

TOWN OF EGREMONT, MASSACHUSETTS
MEETING OF THE SELECT BOARD and FINANCE COMMITTEE
BUDGET
MINUTES

Date: March 9, 2022
Time: 1:30pm
Place: Town Hall
Egremont

Present in-person at Town Hall were Selectboard Chairman George McGurn, Vice-Chair Lucinda Fenn-Vermeulen, Board member Mary Brazie, and Finance Committee Member Dan Blitzer. Present via zoom were Finance Committee members Chair Laura Allen, Thomas Berkel, Dan Blitzer, Water Commissioners Ray Palmucci and Poly Lanoue, Road Superintendent Jim Noe, Water Department Clerk William Brinker and Mary McGurn and for parts of the meeting Water Operator Nate Stalker.

It was announced that the meeting is video and audio recorded.

Review of the Water Department budget took place with questions surrounding the request for a 30 hour per week second Operator though possibly at 15 hour per week Operator would suffice. There is no job description, no supporting documentation of need or requirement. Appropriate funds for insurance and licensing would also need to be budgeted for. The request for a \$60,000 truck was also debated. There are no specifications and no firm price. Also to be considered would be any savings to the budget as a plow person would no longer be needed, and additions to the budget to cover insurance, fuel and maintenance. There is no estimate for water line repairs yet which would be an integral part of the FY 23 budget. The Department also needs to include in its budget the monthly internet charges of \$149 per month. The Department asked for a new line item for legal fees which seemingly was requested because the Town Accountant told them that outstanding accounts needed to be put into Tax Title. There was no clear information on this request. Water Department Officials will return to the next joint budget meeting in two weeks with answers to questions presented.

The Planning Board's request for an increase in technical assistance funds was to pay for someone to reformat the Zoning Bylaw into a Word Document for ease of editing, convert forms and applications for on-line submission capability, and to pay for mapping assistance. The forms and applications will likely be converted as a process in building the new town web page. The amount was felt to be reasonable for the other areas of need.

There will be continued discussion about the Grant Administration position.

The Animal Control Officer will receive the same wage increase other employees are in the amount of 4.2%.

The Human Resources Committee will discuss the wages for the elected Assessors and Selectboard at its meeting later in the week.

The French Park Committee will be asked to submit details as to the \$10,000 request for a grant match for invasive species removal.

Finance Chair Laura Allen will review the Transportation Department budget.

The Town's share of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District is estimated at almost \$200,000. The SBRSD budget will be adopted later in the week and final figures certified to the town in the near future.

Special Articles:

The amount transferred to the GASB 45 Stabilization Fund may be increased from the usual \$15,000.

The Police Department is asking to replace a 2016 cruiser in the amount of \$58,000. It is likely that equipment will not be able to be transferred as cruiser models change.

French Park repairs to the little league ball field fence and replacement of the wood chips under the playground equipment will cost \$4,000.

The replacement of the front door at Town Hall will cost \$12,000.

The Board discussed with Road Superintendent Jim Noe a possible increase in the road repairs budget from \$150,000 to \$200,000. The Town will also have about \$200,000 available in Chapter 90 funds. With fuel costs high and still on the rise, Jim anticipates a cost of \$100 per ton in the coming year for blacktop, up from the current \$85, which is higher than last summer. Further discussion will take place at the next joint meeting.

Jim noted that the cost of the plow he needs to replace recently went up to \$9,000 from \$8,000. As he is having difficulties getting pricing, he will delay asking for a boom mower for another year and make repairs on the one we have.

To finish the blacktopping of the Town Hall parking lot, which is currently a mud hole, will cost \$85,000. Selectboard Vice-Chair Vermeulen is strongly against this prior to completion of the Town Hall Planning Committee recommendation for a redo of the area surrounding Town Hall, while the other Board members are in favor.

Buildings & Grounds Superintendent Tom Reynolds has asked for a third year of budget funds for tree removal of dead trees that are endangering town buildings in the amount of \$5,000. It was noted that there is a lack of attention to dead trees along roadways, though this is a different department.

Both the Selectboard and the Finance Committee support putting the new Buildings & Grounds building back on the warrant in the amount of \$275,000. The special article last year failed to obtain the needed 2/3 vote to borrow did pass a majority vote.

The cost to replace the trash computer is about \$75,000. There is \$20,000 available in recycling proceeds to use towards this so the town will only need to fund \$55,000.

The next joint budget meeting will take place in two weeks.

Meeting adjourned at 3:23pm.

Mary Brazie,
Office Administrator

minutes.22/mar9budget

The recording of the minutes is on record at the Town Hall for 90 days. Anyone who wishes to may obtain a copy or listen to the recording at Town Hall. Attachments are on file at Town Hall.