oct. He said there may be some middle ground there and they have to look at the costs to say if they were able to hire someone and they did Jan., Feb. and March what that would look like on that line.

Mrs. Morin said looking at the Fire Chief's pay the current year expenditure is \$79,000 and the proposed line item is shown at \$72,000 for a reduction of \$6,668.84.

Mr. King said it looked like he carried over what was budgeted last year not what was expended so if there was any pay adjustment he may not have captured that.

Mr. Dickie said he would look at it and adjust that.

Mr. King asked if the proposed raises for this dept. were captured on a separate line.

Mr. Dickie said yes (line 01-4220-90-110 wage adjustments-Fire Dept.).

Mrs. Morin said she had a thought about the wage adjustments and she didn't know if it would save us enough money or give us more of a headache is to do the wage adjustments on anniversary dates. She said we have a lot of new hires that we just hired but she didn't know if that would be more problematic.

Mrs. Heon said she would have to see how it is written in the employee manual. She said historically it has always been after Town Meeting when everybody gets whatever was decided or voted on and it is retro back to Town Meeting because that's when it was voted. I think when someone gets hired there's typically a probation period and there may be a raise associated with getting through that probation period and then after that everybody seems to be on the same schedule she said.

Mrs. Morin asked her to look at that and it may not be a big savings but it might be something.

Mr. King said on the Fire Dept. line this proposed budget is still a 28% increase over last year even with flat lining it and it might be the highest increase of any of the depts. He said if they were to bring the Police Dept. to \$1,800,000 from the proposed \$1,714,000 he thought the Police Chief's number started out at \$1,900,000 but he made some cuts. He said if they get to what they can actually do for hiring if it's at \$1.8 million vs. the \$1.569 million that's only a 14% increase.

Mr. Staples said \$1,852,000 is what the Police asked for.

Mr. King said originally it started out as a 17% increase so if it was moved back up to based upon hiring people when they can what that looks like it may only be 14%. He said that is still a big increase but historically that budget hasn't moved more than \$50,000 in 7 years so it's certainly due for an adjustment to what should have been potentially done.

He said the Executive budget is down \$33,000, Elections is up \$19,000, Finance Administration is up \$4,000 and Personnel administration is up \$5,000.

Mrs. Heon said they might want to take a look at the Personnel Liabilities line at \$4,000 and that is the line if someone were to leave and we had to pay them vacation and sick time that we owed them.

Mr. King asked if we have a Capital Reserve Fund for that.

Mrs. Heon she wasn't aware that we do.

Mr. Dickie asked if we authorized to spend that.

Mr. Staples said it only had about \$1,000 in it and we authorized to spend it.

Mr. Vachon said we had to pay out some larger retirements from there.

Mrs. Heon said she would check that and something to think about for the future whether or not for this budget cycle but taking the time to look at what we have on the books for accrued time because you just really never know when someone is going to leave.

She said another thing she spoke to some of the dept. heads about and she is not sure if they

added that into their budgets is if any of them plan to do the vacation buy back where they sell their vacation back to the Town because they haven't had an opportunity to use it because that is not budgeted for in their salary line unless they put it in there. She said there were a few in the Police Dept. and the Fire Chief did it and she asked the Wastewater Supervisor though that is not in this budget to include his in his budget because he hasn't been able to take vacation. Those kinds of things come up and they're not budgeted for, not that it's a huge amount but we had some big payouts this year she said.

Mrs. Morin asked when they sell back their vacation if their vacation time is part of their salary and benefits.

Mrs. Heon said no not when they sell it. She said when they use it their vacation time gets reduced but when they sell it their vacation time gets reduced and they cash it out so it's as if they got a raise that year and they got paid more than their allotted salary.

Mr. Vachon said the salary line covers 2,080 hours per employee for full time employees. He said if they cash out 40 hours of vacation we have to pay them 2,120 hours that year.

Otherwise, when they take a vacation it comes off those 2,080 hours he said.

Mr. King said their ability to do that is up to the board's discretion.

Mrs. Heon said it caps at 200 hours so you start losing your benefit if you can't take your vacation and it is at 75% value when you do that.

Mrs. Titus pointed out to Mrs. Heon that there is a Town Employee Financial Obligation CRF and \$1,000 was put into it this year.

Mrs. Heon said she would have to see what the balance is in that account.

Mrs. Titus said if they take it out of the budget and talk about it at the Capital Improvement Plan Committee meeting maybe they can put more in that line.

Mrs. Heon said a couple of years ago it was more concerning before Dale Sprague and Kathy Seaver retired but she didn't know that they have anybody on staff right now that would have that kind of time that they had.

Mrs. Morin asked if they changed that policy so they can't accrue that much time.

Mr. King said yes and it's down to a total of 200 hours and before that it was unlimited.

Mrs. Heon said it's always been 200 hours for vacation time since she has been here but the difference was on the sick time which was if you were hired before a certain date you could get all of your sick time paid back to you and she thought the sick time is now capped at 480 hours. Those are things you could look at in the future if you want to reduce those liabilities and I think that would fall under a larger discussion of our employee policies in our handbook that probably needs to be revamped at some point she said.

Mrs. Morin said at the Economic Development Committee meeting they talked about putting \$1,000 for their budget and that didn't change from the \$600 still in the proposed budget.

Mrs. Heon said the Chairman was supposed to send something to Mr. Dickie and she didn't know if she did so.

Mr. Dickie said he hasn't received anything.

Mrs. Titus said the EDC budget has always been \$600 and asked if there was a reason why they want to go up to \$1,000.

Mrs. Morin said they want to start doing the newsletters, putting out flyers, doing some ribbon cuttings, welcome letters and doing some other things to encourage businesses to come and putting the website back together and putting some time into that.

Mr. Dickie asked if the board wanted to put the money back in the Personnel line for the Police.

Mr. King said his is based on what they think they can hire people at and it may not be to the full extent that he had it because based on the people he may have been interviewing if he were to hire them at that rate what that would be and that may put back \$70,000 or \$80,000 in it. It may not put the \$100,000 in but that would be my preference he said.

Mr. Staples agreed.

Mr. Vachon said the employee pool for everyone is small so if they have certified officers that want to come here he didn't want to lose that opportunity. He said the pool is extremely small for anything especially Police right so if we have a qualified officer he would hate to turn them away and be understaffed to save a nickel on the tax rate.

Mr. King said \$100,000 would be less than 20 cents.

Mr. Dickie said they figured the salary is about \$55,000 per officer and then you have to figure in another 32.5% for retirement.

Mr. King said Chief Orlando said that is changing mid-year and asked if they figured that in.

Mr. Dickie said they have that.

Mrs. Heon it's not changing dramatically and when they say 32.5% that's the average.

Mr. Dickie said the current cycle we are in is at 33.88% and the next year which starts in July it drops to 32.28 so what they do is take the two, add them together and divide by two and then they average it because that's what we're going to pay for the full year and what works out between the two so they did take that into account.

Mr. King said he was looking at all the differences and the Executive budget is down \$33,000 which is a significant percentage, more than 10%, Elections is up \$19,000 which is probably 10% and the next big one is General Government Buildings which is up \$30,000 and asked if that's mostly due to fuel.

Mr. Dickie pointed out what each building is using and that doesn't include December's use because they came back in and tapped off each tank.

Mrs. Heon said and the Rec. Dept. got a delivery again.

Mr. Dickie said they got another tank full because they ran out between just before he went on vacation on the 21<sup>st</sup> until he came back they had used a tank of oil.

Mr. King asked how big the tank is.

Mr. Vachon said it is a standard 275 gallon tank.

Mr. Dickie said he thinks it is bigger than that.

Mr. King said 330 gallons is the next size up.

Mrs. Heon said she didn't know if this building was on the same schedule but it was a twice a week delivery so that they don't run out.

Mr. Dickie said the Municipal Office Building was right behind it and the only reason it was lower than the Town Hall is because they also have this electric heat going.

Mr. King said this was designed by the engineer that sold it to us that this was going to take care of it and we weren't going to use that so we were going to disable it and not need this as a backup but that doesn't work. We've got the worst of both worlds-heating oil and electricity he said.

Mr. Dickie said he had to take the total on the sheet plus a little more times \$4.05 a gallon as that is what they locked in at.

Mrs. Morin said this is just heating and doesn't include the electric.

Mr. Dickie said it's just the heating oil and doesn't include any other fuel.

Mrs. Morin then noted he put the electricity on the next page.

Mr. Staples turned to the Emergency Management budget, line 01-4290-20-630 River Maintenance and said their original request was for \$40,000 and it was cut to \$5,000.

Mr. Dickie said that was because Mr. Tiffany could not find a cutter to go on the excavator in time for the budget or in time to apply for the grant so he told him to reduce that line. He said he was not going to carry that if they're not going to do it because it was just artificially inflating the budget.

Mr. King said the next big one is the Police which is up \$231,000 if it goes back up to \$1.8 million, the Fire Dept. is up \$261,000, and the Bldg. Insp./Code Enforcement is up \$19,000.

Mr. Dickie said his proposed budget is \$1,853,040 after he made all of his adjustments and he got his latest packet.

Mr. King said if they figure out when they are hire people it might be slightly less or when they actually could hire people.

Mr. Dickie said it could be \$20,000 or \$30,000 less.

Mr. King said the Bldg. Insp. wasn't properly funded last year so this increase really isn't so much of an increase.

Mrs. Heon said it's making it correct.

Mr. Staples asked if there is also a Special Revenue Fund that cuts into that amount and it all comes out of that.

Selectmen said there is a Building Inspector Position SRF that acts like a revolving fund.

Mrs. Heon said his Secretary doesn't come out of that SRF.

Mr. Staples said so most of that won't be absorbed by the taxpayers.

Mr. King said we have offsetting revenue for that. He asked if there was going to be a warrant article to change that to a different amount.

Mr. Dickie said he gave them a proposed list of warrant articles and that should be there.

Mrs. Morin asked if this amount should be reduced from the overall budget if it's refunded.

Mr. Vachon said they can't because if they don't bring in enough how would they pay him.

Mr. King said it needs to be raised and appropriated but it also has to have a revenue side to reduce it and this doesn't show the revenue side.

Mrs. Morin said that would reduce the \$672,000 budget increase by a little bit more.

Mr. Dickie said that's why they see at the end that they normalized the operating budget by removing the \$94,000 we had in the warrant article.

Mr. King said the Highway Dept. is up \$77,000 which is a little more than 10%.

Mr. Vachon said a lot of that is fuel, heating and power and some salary increases.

Mr. King said sanitation is up and solid waste disposal is up by 25%.

Mr. Vachon said much of that is due to trucking costs.

Mr. King said the next one that is up significantly is the library and their proposed request is up \$60,000 which is a 22% increase and they need to figure out what they're going to do with that.

Mr. Staples suggested they level fund it.

Mrs. Morin said she wasn't here for their presentation and would like to see what their fuel costs were. She asked if the board would say the library building is roughly the same size as the Municipal Office Building.

Mr. King said that might have been included in their proposal.

Mr. Dickie said he didn't recall seeing it in their proposal.

Mr. Vachon said he thought it was included under building and grounds and that it wasn't broken out separately. He said for most of these categories the increases are to salaries to keep qualified employees which brings along benefits, the insurances are up, fuel and power are up which is out of their control and if they want to have staff and personnel in the Town to maintain the town-Fire, EMS, Police, Highway and this building they have to keep qualified candidates and they had to bump the pay to keep qualified candidates. We're hemorrhaging people like every other town he said.

He said they are not asking for a lot in the other lines and he knows that pennies add up but honestly it's mostly salaries, benefits, fuel and power.

Mrs. Morin agreed.

Mr. Vachon said it isn't their idea to increase taxes and run everybody out of town but we won't have a town if we don't pay unfortunately.

Mrs. Morin said every town around us is struggling with the same thing so it's not going to be any better anywhere else.

Mr. Vachon asked if it would be a \$1 tax increase if they re-staff the Police Dept.

Mr. Dickie said the Chief's bottom line proposed budget was \$1,853,040.

Mr. Staples said it would go back up \$137,549.

Mr. King said it might not need to go up all the way based on how they hire.

Mr. Dickie said it would be about 20 cents more.



Mr. Vachon said so we're looking at roughly \$1.39.

Mr. King said if it works out to be all of that but it may not be. He said they have to justify it to the voters and they need to say these are the increases that they can't do anything about-this is the fuel and this is the total.

Mr. Dickie said they have all the details on what we used last year by dept. all broken out.

Mr. King asked if it's a \$673,000 increase what those fixed costs are that they can't do anything about and what is that number. He said this is about an 11% increase and asked if they take out the things that are out of their control what that number really looks like.

He said everyone at home is feeling the same thing, food is way up, fuel is way up, electricity is way up especially in NH because the Public Utilities Commission didn't do us any favors by giving Public Service the biggest raise they've ever got-double and triple what neighboring states got. He said it will be interesting to see if there's a sharp adjustment and if they would be able to re-negotiate the energy contract and asked if they signed up for 2 or 3 years.

Mr. Dickie said the contract is for 2 years.

He said they may start dropping and we may get a little relief. He said he was concerned about the staffing in this building and asked if going with 1 part time person was going too lean especially when they may have to bring in someone with no experience and has to be trained or cross trained in some areas.

Mr. Dickie said when the assessor comes in it will be a strain on Mrs. Heon because she is the only one with assessing experience who can train that person.

Mr. King said once that person becomes competent then they will have a little more cushion. He asked what budget the additional part time person would be in.

Mr. Dickie said the front desk position would be part time as the position would be split between welfare and the front desk. He said with the Welfare Dept. there are days you don't have anybody and days when you may have 3-4 customers but on average it's a little under a half day's worth of time so that is why he split that up between the two and that is one of the reasons why that budget is down a little bit more.

Mrs. Heon said right now they are seeing a lot of welfare but in the spring and summer that could go way down and sometimes weeks go by and there are no welfare clients.

Mr. Staples said he was concerned that this economy is not getting any better.

Mrs. Heon said no but the urgent needs are typically fuel and electricity and those things happen in the wintertime is what they've seen recently.

Mr. Dickie said they've also seen people who need to be placed at a motel/hotel because they have no place to stay or got kicked out of their apartment for being behind on their rent.

Mrs. Heon said there was a moratorium on evictions for quite a while which might have ended about 6 or 8 months ago.

Mr. King said Community Action Partnership has more money than it has ever had for fuel and they have a program for people who are behind in their mortgage and hopefully they are tying

that into finding services for people that have needs.

Mrs. Heon said definitely but they are going to need to have somebody that is aware of and trained in all those programs and that she and the Building Inspector are not trained for that.

Mr. King asked when they have to have their numbers to the Budget Committee.

Mr. Dickie said the Town budget workshop with the Bud Com is on Jan. 18 and public hearing is scheduled for Jan. 7 and it might be a week before or after that and he would let them know.

Mr. Vachon said they discussed though it is out of this budget a part time Town Clerk that's a resident.

Mr. Dickie said the board asked for more information on this and he talked to Town Clerk Becky Dickie and she gave him a print out. He said they generate revenue for the town at about \$1.7 million in motor vehicle registrations and that all goes into the general fund.

Mr. King asked if that is the net and the state money is already separated at the time of the transaction.

Mrs. Heon said Mrs. Dickie told them the \$1.7 million is the net.

Mr. Vachon said he gets the plan she has in place and it would not leave us in a good spot if she didn't have someone to train and turn it over to when the time comes.

Mr. King asked if this budget is removing that position.

Mr. Vachon said that is correct. He said it is another \$25,000 on her budget because she had \$50,000 in the one that Mr. Staples had.

Mrs. Heon said they are tied because it's an elected position and the person has to be a resident and in other towns or cities it might not be and it's just a hire like any other employee.

Mr. King asked if it's time for this town to consider making it an employee position instead of elected.

Mrs. Heon said it may be because you can't post the position you just hope that somebody runs for it.

Mr. Dickie said in order to run the elections you have to be a resident of the town. He said in towns where it's not elected he didn't know if both Town Clerk and Tax Collector are together or are separate positions.

Mrs. Heon said they would have to look into it and noted that the Treasurer is also an elected position so you can't hire a Treasurer.

Mr. King said that position is more of an oversight position where most of the work is done by paid staff and they are approving it and signing off on it. He said Farmington has been lucky that we've had long serving Town Clerks and asked when Mrs. Dickie retires what would happen if somebody with no experience or skill set puts their name on the ballot and we have a new Town Clerk and how we would deal with that as far as running the town.

Mrs. Morin said there's training for that and at one point they put those 2 positions together and they used to be separate. She said it hasn't always been a combined position so maybe the elected position would be the Town Clerk and the hired position would be the Tax Collector and

maybe that's a way to move forward as well.

Mr. King asked Mr. Dickie to have some discussion with the Town Attorney about what other towns do and what makes sense. He said he didn't think it was something they have to deal with this year but generally moving forward in the next 3-4 years what makes sense and then bring it before the voters to make the change if they think it's a good idea.

Mrs. Morin asked if they would be looking at the warrant articles.

Mr. Dickie said to ignore the dollar values in the list of potential warrant articles as he just copied what was in there last year. He said he crossed out the budget and put the article in there for the bridges and he is waiting for the article to come in for the water. He said he just put everything in that we had last year to get the wheels turning to see what we wanted to have amended, added or reduced and try to get the company moving with the Town Report and get this thing collected and put together so we can get that information out.

Mrs. Morin asked for the deadline for petition warrant articles.

Mr. Dickie said he thinks it is Feb. 5.

Mr. King said petition warrant articles have a different deadline than those submitted by the Town and it came up last night and he did a quick search and it looks like it may be next week.

Mrs. Heon briefly left the meeting and returned with the posting and said the deadline for submitting petition warrant articles is the 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesday before Town Meeting which is 02/07/23.

Mr. King asked for the deadline for the Selectmen to submit warrant articles.

Mrs. Heon said it doesn't say anything about that. She read that Wed., Feb. 22 in Budget Committee towns is the last day for the Bud Com to submit 2 copies of the annual budget to the Select Board for them to post with the warrant.

Mrs. Morin asked if the budget that goes forward is the Bud Com's budget.

Mr. Staples said yes.

Mr. Dickie said they have to do a state MS-737 form (proposed town budget) and the Selectmen have to sign it.

Mrs. Morin said they have to have the warrant prepared for printing.

Mrs. Heon said that is important too if they want it in the book.

Mr. King said he has been asked by 2 residents about petition warrant articles so they would have to have 25 signatures of registered voters.

Mr. Dickie said they would prefer 50 signatures but a minimum of 25 signatures is required.

Mr. King said the signatures would be checked and if they are not registered their signature would be crossed out.

Mrs. Morin said that's correct so having more than 25 signatures is wise. She said they purged the voter rolls over the last few years so you should make sure you're registered to vote as well.

Mr. King said the big one he sees missing here is the (new Town) well.

Mr. Dickie said he is waiting for it to come in from the engineer and then he will put it in there. He said that he and Mrs. Heon have to get together with the auditor to find out what the

residual fund balance is.

Mrs. Heon said until he audits the Town's books for 2022 it won't be completely accurate in case there are things that need to be adjusted or changed and that won't happen until after Town Meeting so they will have a general idea but it won't be exact.

Mr. Dickie said that is so they will know what they can allocate to the Capital Improvement Plan funds.

Mr. King said looking at this list they have the bridge warrant article for \$1.6 million with \$1.4 million raised through bonds and \$200,000 from the CRF, put \$100,000 in the Bridge and Road Design CRF, highway equipment and that needs to be moved up from \$5,000 to at least \$50,000 and some of the other ones are pretty much not going to change. He said the last one talks about the levee and they need to put at least \$10,000 in there on top of what they know they're going to spend and after we finish this start working our way through the FEMA stuff because they have not kicked off that engineering company yet. We need to get back on that with them to see if we are actually going to use them or how we're going to wade through the FEMA stuff on the levee. There might need to be an increase here for that I don't know he said. He said they might just need to deal with what they think they will expend next year or this year. He asked what the rate of expenditure would be and if they need \$100,000 each year to deal with the levee for FEMA or more or less than that.

Mrs. Morin said what is also not on here is the playground for the Rec. Dept.

Mr. Dickie said there needs to be a special meeting here to accept that.

Mrs. Heon said they need that to accept the funds but they need to budget for the cash portion of it but she didn't know if that was budgeted for. She said it is \$62,000/\$62,000 match and of the Town's \$62,000 match the whole thing cannot be in-kind there has to be a cash outlay as a portion of that and she thinks it is close to \$30,000.

Mr. King said so they need to budget for that.

Mr. Vachon said the line item for Rec. Dept. Grants only has \$1 in it.

Mrs. Heon said when this budget was build she didn't think they knew they got this grant and only recently found out that they got it so that has to built into the budget.

Mr. Vachon asked if they have to build the whole grant in there, if it's a reimbursable grant and if it is matching dollar for dollar as we go.

Mr. King said they have to show the whole thing and then show the revenue on the other side.

Mrs. Heon said it's a \$62,000/\$62,000 match so it's a total of \$124,000.

Mr. King said they would need to budget at least \$30,000 in cash and the rest will be in-kind so they need to show the whole \$62,000 to be raised and appropriated. He asked where they would put the in-kind portion of the match.

Mrs. Heon said they do have to account for it somewhere and she will find out.

Mr. King asked if they know it's coming from staff time if they can legitimately say there's only \$30,000 here because the other \$32,000 is in the payroll lines.

Mrs. Heon said she and Mr. Dickie were talking about this because she has no experience in managing grants and she was going to ask Planning Director Kyle Pimental if there is someone at the **Strafford Regional Planning Commission** that could help out with managing this grant. She said she thinks it is going to be a little bit of a lift because if all the in-kind is going to be volunteers to build the structure she didn't know (how to show that in the budget).

Mr. King said he thought that was only going to be some of it and that a lot of it would already be met by the Rec. Director's time managing this grant.

Mrs. Heon said she wondered if somebody from SRPC managed the grant if their time could be in-kind.

Mrs. Morin said anybody's time is in-kind.

Mrs. Titus asked if someone from the Goodwin Library wrote the grant.

Mrs. Morin said it was both Rec. Director Erica Rogers and someone from the library.

Mrs. Titus asked if there was anybody at the library that could manage this grant.

Mrs. Heon said she didn't know the library had anything to do with it and this is for a play structure for the playground.

Mrs. Morin said the library wants to do Family Nights at Fernald Park so she thought they were involved with it.

Mrs. Titus suggested they contact the library to see if someone can manage this grant and maybe they can save a few bucks.

Mrs. Morin said it would be an in-kind donation whether the library or SRPC does it.

Mrs. Heon said but they do have to budget the \$30,000.

Mr. Vachon said in-kind doesn't have to be staff time it could be with our materials like if they need gravel out of the pit it would be in-kind. So it's not just going to be just salaries it's materials and everything else too he said.

Mrs. Morin asked if they could use any of the remaining ARPA funds for that \$30,000.

Mr. Dickie said he'd have to look at the grant.

Mr. Vachon said he didn't think they could pay for a grant with a grant.

Mr. King asked where they stand with the balance of the ARPA funds and what they've allotted.

Mr. Dickie said there is \$112,000 left unassigned.

Mr. King said some of that they still haven't got from the engineers as far as the bridge repairs, there was \$105,000 slated for that and we've got nothing from them as far as RFP's and so forth so they need to get back on them on that because that's just an estimate. He said there was another item that was working off an estimate and asked what that was.

Mrs. Morin asked if he was talking about the shed at Fernald Park.

Mr. Vachon said it was the shed needed to store recyclable materials at the Transfer Station.

Mr. Staples asked if the \$112,000 Mr. Dickie said was unassigned includes the \$30,000 the Police Dept. gave back for the car.

Mr. Dickie said no because it hasn't been updated since then.

Mr. Staples said they only need half of the \$60,000 they gave them so that freed up another \$30,000.

Mr. Dickie said he would have that for the board at their next meeting.

Mr. King asked what they are going to do with that and if they would offset some of the expenses in this budget with whatever is left over.

Mrs. Morin said those funds should be used for one-time expenses.

Mr. King asked when they have to be expended by.

Mr. Dickie said by the end of 2024.

Mr. King said we have \$105,000 in bridge repairs and if they had to get it done by the end of this year it wouldn't be likely so they have another year and a half.

Mr. Vachon said that \$105,000 worth of bridge repairs is going to be \$250,000 by the time they get to use that money because they are just going to keep deteriorating until they fix them.

Mrs. Morin said and the prices are just going to keep going up for the materials we need.

Mr. Vachon asked Mr. Dickie to get a hold of Josif Bicja of Hoyle Tanner to see where they stand with the bridge repair list they asked for about 8 months ago.

Mrs. Morin suggested they invite him to share it with the board at their meeting on Monday.

Mr. King said he needs to develop the bid spec because he knows what those repairs are and until the bid spec is built they can't put the work out for bids. He said they need the bid spec because they may need to adjust the \$105,000, maybe it's \$150,000 or we just say we're only going to commit \$105,000 from the ARPA funds and the rest will come from somewhere else.

Mr. Vachon asked if Hoyle Tanner is on retainer and if they have a contract with them.

Mrs. Morin asked if they are paying them hourly for work they are not seeing.

Mrs. Heon said they send bills.

Mrs. Morin said they send bills but they haven't seen any product.

Mr. Dickie said he didn't think they were under contract with the Town and he would have to look at the files to see if there is one.

Mr. Vachon noted they are not the only engineers out there.

Mrs. Morin said she would like to see some of their bills.

Mr. King said they need to have a "meeting of the minds" and say this what we need to get done in this amount of time and ask if they are going to be able to get this done in a timely manner and if the answer is not yes then we may need to consider other people. He said so far they've fallen off pace after we asked them to go to work and send us the bill so we can move on these projects. We're going to start 2 bridges for \$1.6 million and if they're not up to the challenge we may need to shift horses sooner than later he said.

Mr. Vachon asked if there were any other questions on the budget or the warrant articles.

Mr. Dickie said if they have any additions or subtractions to send them to him and he will amend the list. He said he will take into consideration what Mr. King has suggested and when they get the well warrant article he will embed it into the list.

Mr. Vachon said the only adjustment they discussed tonight was to bring the Police Dept. back up to the full ask for officers at \$1,853,040 or close to that whatever is going to be their full staff of 13.

Mr. King said whatever is reasonable to hire and the Chief is probably the only one can answer that based on the people he interviews. He asked if they are going to add back the part time position for this building.

Mrs. Morin asked if they should consider a full time position and just split it. She said she was concerned about hiring a part time person when people need full time work and benefits and we're so short here. I don't think we're going to get the draw with 2 part time people she said.

Mr. King said that can only be clearly answered by these are the tasks that we have and these are the positions for who is doing what and that needs to be developed.

Mr. Dickie said he appreciated the offer but before they undertook that he would rather look at getting a full time Planner.

Mr. King said he agreed but that is a significant investment.

Mrs. Heon said if that is not for this year they need to think about it and build towards it next year. She said one of the things that has to happen is because she has moved to the Finance office there is no administrative staff for a Planner so getting some admin staff up and trained...

Mr. King said the part time person that will be working on the Home grant will be starting.

Mrs. Heon said the Housing Navigator through the SRPC will be a person that can do some work for Farmington but Mr. Pimental has to be careful that the tasks are housing related and we need some administrative staff so they're looking at posting for a part time Planning Secretary 3 days a week to counter balance the building Secretary who is doing 3 days a week and they would have 1 day of overlap and 5 days would be covered.

She said they are looking at hiring an Assessing Clerk for 4 days a week and then depending on the skill set of that person they may be able to assign other administrative or finance duties to that person.

Mr. King asked if an assessor that has experience would be needed 2 or 3 days a week.

Mrs. Heon said to do it well it should be 3 days a week and she wouldn't want to do less than 4 days a week with a person with no experience because it's a lot to learn.

Mrs. Titus asked if the Welfare Dept. legally has to be open 24/7 or 5 days a week or if they could do it 1 day a week.

Mrs. Heon said CEO Ron LeMere has been doing a lot of research on that and he believes based on what he has read that when the door is open then they are open for welfare so it has to be available. She said even if a welfare person isn't here then someone else would have to be cross trained to offer welfare because if somebody comes in at 3:30 p.m. on Friday afternoon and they have no heat and they have children then we are bound to take care of that. Cross training is really important and we're trying to manage that right now she said.

Mr. King said they are not required to have somebody here that can attest to immediate needs

every hour we're open. He said we need to have access to where appointments can be made to service the clients. He said he was sure there was no expectation of that and it's just like in the Planning Dept. where if there is nobody to give somebody a building permit or an inspection an appointment can be made to deal with it.

Mrs. Heon said she thinks this is different and she would have to research it a little bit more. She said if you are talking about a life threatening situation it isn't the same thing as needing an inspection for something.

Mr. King said in a neighboring town their welfare person receives a \$300 stipend a year and has a Town cell phone and deals with clients in her part time. He said they may not be meeting the threshold to the extent that they should be meeting as far as access to personally do that but he knows the person who is doing that job and asked them if they wanted to do it part time in Farmington and pick up some hours.

Mrs. Heon said they would have to get back to him on exactly what they are required to provide by law as she does not know.

Mr. King asked what they have done in the past when the welfare person was out on vacation or on leave.

Mrs. Heon said someone had the cover for them.

Mr. King said then they would set up an appointment to meet with somebody.

Mrs. Heon said unless it's an emergency situation and especially when there are children in the home they are bound by law to get somebody heat and electricity.

Mrs. Titus suggested adding an extension number for welfare to the Town Offices phone number and that goes to somebody and they check the messages and get back to that person.

Mrs. Heon asked if she meant somebody not physically in the building and working from home.

Mrs. Titus said she meant somebody working in this building.

Mr. Dickie said 9 times out of 10 they come here from what he sees.

Mrs. Heon agreed that the clients are physically coming in.

Mrs. Titus said if somebody needs to make an appointment if you have that extension and somebody checks that extension then you know when they need to come in and somebody can get back to them.

Mr. King asked Mrs. Heon if she has had a conversation about this stuff with Erica Rogers who was the former Welfare Director for a lot of years.

Mr. Dickie said they are using Mrs. Rogers as a backup for now.

Mr. King said she may be able to answer some of these questions about the legal expectations.

Mrs. Titus said about 20 or 30 years the Rec. Dept. Director also did welfare out of the Rec.

Dept. She said she wasn't suggesting that the Rec. Dept. take that on but it was done by another Town employee then and maybe another Town Office employee could take it over.

Mrs. Heon said she thought what makes the most sense is to have welfare be an additional duty to a Town employee.



Mr. King said with coverage and cross training.

Mrs. Titus asked at one time didn't former Executive Assistant Megan Taylor-Fetter do secretarial and welfare duties and maybe we could go back to that.

Mrs. Heon said that is what they are looking to do because they're taking 2 full time positions and making one full time position because we had an administrative secretary that was full time and a welfare person that was full time and now we just want one of those.

Mr. King said coverage on the front desk could be 2 part time people with different responsibilities or it could be a full time position with different responsibilities and it depends on the tasks and what their skill sets are. He said depending on the pay rate the full time position is 50% more money than 2 part time people because of the benefits package.

Mrs. Heon asked if he thought they shouldn't box themselves into this position is full time and it should be for whatever the right person is.

Mr. King said he didn't want to say this is what he wants to see because they are more in tune with what the needs are and what we have available. He said if they bring forth a recommendation for a certain way and the reasons to justify it he is going to listen. He said he has said in the past this is an area where he thinks it could be more efficient but they have to figure out what fits where with what skill set.

Mrs. Heon said they need people here and it doesn't matter if they are full time or part time if they're reliable and they're going to show up.

Mrs. Morin asked if they posted for the open positions we have yet.

Mrs. Heon said they posted for the Assessing Clerk and received one application but they have not posted the other openings.

Mr. King asked if the Assessing Clerk position was posted on the list serve (Town website e-mail notification system).

Mrs. Heon said she would ask the Admin. Assistant to post it there if she is in tomorrow as she is their "website guru" and no one else really knows how to post things on the website as well as she does.

Mr. King said he also uses that to see what notices have gone out and when such as job postings, requests for bids or proposals, etc. and he doesn't have to ask Mr. Dickie about it. He said he was curious about the number of people who have subscribed to that and suggested they advertise it on the local cable TV channel and those people that want to be notified will sign up and they may get some additional people to help get the word out.

Mr. Staples asked if they have heard anything from FEMA regarding this last storm.

Mr. Dickie said he hasn't heard anything yet and they submitted a rough estimate (of the cost to repair storm damage).

Mr. Vachon said preliminary reports had to be in by the 30<sup>th</sup> to see if there is enough damage state wide. He said he had to get his numbers together (for Somersworth where he works) for the preliminary and there is a threshold that each community had to reach in order for it to

trigger a full FEMA response. He said their threshold was only \$3,800 and they met that but he didn't know what the threshold for Farmington is but there was way more damage here than they suffered.

Mr. Staples asked if the board was allowed to make a motion at this meeting.

Mrs. Morin said no because this is a budget workshop.

Mr. Dickie said they submitted a rough estimate of \$180,000 on Friday.

Mr. Vachon said they would charge out at the full benefit rate plus the hourly cost of the equipment for dump trucks, loaders, graders, gravel and everything gets charged out.

Mr. Staples said Poor Farm Road is temporarily weight restricted over that culvert.

Mr. Dickie said until they can get it frozen up and then they can lift the weight restriction. He asked if he saw the damage and that the water created its own culvert and there was a foot of frozen gravel that was acting as a culvert.

Mr. Vachon clarified there was a culvert there but there was so much water it went through and around the culvert because there was too much water.

Mrs. Morin said the majority of Ten Rod Road is now sitting in the pond down the street so if we need any extra material pull it out of there.

#### **4). Adjournment:**

**Motion:** (Morin, second Staples) to adjourn the meeting passed 5-0 at 6:31 p.m.

Kathleen Magoon  
Recording Secretary

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gerry Vachon, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Charlie King, Vice Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ann Titus

\_\_\_\_\_  
Douglas Staples

\_\_\_\_\_  
Penny Morin