

TOWN OF NEW BOSTON
New Boston Select Board

January 17, 2023

APPROVED

In attendance at the Whipple Free Library Community Meeting Room: Donna Mombourquette, David Litwinovich, and Jennifer Brown

Staff present: Paul Branscombe, Town Administrator; Jennifer Allocca, Finance Director; Benji Knapp, Road Agent; Mike Sindoni, Recreation Director; Gerry Cornett, Transfer Station Manager; Police Chief James Brace; Tanya Ricker, Library Director; and Fire Chief Cliff Plourde

A. CALL TO ORDER: A regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order by Chair Mombourquette at 6:00PM beginning with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 1: PUBLIC HEARING RE: 2023 Municipal Budget

Chair Mombourquette opened the public hearing. Jennifer Allocca presented the budget.

Jennifer Allocca reviewed the Financial Administration Department budget. This budget is proposed to increase by \$73,701 mostly due to salaries and an increase in technology expenses.

Steve Sears, 19 Carriage Road, asked about the proposed budget increase for this Department. Jennifer Allocca explained that this is partly due to a Finance staff member being moved from the Select Board budget into the Finance Department budget. Additional hours were added to the Staff Accountant's position and the Finance Director's salary was increased, due to additional duties and responsibilities. Regarding technology, there are proposed updates to the software systems and cyber security. These are new initiatives for 2023 that were not being done in 2022. Mr. Sears stated that, in the 2022 budget, most of these line items were not fully spent, but the 2023 budget looks to double the amount in these line items. Jennifer Allocca noted that a budget is based on a best estimate and on history and experience. Mr. Sears stated that it appears the budget was created by doubling last year's actuals. Jennifer Allocca explained that the budget for the Payroll/ Accounts Payable staff member, working two days a week, was previously in the Select Board's budget. The Town Office Clerical line item in the Select Board's budget was reduced by approximately \$80,000 while the budget for the Finance Department was increased. Chair Mombourquette explained that a decision was made last year that clerical staff from all departments would come under the Select Board budget. Later, it was determined that this was not working, so support staff has been decentralized to their respective departments.

Peter Hogan, 39 Scobie Road, stated that the Planning Board has spoken at length talk that the Town put the purchase of a Fire Department command vehicle on the ballot. The answer to that request was no. The vehicle was purchased anyway. The vehicle was donated to the Town and is now maintained and registered by the Town. The Town was assured during the CIP process that, under no circumstances, would that vehicle be purchased until it went before the Town and the specific vehicle was voted for. Chair Mombourquette noted that this issue has been resolved.

Peter Hogan stated that the public cannot count all the line items and add them together while sitting in this meeting. Jennifer Allocca stated that this is the job of the Finance Committee. Peter

TOWN OF NEW BOSTON
New Boston Select Board

January 17, 2023

APPROVED

Hogan stated that there is no way to know that the process was not circumvented. The Finance Committee does not judge what is given to them. He stated that it has been said to him that the Finance Committee accepts the numbers given to them by department heads to then move them forward to the CIP. He stated that he does not believe the Finance Committee thinks it is their job to judge any of these requests. Chair Mombourquette stated that the Finance Committee asked a lot of questions of the department managers this year.

Peter Hogan stated that the process to obtain the command vehicle was circumvented. Somehow that vehicle was registered, insured, and continues to be maintained, even though it was voted down by the taxpayers. Jennifer Allocca stated that, per the DRA, unless the line item was specifically set to zero dollars, it is unclear whether the voters said no because of the amount or because of the purpose. If the same warrant was placed on the ballot with the purpose only, set at \$0.00, and the voters said no, that would tell the Town 100% that the purpose was being voted down.

Mr. Sears asked about a number of overbudget individual line items. Jennifer Allocca stated that a Department can use the underspent funds from one line to use toward overages in another line.

Karen Scott, 110 Dane Road, asked about the Facilities & Grounds Manager line item, proposed at \$32,285. Jennifer Allocca noted that this is a brand-new position. Ms. Scott asked how a new position could have a default budget of \$6,400 if it never existed before. Jennifer Allocca explained that this person was already working for the Town under the Groundskeeping Wages line. The hours allocated to this position are now split into two categories, with the default \$6,400 coming from the previous line item. Ms. Scott asked why this new position is set to get a COLA raise and additional performance raise after 13 weeks. Jennifer Allocca explained that the COLA is for a cost-of-living increase, and the additional raise is after a 6-month performance review.

In response to a question regarding the Longevity Plan under the Police Department, Police Chief Brace explained that long-tenured employees with the Town receive a one-time statement for their service. He noted that, for the last couple of years, the Department did not give a COLA to employees, and the only thing given to certain employees was a longevity payment. This is given within certain departments as an appreciation bonus.

In response to a question from Peter Hogan, it was noted that Car 1 in the Fire Department budget is the command vehicle. Fire Chief Plourde explained that the Department is seeking \$5,000 for maintenance and repairs for vehicles for 2023. Mr. Hogan noted that this money is being requested for a vehicle that was voted down by the Town. Jennifer Allocca stated that the Town hires experienced people and needs to give them the tools and equipment needed to do their jobs. Peter Hogan asked if he should purchase a vehicle for the Town to register and maintain for all of the work that he does as Chair of the Planning Board. Jennifer Allocca noted that Peter Hogan receives a stipend for his position. Peter Hogan stated that a stipend is not the same thing as a salary. He stated that this is not an authorized car. The Town continues to spend the money on this car and the Select Board continues to authorize this spending. New vehicles

TOWN OF NEW BOSTON

New Boston Select Board

January 17, 2023

APPROVED

are also continually being put on the CIP. This is all being done banking on the fact that the public is not paying attention. He stated that he uses his own personal vehicle because he's trying to help the Town. The Fire Chief could do the same. Jennifer Allocca stated that the way the departments are run is decided by experienced people who work in the industry.

Karen Scott stated that the command vehicle was voted down and a vehicle was donated to Dan McDonald, at which point he outfitted it on his own. She asked why the Department is requesting \$5,000 to now maintain this vehicle. She noted that there is a brand-new red truck with government plates on it, which would apparently be command vehicle #2. She noted that the Fire Operations Manager salary is listed as \$101,000 yet there is still an additional budget line for \$27,000 for a Fire Chief. She asked why the Yukon truck was not handed over to the current Operations Manager and what the purpose of the brand-new red truck is.

Chair Mombourquette stated that the Select Board and Fire Wards have decided that the new command vehicle was a significant error. The vehicle will be turned back, and the Town will not be responsible for it. All of the details have not yet been worked out, but there will be no cost to the taxpayers of the Town. The vehicle could be sent back to the dealership, or it could be sold. The vehicle has been turned over to the administration of the Town and the Fire Department has no authority or responsibility of the vehicle. Peter Hogan stated that any donated amount to cover the cost of returning this vehicle will likely have to come from the Chair of the Select Board's pocket. Karen Scott stated that she is the only person that has ever stated that things go rogue in the Fire Department. This is not the first time. She respects each and every firefighter and staff member, but there is an issue with how the Department is run.

Chair Mombourquette stated that the Fire Wards now have a clear and complete understanding as to the scope of their authority. That authority is specifically and only for the operations of the firefighters, and maintenance of the buildings and equipment. Over some number of years, no one has taken control for management of this issue, until now. This Board cannot take responsibility for what has happened in the past. Peter Hogan agreed but stated that the current Board can deny the proposed maintenance line item for the new command vehicle and remove it from the fleet.

Chair Mombourquette stated that there are policies and procedures that need to be adopted by the Fire Wards, such as in terms of the Ambulance Revolving Fund. She explained that this command vehicle issue was not out of line in terms of the way in which the Fire Wards have operated for years. However, it was wrong. This item has been fixed.

Peter Hogan asked who signed off on the vehicle from the administration. Chair Mombourquette stated that this was not done. Peter Hogan stated that this vehicle should not even exist in the Town and should not be insured or registered then. Chair Mombourquette stated that the Board has this item under control. There will be no cost to the taxpayers.

Peter Hogan asked how residents can know who was responsible, in order to know who to vote off at the next election. He believes this went higher than the Fire Wards. Chair Mombourquette

TOWN OF NEW BOSTON
New Boston Select Board

January 17, 2023

APPROVED

133 stated that she, personally, will not throw anyone under the bus. The Fire Wards have operated in
134 this way for years. Peter Hogan stated that it is not throwing anyone under the bus; it is giving
135 facts. Chair Mombourquette stated that the Fire Wards voted unanimously on this item because
136 they believed they had the authority to. Any asset under the Fire Wards' responsibility is a
137 municipal asset. Peter Hogan stated that the Select Board is the one that is supposed to be
138 watching the residents' money. Chair Mombourquette stated that this was simply an error in
139 terms of the way people have been operating for years and it has been corrected.

140
141 Mark Suennen, Twin Bridge Road, asked how much money was spent on the truck up to this
142 point that will somehow not be taxpayer-spent money. He asked that this exact number be
143 reported at Deliberative Session. Chair Mombourquette explained that this will include the title
144 and registration.

145
146 In response to a question from Bill McFadden regarding the fact that every purchase over \$5,000
147 must be approved through the Select Board, Chair Mombourquette stated that she believes this is
148 now known by each department in Town. She believes there has been a loss of institutional
149 knowledge in the Town over the year. There was no malice to this purchase, simply a lack of
150 knowledge of the process.

151
152 Peter Hogan stated that the other option is that the Fire Wards were fed information as someone
153 believes the Chief was entitled to that car. Jennifer Allocca asked if Peter Hogan was insinuating
154 that she had something to do with this. Chair Mombourquette stated that there was a
155 conversation among certain people that there is a need for a command vehicle for the Fire
156 Department. Any conversations between the Fire Department staff and the Finance Director were
157 related to the command vehicle. Peter Hogan stated that that Finance Director believes the Fire
158 Chief is entitled to this vehicle. Jennifer Allocca stated that she and the Fire Chief have had
159 discussions that, any other town in the entire country has a command vehicle for this type of
160 Department. She asked how the Town can rely on the people it hired for this Department to
161 know what it needs to run the department. The Town was lucky to have Dan MacDonald to
162 provide all the hours he did that he was never compensated for. Karen Scott stated that he
163 actually double-dipped and was paid a salary while also paying himself for each call he went on.

164
165 Brad Bingham, 166 Byam Road, asked, if the Department Heads know better than the voters,
166 which warrant articles can be ignored this year where, if they are voted down, the department
167 head can simply do them anyway. Jennifer Allocca stated that this is misconstruing what she
168 meant. She trusts the people hired to tell the Town what they need to get the job done. Chair
169 Mombourquette stated that there is nothing stating that a department cannot accept a donation.

170
171 Karen Scott noted that the GIS mapping system has been voted down for several years. This
172 year, the system is proposed to be purchased using the unassigned fund balance instead. This is a
173 way to circumvent what the taxpayers have voted on. Jennifer Allocca stated that this is way to
174 get the tools the Town needs without a tax impact.

TOWN OF NEW BOSTON
New Boston Select Board

January 17, 2023

APPROVED

Peter Hogan stated that, regarding Car 1, this was accepted by the Town as a donation, but is now included in the budget. Thus, this will cost the taxpayers over the years. Car 1 is not legal and should be removed from the fleet. Chair Mombourquette the voters said no to purchasing a vehicle. This vehicle was not purchased, it was donated. Peter Hogan stated that the Town now has to maintain it though. Nothing being done with this vehicle is in keeping with what the taxpayers voted on. Chair Mombourquette noted that this is now on the Town's CIP.

Mark Suennen disputed Chair Mombourquette's previous statement that the purchase of the truck was an error, but this had not happened in the past. He stated that year's ago, the Highway Department purchased a truck through a similar process which led to the Road Agent at the time being let go of by the Town. Chair Mombourquette agreed that this happened a couple of times. Mark Suennen stated that it is important to note this has happened a number of times. The Fire Wards likely watched the truck be purchased on behalf of the Town through this process and believed they could do the same, even though that employee was then fired by the Town. Chair Mombourquette asked if the implication is that the Fire Wards did this on purpose. Mark Suennen stated that he is not implying anything about the decision-making of the Fire Wards.

Peter Hogan stated that he believes all of the vehicle purchases made incorrectly are now included on the CIP. Chair Mombourquette stated that if a department has needs, it is appropriate to put these on the CIP.

Karen Scott stated that minutes from the Fire Wards meeting would be helpful to clear up a lot of items. However, minutes have not been posted from Fire Wards meetings since May 2022. There is \$914 allocated in the budget for a minute taker for these meetings. She noted that this is not the first time she has brought up this issue. Chair Mombourquette stated that this has also been addressed with the Fire Wards. The Fire Wards will now be carrying out the same process for their minutes as the Select Board does. She asked that the public allow the Fire Wards to work through the process of preparing, posting, and accepting the minutes. Karen Scott stated that she would like to see these before the Deliberative Session. Chair Mombourquette stated that this should not be a problem.

Karen Scott noted that gas for the command vehicle is budgeted at approximately \$8,000. Jennifer Allocca stated that there are other vehicles included in this line item. Fire Chief Plourde stated that this budget item was estimated. Kaleb Jacob, 22 Fraser Drive, asked if there can be an assurance that the Department will seek an adjustment to the line item at the Deliberative Session, if it is determined it could be reduced. Fire Chief Plourde agreed to this, based on calculations.

Regarding Warrant Article 25, Mark Suennen asked about the budget proposed. Jennifer Allocca stated that this includes additional officers' nights/weekends shift coverage.

Regarding the Propane Gas Inspection line in the Building Department budget, Peter Hogan noted that this cost should be passed onto the consumer. Jennifer Allocca stated that she would review this item.

TOWN OF NEW BOSTON
New Boston Select Board

January 17, 2023

APPROVED

In response to a question from Bill McFadden regarding the proposed increase in the Emergency Management Miscellaneous line item, Jennifer Allocca stated that most of this increase comes from the Code Red alert system increase and a generator replacement.

In response to a question from Bill McFadden regarding the Highway Full-time line item increase, Jennifer Allocca stated that this is due to COLA and certain merit increases. Benji Knapp noted that his assistant is also moving from part-time to full-time.

Karen Scott noted that there is a line item which includes \$9,000 of material storage at Tingley storage. This was supposed to be a one-year item and then be removed from the budget. Benji Knapp stated that the Town paid for the rental again this year. He has left this item in the budget until he can make it through a year of the process and get a better sense of what is needed. Karen Scott stated that she does not believe there is any material currently being stored there. She asked why is sand also being budgeted for, if there is indeed still material being stored there. Benji Knapp stated that he will not pay for material that is not needed.

In response to a question from Steve Sears, Benji Knapp stated that he purchases the salt for all of the Town. If another department uses some of the salt, this change is made through the budget. It was noted that this sounds like the taxpayers are paying for the salt twice. The salt is being purchased in total by the Highway Department, but there are additional line items for salt in other department's budget as well. This is a double taking from the taxpayers. Gerry Cornett stated that his department pays back the Highway Department for any salt used, through the budget line items.

Chair Mombourquette explained that the Town also buys diesel/gas through the Highway Department's budget. This can then be used by other departments and expensed. Police Chief Brace explained that the Town has discussed getting bid pricing locked in for certain items, but there is not enough of a gas usage to do so. There was a question as to if each department sits down with the Highway Department to discuss the need and use. Police Chief Brace stated that the cost, based on estimated cost per gallon, is reviewed within each department with the Finance Director. Usage is reviewed in terms of staffing. Benji Knapp explained that the Select Board sets the price of fuel per gallon, based on estimates. Each department then estimates gallons needed based on usage. Mark Suennen agreed that all gas was budgeted at \$4/gallon across all departments.

In response to a question from Steve Sears, Gerry Cornett stated that the Transfer Station pick-up truck is a 10-year-old truck purchased from the federal government for \$27,000. This did not cost taxpayer funds, as it was purchased through the Revolving Fund. The outfit to the truck was also done in-house. He explained that he uses the truck as a savings in manpower to the Department to plow and sand the Transfer Station himself. He gets approximately 13-14 miles/gallon. The existing equipment and vehicle makes the Department completely self-sufficient. Peter Hogan disagreed that this was not purchased with taxpayer dollars.

TOWN OF NEW BOSTON
New Boston Select Board

January 17, 2023

APPROVED

In response to a question from Steve Sears, Gerry Cornett explained that the Town does not pay to get rid of recyclables. The Town receives respectable revenues from the recyclables. The Town pays \$100/ton to get rid of its trash. It was asked, in terms of budgeting, what the net difference is of handling the recyclables versus the net cost of handling trash. There is a net difference in cost to sorting recyclables versus the process for general trash. Gerry Cornett stated that every 20 tons of recycling sent out saves the Town a minimum of \$2,000.

Chair Mombourquette explained that the Town pays \$100/ton to get rid of trash without any staff time, but staffing is needed to sort recyclables. The Town receives money for these recyclables. The question is the net difference between these items. More information on these items will be presented at Deliberative Session.

In response to a question Brad Bingham, Gerry Cornett stated that, on average, he takes the Transfer Station command vehicle home with him three days/week. Brad Bingham asked if the Town has a tax policy as it relates to personal use of vehicles. Chair Mombourquette stated that there is not one. Gerry Cornett stated that he is also on staff to assist other departments, as needed.

In response to a question from Bill McFadden regarding the Municipal Projects/Illegal Dumping line item decrease, Gerry Cornett stated that he believes this may be a typo. He did not include this number in his budget projection. Jennifer Allocca stated that this line item was created to cover the cost of items dumped on roadsides that need to be cleaned up by the Highway Department. She will review this proposed cost with Gerry Cornett.

In response to a question from Steve Sears regarding the Landfill/Ground Monitoring line item, Jennifer Allocca stated that this is handled by the Town Administrator. It is a required contract after the landfill was closed. The budget cost listed for 2022 is incorrect.

Keith Ammon, 174 Byam Road, noted that the overall budget increase is 19%. The higher the increase, the higher the probability that the default budget will be voted in. Jennifer Allocca agreed that this is a potential. The default budget is based upon prior years' budgets, plus/minus required items. This is developed through the same process as the overall budget. Mr. Ammon stated that the default budget should be lower than the proposed budget in most cases. There are some items in which the default is actually higher.

Mark Suennen asked that staff double check the math on Warrant Article 25. He asked that this be ready for the Finance Committee meeting on the 26th. He would also like information regarding the Transfer Station material item previously discussed.

Chair Mombourquette closed the public hearing.

Peter Hogan asked that Car 1 be addressed.

Chair Mombourquette reopened the public hearing. She stated that Car 1 will be reviewed.

January 17, 2023

APPROVED

Item 2: Consent Agenda- The Selectmen reviewed the January 17, 2023 consent agenda.

David Litwinovich moved to approve the January 17, 2023 consent agenda items including payroll, Accounts Payable and other signed official documents. Seconded by Jennifer Brown.

Roll Call Vote: David Litwinovich – aye; Donna Mombourquette – aye; and Jennifer Brown – aye; 3-0-0 motion carried unanimously.

1st PUBLIC COMMENT:

Donna Mombourquette stated that this is a business meeting of the New Boston Select Board. Comments and feedback are welcomed but because this is not a public forum or public hearing, comments will be on the agenda items only. Dialogue or answering of questions will not be part of the meeting. Should you have an issue you wish to discuss, please communicate with the Town Administrator who may resolve your issue or potentially schedule your appearance before the Board at a later date. The Board appreciates your understanding and cooperation.

Mark Suennen asked about the \$1M consent agenda item just approved. Jennifer Allocca stated that this is the school's tax payment, which does not go through the Town's budget. This is reported out at least once a month.

Seeing no additional public comment, Donna Mombourquette closed the first session.

B. APPOINTMENTS

None

C. NEW BUSINESS

None.

D. OLD BUSINESS

Item 3: Approval of Public Meeting Minutes of January 4, 2023 and January 16, 2023

David Litwinovich moved to approve the meeting minutes of January 4, 2023, as presented. Seconded by Jennifer Brown.

Roll Call Vote: David Litwinovich – aye; Donna Mombourquette – aye; and Jennifer Brown – aye; 3-0-0 motion carried unanimously.

E. Internal Reports

Item 4: Town Administrator Report

Town Administrator Branscombe stated that, on January 5th, he participated in a welfare meeting as the Hearing Officer in Weare. On January 10th, he, Jennifer Allocca, and Maralyn Segien met with a representative from Systems Engineering to discuss Managed IT Services. On January 11th, he and Jennifer Allocca met with representatives from Rhombus Systems, regarding a quote

TOWN OF NEW BOSTON
New Boston Select Board

January 17, 2023

APPROVED

for security cameras for the Town Hall. Also, on January 11th, he, Jennifer Allocca, and Maralyn Segien had a visit from Toni Flewelling and Derek Martel from Primex. He noted that Jennifer Allocca gave an excellent presentation on the bond for the proposed Fire Station. She was joined by Tammy Gelinas from the New Hampshire Bond Bank.

Item 5: Health Officer Report

Town Administrator Branscombe stated that, on January 11th, he carried out a foster care inspection at 364 Chestnut Hill Road. Since his last report there have been 13 new COVID-19 cases reported to DHHS. New Boston's total stands at 1,439 over the course of the pandemic.

Item 6: Department Manager Reports: Transfer Station, Recreation, Fire, Highway, Community Development, Police, Building

The Board reviewed these reports.

Item 7: Select Board Reports: Donna Mombourquette, David Litwinovich, Jennifer Brown

The Board reviewed these reports.

2nd PUBLIC COMMENT:

Donna Mombourquette stated that this is a business meeting of the New Boston Select Board. Comments and feedback are welcomed but because this is not a public forum or public hearing, comments will be on the agenda items only. Dialogue or answering of questions will not be part of the meeting. Should you have an issue you wish to discuss, please communicate with the Town Administrator who may resolve your issue or potentially schedule your appearance before the Board at a later date. The Board appreciates your understanding and cooperation.

Seeing no public comment, Donna Mombourquette closed the second session.

H. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Mombourquette moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:51pm. Seconded by David Litwinovich.

Roll Call Vote: David Litwinovich – aye; Donna Mombourquette – aye; and Jennifer Brown – aye; 3-0-0 motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude

Next Scheduled Meeting: January 31, 2023 (6:00 PM)