

**SUNAPEE SELECTBOARD
BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
TOWN OFFICE MEETING ROOM
Monday, November 27, 2023, 6:30 p.m.**

Present: Chair Carol Wallace; Vice Chair Suzanne Gottling; Member Josh Trow.

Also present: Town Manager Shannon Martinez; Finance Director Ronna Johnson-Davis

1. BUDGET ADVISORY MEETING

Town Manager Martinez updated the Advisory Budget Committee (ABC) on the status of the budget, incorporating the suggestions of the Committee from last month's presentation. There will be follow-up meetings with the Fire Wards to discuss the growth and development of the Fire Department. The Supreme Court decisions on education financing could also affect the upcoming budget.

The Committee requested a revenue estimate and a review of the specific components of the budget for the next meeting. Ms. Martinez explained the correlation between budget limitations and the Town's desire to move forward and be innovative.

Ms. Johnson-Davis presented a review of staffing and compensation, including the challenges of hiring and retaining employees in today's market. Wages and the lack of affordable housing are some of the issues. They discussed conducting a compensation survey to compare wages, benefits, turnover, and so on with other towns in the region. The Committee noted the importance of retention and the need for a retention policy and a more robust employee evaluation process tied to compensation.

Chair Wallace asked if the Committee has discussed putting staff positions in a warrant article as opposed to embedding them in the budget. The Board agreed this should be discussed on a case-by-case basis to consider the possible consequences of each route.

2. CALL SELECTBOARD MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Wallace called the Selectboard Meeting to order at 7:28 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. REVIEW OF MINUTES

In section 4, bullet 7, change Chair White to Chair Wallace.

MOTION to approve the minutes as amended for the November 13, 2023, Select Board meeting made by Member Trow, seconded by Member Gottling. All voted in favor.

4. REVIEW OF ITEMS FOR SIGNATURE

CZCs

- Parcel ID:0126-0024-0000, 8 Old Norcross Road, Michael & Janet Jesanis Trust
- Parcel ID: 0232-0018-0000, 46 Depot Road, 46 Depot Rd LLC, Jim Bruss

LAND DISTURBANCE

- Parcel ID: 0128-0031-0000, 90 Garnet Street, Michael & Sharon Kelly
- Parcel ID: 0125-0012-0000, 36 Jobs Creek Road, Duane & Elizabeth Delfosse

USE OF FACILITIES

- Retroactive Approval: November 20, 2023, Make A Wish Parade

INTENT TO CUT

- Parcel ID: 0234-0008-0000, Stagecoach Road, RH Webb Forest Preserve, LLC

Consent Agenda: MOTION to approve CZCs, Land Disturbance, Use of Facilities, and Intent to Cut made by Member Trow, seconded by Member Gottling. All voted in favor.

5. APPOINTMENTS

7:30 – Public Hearing for the Acceptance and Expenditure of Unanticipated Revenue from State of New Hampshire Highway Block Grant of \$35,295.52

Ms. Martinez said the Staff's recommendation is to earmark these funds for the evaluation of repairs needed for Georges Mill Bridge. These funds can only be used for specific purposes.

Chair Wallace invited public comment. Chris Whitehouse clarified that these funds would be used for the Georges Mill Bridge and the Board agreed.

Chair Wallace closed the public hearing.

MOTION to accept the Block Grant in the amount of \$35,295.52 to be directed towards Georges Mills Bridge made by Member Trow, seconded by Member Gottling. All voted in favor.

7:30 – Conservation Commission

Van Webb, Chair of the Sunapee Conservation Commission, and Matthias Nevins of Meadowsend Timberlands appeared before the Board to present an update on the restoration project of the meadow at Dewey Woods. Mr. Webb asked the Board to waive the timber tax with an initial estimate of \$206. Mr. Nevins reviewed the project, which will include harvesting trees to return the meadow to its historic footprint. The trees will be transported along old Route 11 to the Town gravel pit before being taken to the mill. They are working with Highway Director Michael Martell on this. The Commission has funds to cover the cost of this project.

MOTION to approve waiving the timber tax made by Member Gottling, seconded by Member Trow. All voted in favor.

- 6. PUBLIC COMMENT:** (Public comments can be heard in full [here](#), beginning at 7:46 p.m.)
- **Chris Whitehouse** noted errors in the tax calculation information sent out by the Town. He directed a comment to Patrick Fine of the ABC, saying he does not agree that people want full-time positions put into the budget. He believes people want the chance to determine whether or not they want that position. He said the discs supplied by the Town with Right to Know information could have viruses on them, so he would like the information sent to him electronically. He said this information has been supplied to him electronically in the past and if the Town will not do this, they will have to print the information. He said the Town claiming they cannot send Right to Know information electronically is a lie. He noted the information presented regarding the budget did not include the retirement package and if the cost of someone doing a similar job in the civilian world is 25% more, then it is equal.
 - **Lisa Hoekstra** will be meeting with Town Manager Martinez regarding the STR registration process. She asked how many people have registered. Ms. Martinez said there have been five registrations. Ms. Hoekstra said two of the significant questions she is hearing are if there is a deadline, as one was not communicated in the letter sent out regarding registration, and about the proposed 120-day rental limit. She said this is muddying the waters of the registration process and is a huge concern for STR owners. She said it was disappointing that the Planning Board did not pay attention to the 65 people who said they did not want the 120-day limit. She offered to provide this information to the Selectboard.
 - **John Augustine** believes it was mentioned at a prior meeting that the Police and Fire Departments do not have a retention requirement, if individuals are sent for training. He asked why a requirement does not exist, as it would solve the retention problem. He believes that everyone getting a 2.5% step increase in addition to a COLA has an impact on retention. He thinks the increase should depend on performance and this would solve the retention issue. He understands the Town owes the County \$5 million by December 17, 2023. The tax bill due date is December 21, 2023. The first tax billing collected \$2 million. He encouraged the Board to think about how they are going to pay the remaining \$3 million. He thinks there should be discussion on why the due date is December 21. He believes this is due to the assessor not finishing the reevaluation process in time.
 - **Christine Corey** asked if "draft" watermark could be less visible on the draft minutes. She asked the Board reconsider the October 30, 2023, vote/motion to accept the new voting tabulation machine by Dominion and wait until the voters can vote on which type of machine they would like. Chair Wallace said this decision is in the purview of the Selectboard and that any concerns were mitigated by the \$800 million settlement. Ms. Corey said there are many other cases coming up. Mr. Trow suggested anyone with questions about the voting machine should speak with the Town Clerk. Ms. Corey said she believes the Board is wrong and they are doing the voters a huge disservice by not letting them vote on this.

Chair Wallace closed public comment.

7. SELECTBOARD ACTION

Certificate of Appointment – Ian Kirk, Recreation Committee

MOTION to appoint Ian Kirk to the Recreation Committee made by Member Trow, seconded by Member Gottling. All voted in favor.

8. TOWN MANAGER REPORT

- **Tax Rate:** Ms. Martinez reviewed the tax rate, which was set at \$9.68 per thousand, and how it was determined. Mr. Fine of the ABC asked the Town to consider the delta between revenue estimates and expenditure plans, and then determine what impact this will have on the amount of money needed from the citizens. Ms. Martinez said she believes they have done this, but they will review the process. Chair Wallace asked Mr. Fine to write down the process he is looking for, to ensure the Town Finance Department understands his request. The Board discussed the items they can control in the revenue estimates.
- **Tax Bill:** Ms. Martinez clarified that the reevaluation was not delayed; due to the number of people who wanted to speak with the assessor, the deadline was extended. Chair Wallace asked if there is an issue regarding the gap between the deadlines and Ms. Martinez said she is not concerned, although it is possible to obtain a TAN if necessary.
- **Legal Update**
 - November 21, 2023: KTP Hearing
 - November 29, 2023: Hoekstra Hearing
 - December 16, 2023: Weiss Hearing
- **Coalition 2.0:** There is a meeting on November 29, 2023, to try to get a better understanding of what it means regarding Sunapee becoming a donor town, if the cases stand. The Board discussed education funding and how it impacts the Town.
- **FY 2022 Audit:** Ms. Martinez updated the Board on the FY 2022 audit. Chair Wallace asked for a summary of the recommendations made and an action plan.
- **Meeting Room:** The Board discussed the possibility of reconfiguring the meeting room to provide more space.

9. SELECTBOARD MEMBERS' REPORTS

There were no Selectboard member reports.

10. UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Water and Sewer Commissioners Meeting: November 30, 2023, 5:30 PM
- Sunapee Selectboard Meeting: December 4, 2023, 6:30 PM
- Conservation Committee Meeting: December 6, 2023, 7:00 PM
- Zoning Board of Adjustments Meeting December 7, 2023, 6:30 PM
- Sunapee Selectboard Meeting: December 18, 2023, 6:30 PM

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Haggeli
Recording Secretary