

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING  
NOVEMBER 26, 2019

PRESENT: David Lage, Chairman, Bert Hamill  
Scott Butcher – Town Administrator  
Finance Advisory Committee members Marc Fortier, Jack Low, Jeff McCabe,  
Nicole Saczawa  
Green Farm Homeowner's Association President Brad Brock  
Police Chief Tim Carpenter, Lt. Mike Abel  
ABSENT: Selectman John Veaser

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. at the Town Office.

Green Farm Homeowner's Association: Chairman Lage stated he had seen the letter and petition from the residents of the Green Farm Village Cluster Development Association (GFVCDA) and explained that the request to accept Green Farm Rd. and Jacqueline Drive as public ways was premature. He explained that the Planning Board still has to give their approval and that the developer has to meet all of the conditions set when the subdivision was approved. The Planning Board would have to recommend the release of the bond being held from the developer before the Selectmen could do anything. He offered to answer questions from the residents.

Brad Brock of 40 Jacqueline Drive, and President of the GFVCDA, asked for clarification on the process to get the subdivision roads accepted. Selectman Hamill stated that there are still at least two items outstanding that the developer has to complete before the Planning Board would vote on whether the subdivision conditions had all been met. First, the stone bounds installed by the developer had to be lowered to be flush with the ground. Second, the developer had to provide a set of "as-built" drawings to the Planning Board that the town's engineer and the road agent could then verify with a field inspection. Assuming the remaining conditions are met, the Planning Board would take a vote on whether to recommend to the Selectmen to release the \$169,000 bond and/or to consider accepting the roads in the subdivision as public ways. Until that happens, the developer is responsible to maintain the roads including snow removal. Selectman Hamill went on to say that when the developer has met all of the conditions and the bond is released, it is at that point that GFVCDA takes ownership of the road. At that point there are two options available to get the subdivision roads accepted as public ways. The first is to petition the Selectmen, the second is to put an article on the town warrant which would have to be done by January 14, 2020. Chairman Lage stated that just because the residents petition the Selectmen, it doesn't mean they have to accept the roads.

Brad Brock discussed some of the difficulty with the homeowner's association because half of the subdivision is already had their part of Green Farm Road accepted as a public way and that those residents feel they have been released from any of their obligations under the homeowner's association. Several other area residents asked questions and voiced their concerns. There was

additional discussion on the process and timing of the steps with the Planning Board, Selectmen and the warrant article for Town Meeting.

Police Dept. Budget Review: Chief Carpenter stated that the budget is based on a 53 pay period year. Chairman Lage stated all the budgets should be based on 52 weeks. As a result of the change, the Full-time Salaries line item was reduced to \$411,468. Part-time Salaries line item requested is \$2,578. The Prosecutor line item was level funded at \$38,588. Chief Carpenter requested an increase in the Overtime line item from \$26,324 in FY2019 to \$32,579 for FY2020. The budget is based on six full-time officers and one part-time officer. There was some discussion as to why the labor line items were underspent in 2019. Chief Carpenter explained it was because he was understaffed for part of the year. Chairman Lage questioned how the Overtime line item was calculated. Chief Carpenter explained that in the last few years the budget has been calculated to include the liabilities associated with accrued vacation and sick time of the officers. When discussing the Court Labor line item, Chairman Lage asked why the request went up \$62. Chief Carpenter explained it was based on the same number of hours but at a higher labor rate.

The discussion then turned to the Retirement line item. Chairman Lage wanted to know what the approximately \$8,000 increase was for. Chief Carpenter explained that the increase in wages was the reason. There was discussion around the health and dental insurance and the impact on FICA and Medicare line items. The Education line item was discussed and Chief Carpenter explained that the increase from \$4,000 to \$5,000 was due to having the sixth officer now onboard. The Uniform line item request was level funded from the previous year at \$3,000. The New Hire line item request for \$1,000 was challenged by Chairman Lage who wanted to set it at \$0. Chief Carpenter explained that it was for testing in the event he loses an officer during the year and needs to hire a new one. Chairman Lage said they'd take it out of the budget elsewhere.

The Equipment line item request was to level fund it at \$2,000 and \$608 has been spent so far in 2019. Chairman Lage asked why \$2,000 was required for FY2020 when only \$608 had been spent so far in FY2019. He asked Chief Carpenter what he anticipated needing the money for. Otherwise everyone would come in and say their budget was level funded. Chief Carpenter explained that there are unforeseen events that require repair or replacement of equipment. Chairman Lage said that there is always surplus money left at the end of every year in some of the line items that could be used in the event something came up. There was discussion about whether department heads were told to stay within each line item rather than sliding money between line items. Chief Carpenter reiterated that there are expenses that cannot be anticipated.

The Vehicle Maintenance line item request is level funded at \$7,700. Chief Carpenter explained that the two oldest vehicles, both 2013s, are having issues and one is currently not able to pass inspection due to an emissions issue. He is trying to locate a new replacement rather than put money into old vehicles, but there are none available in the near-term. Chairman Lage asked if the line item could be reduced if a new vehicle is purchased.

The Computer line item request is to level fund at \$4,500. Chief Carpenter explained all of the systems and support that are required to operate the Police Dept. He also explained the \$1,995 annual portion that is required for the telephone diagnostics/investigations system.

Chief Carpenter explained the Communications line item and that the Comcast phone system and internet costs are high, but that's what the town selected. He also stated that he needs a standard analog (POTS) line added as well. The problem with the VoIP system from Comcast means if the network goes down, the Police Station loses all telephone communication and the Internet. There is no backup. His request for \$7,900 over the \$7,500 for FY2019 is based on an expected increase in cost of service.

Chairman Lage asked about the U.S. Cellular costs for the telephones and the air cards in the police cruisers that connect the PCs to a network. Chairman Lage got into a discussion with the Chief about U.S. Cellular versus AT&T as far as cost and coverage. Chief Carpenter explained that there are three wireless routers in the police cruisers that are paid for and the only cost is for service. If there was a switch to AT&T, then new routers may have to be purchased.

The General Supplies line item request was to level fund it at \$2,000. Chairman Lage asked how much had been spent so far in 2019. Chief Carpenter stated that \$1,819 had been spent year-to-date. There was some discussion about the Animal control line item request for \$200. Chief Carpenter explained that allows him have one rabies test performed on an animal. Chairman Lage asked about the separate Animal Control budget of \$5,000 and Chief Carpenter explained that over the last couple of years he has had people interested in the position but nothing came to fruition. The position for an Animal Control Officer is being advertised and there are currently two applicants, but the Chief wanted to make sure the Selectmen were still supportive of the position before moving forward with the candidates.

There was discussion about the Vehicle Fuel line item. Selectman Hamill asked why the request of \$11,111 for FY2020 was lower than for FY2019. Chairman Lage asked why that much was necessary given that less than \$8,000 has been spent so far this year. There was discussion between Chairman Lage and FAC member Jack Low about how many gallons were being forecasted and at what price per gallon. Chief Carpenter stated that his 3-year average for consumption was 3,900 gallons per year. Now that he is fully staffed, he expects to need 4,100 gallons in 2020 and that's what his budget request reflects.

Chairman Lage asked about the Equipment line item request of \$2,000. Chief Carpenter stated that it included the purchase of two new PCs as part of his normal rotation of equipment.

There was additional discussion about the overall expenditures for FY2019 versus the budget originally requested. Most of the surplus was due to not being fully staffed for part of 2019.

FAC member Jeff McCabe brought the conversation back to the Overtime line item. Chief Carpenter requested \$32,579 for FY2020, up from \$26,324 for FY2019, of which approximately

\$12,000 has been spent so far. Chief Carpenter reiterated that the FY2020 request is based on six full-time officers and one part-time officer and that the Police Dept. was understaffed for part of 2019. Chairman Lage asked if the average rate being used to calculate was based on all of the department wages. Chief Carpenter stated the average was based solely on the wages of the four patrol officers and does not include the rest of the personnel. Chairman Lage questioned why the vacation and sick time liabilities were being included in the budget. He feels that the budget is being inflated by something that will never be used. He asked why appropriate funding for it then? Chief Carpenter explained that in the past they did not incur as much overtime because the Police Dept. ran without covering the shifts of those officers out on vacation or out sick. Now that the department is better staffed, that doesn't have to happen, but officers covering those shifts will be on overtime. Selectman Hamill asked if there was some overlap with officers on some shifts. He also wanted to know what the risk factors were if some of the shifts weren't covered. Chairman Lage wanted to know more about the overlapping shifts. Chief Carpenter explained the risks and logistics of managing all of the shifts with limited or no officers available. Understaffing would make the town reliant on mutual aid or the State Police, if available, with at least a 15 minute turnaround. Chairman Lage stated he doesn't see how putting money into the budget will put the men there. He said he'd be more of a proponent of an increase if,....we only spent \$12,000 so far this year....is not going to the \$38,000+ proposed....Chief Carpenter interrupted and reiterated the reason only \$12,000 has been spent is because they were short of staff to fill shifts, not because there wasn't a need. The Chief stated he is trying to get the shift coverage to where we need to be. Chairman Lage said that adding another officer doesn't mean that the Chief is going to triple the coverage. FAC member Jeff McCabe asked the Chief how much more of the current overtime budget will be spent before the end of 2019. Chief Carpenter stated it is difficult to tell and is dependent on how many are out sick or choose to use accrued vacation time.

Selectman Hamill stated that the money should go to the Part-Time line item so you can have a part-time person step in when needed. Chief Carpenter stated the problem with part-time trying to fill a shift they were not originally scheduled for since they typically have other commitments. Chairman Lage asked if more part-time officers should be hired, is it an option? Chief Carpenter stated that hiring full-time officers is already difficult, and the time commitment and requirements that a part-time officer has to meet make it unattractive. They have to meet the same standards as a full-time officer. The Town Administrator stated that some New Hampshire communities are paying a \$10,000 signing bonus for police officers right now because there is a shortage of qualified people. Chairman Lage said he just saw an article that Manchester just hire fifteen new officers, but acknowledged that they pay scale is higher than New Ipswich has. Chief Carpenter stated there are other area towns paying a \$5,000 signing bonus and added that hiring part-time people is more difficult because they need to have the same training requiring a significant time commitment that few are willing to give. Selectman Hamill asked if that means one of the current full-time officers would be asked to fill those sick or vacation related shifts instead and that's where the overtime comes from. The Chief acknowledged that is the case. Chairman Lage stated that isn't fair to the other officers. Chief Carpenter replied that the focus would be on filling the openings on the first two shifts, not the overnight shift, and that's what



the budget request reflected. Chairman Lage said overtime is a significant part of the budget. Chief Carpenter asked if keeping the officers safe was a priority or do we want to start operating like a part-time department. Chairman Lage responded by saying officer safety is important, what I'm asking is reducing or eliminating the overlap of shifts. Chief Carpenter said the budget is based on what the officers have accrued for sick and vacation time. Selectman Hamill asked if the current officers are eager to take on the additional shifts when asked to do so, and does requiring them to take them cause a morale issue. Lt. Mike Abel said he does the scheduling of the officers and goal is to provide adequate coverage for the residents in the community. The goal is to provide good coverage and officer safety. He has not had anyone refuse a shift when asked. Chairman Lage asked Chief Carpenter to go back and review the overtime numbers and find a way to reduce the amount required.

Chairman Lage asked if the Chief intended to purchase two computers out of the General Supplies line item. Chief Carpenter stated that two computers were purchased, but that those purchases don't come out of the General Supplies line item, but the Equipment line item instead. Selectman Hamill stated that some of the computers are replaced each year on a three year rotation. FAC member Jeff McCabe asked if the Police Dept. will need to purchase two more computers in 2020. The Chief said yes, if they were to stay on the current rotation schedule. Chairman Lage asked if they could be purchased with 2019 funds instead. FAC member Marc Fortier pointed out that there is only a few hundred bucks left in the line item for 2019.

The conversation shifted to cellular telephone communications. Chairman Lage asked the Chief what he required for cell service. He suggested that the he and the Chief take a ride around town to check on cell coverage with AT&T compared to the current vendor, U.S. Cellular.

Animal Control Officer Budget Review: This budget review was deferred to a later date.

Communications Budget Review: Selectman Hamill asked about the new cell tower being erected and asked if there should be a warrant article for communications equipment this year. Chairman Lage asked if the town had received a cost proposal yet. Chief Carpenter stated that we hadn't gotten that far yet, but that there had been discussions, and the request for equipment would probably be sometime in 2020 for 2021. Chairman Lage stated that if there was surplus in this year's Police Dept. budget, it could be used to purchase some of the communications equipment now. Chief Carpenter raised the issues of buying equipment before the final requirements were known, having no place to store it while waiting for the cell tower to be constructed, and having equipment sitting for a long period of time and being out of date from a technological standpoint before it is even installed. The consensus was to gather additional information and review the current year budget to determine if there is a surplus amount that could be encumbered.

All of the requested line items in the Communications budget for FY2020 were level funded with the exception of the \$3,840 for the CodeRed system that will be going away and replaced by a no-cost service from the State of NH.

Conservation Commission Budget Review: ConsComm Chairman Bob Boynton did not show up for the discussion. FAC member Marc Fortier asked about the status of the GIS software purchased for \$400 last year, and why the ConsComm was asking for another \$400 this year. After reviewing the backup documentation, the consensus was that the \$400 was for annual subscription, not an outright purchase of software with a perpetual license. Selectman Hamill gave an overview of how the GIS software works and what it is used to document.

Chairman Lage pointed out that the ConsComm had overspent on postage this year. Selectman Hamill questioned the request for travel, mileage and meals in the budget and pointed out that there has been some inconsistency in allowing some to have it in their budgets and others not being allowed to have those items in their budgets. FAC member Jeff McCabe stated that was the case. There was discussion about how the conservation funds impact the budgeting process and how those monies can be spent. Chairman Lage explained how the Current Use Tax program works and what happens when a landowner pays to take a property out of that status and that some of those fees collected by the town go directly to the ConsComm funds.

The Selectmen and FAC members approved the requested budget at \$1,325.

#### Other Business:

Heritage Commission Appointments – The Selectmen questioned why the commission was requesting all 1-year terms. The Town Administrator was asked to confirm the length of the terms before the Selectmen appoint/re-appoint people and set it up according to the RSA.

School Payment Vote – The Selectmen discussed increasing the payment to the school district from \$652,239 to \$770,839 for the month of December. Chairman Lage asked what the cash available was. The Town Administrator stated that \$1.45 million was available. Selectman Hamill made a motion to pay the school district \$770,839 for the month. Chairman Lage seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Employee Holiday Schedule – The Selectmen approved the 2020 schedule.

Health Insurance discussion – There was some discussion about the increase in cost and changes to the employee health plan. The Selectmen want to table this discussion until all three members of the BOS are present.

LED streetlight RFP – The Town Administrator provided the Selectmen with a sample of an RFP that the Town of Hollis used to upgrade their street lighting to LED technology. Eversource confirmed that there is no “buyout” required on the existing fixtures. The Town of Milford has also agreed to share their RFP for LED street lighting. There was a review of the current New Ipswich street light inventory.

At 9:43 p.m. Chairman Lage made a motion adjourn the meeting. Selectman Hamill seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Scott Butcher, Town Administrator

Minutes approved by:  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

  
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David S. Lage, Chairman

ABSENT  
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John Veaser

  
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Bert Hamill