

TOWN OF NEW BOSTON  
New Boston Select Board Meeting

January 16, 2024

**APPROVED**

In attendance at Whipple Free Library: Donna Mombourquette, William McFadden, Kary Jencks

**A. CALL TO ORDER:** The 2024 budget hearing was called to order by Donna Mombourquette at 6:33PM with a Pledge of Allegiance.

Donna Mombourquette explained that, due to poor weather, the Board will allow for public questions and comments to be emailed throughout the meeting. These will be addressed in real time during the meeting.

**PUBLIC HEARING RE: 2024 Municipal Budget**

The Board reviewed the Select Board Office budget.

Karen Scott, 110 Dane Road, asked about the Mileage line. Donna Mombourquette stated that the per mileage cost has been increased to \$0.67. This leads to approximately 116 miles/month of budget funding. This includes trips to the Post Office, bank, and other locations. It is 1.4 miles to get from Town Hall to the Post Office. Karen Scott stated that \$900 is equivalent to 1,343 miles at \$0.67 per mile. This seems to be a lot per year.

Bill McFadden noted that the actual budget for this item was \$344 last year. Donna Mombourquette explained that there were savings due to reduced staffing and a certain vehicle being used.

Karen Scott asked about the budget line item for Town Office Clerical. Donna Mombourquette stated that, prior to last year, there were two employees. One full time individual left, and the part time person became full time. The default budget for this line is \$142,775 which is based on the 2023 budget. The proposed budget for 2024 is \$93,684.

The Board reviewed the Town Clerk's budget. The bottom line will be reduced by \$10,000 based on a change in the voting machine line item that is not yet approved by the Secretary of State.

The Board reviewed the Financial Management budget.

The Board reviewed the Tax Collector's budget. There is a slight increase in this line item, due to the fact that the current Tax Collector is retiring and has requested additional funding to train a new person for the position.

The Board reviewed the Assessing budget.

The Board reviewed the General Legal budget. There is a recommendation to further reduce this line item by \$11,000. There was discussion regarding the costs of the Eversource settlement suit.

The Board reviewed the Personnel budget.

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The Board reviewed the Planning budget. There was discussion regarding the Health Inspector stipend.

The Board reviewed the Zoning budget.

The Board reviewed the Government Buildings budget. Donna Mombourquette began to review a number of proposed reductions to this line item. Karen Scott noted that the actual budget was not handed out to the public at the start of this meeting. Therefore, it is not possible for the public to review the proposed changes. Donna Mombourquette stated that the document handed out is the same one that was historically published. The reductions proposed total approximately \$10,289.

Regarding a question from Brandon Merron, 118 Dane Road, Donna Mombourquette read each item under the Groundskeeping Government line item.

The Board reviewed the Police Department budget. There was discussion regarding a reduction in gas and diesel fuel costs. Donna Mombourquette stated that there is a proposed reduction of \$5,250 in the Police Fuel line. The Chief also came up with an additional reduction in the budget of \$16,418. The Chief reviewed these changes.

The Board reviewed the Fire Department budget.

The Board reviewed the Building Inspector budget. It was noted that the Town does not currently have a Building Inspector. Kary Jencks noted that additional rounds of interviews will be held within the next few weeks.

The Board reviewed the Emergency Management budget.

The Board reviewed the Forest Fire Department budget.

The Board reviewed the Highway Department budget. Benji Knapp, Road Agent, reviewed a number of proposed reductions of approximately \$51,000.

The Board reviewed the Street Lighting budget. Bill McFadden explained that there has been a significant savings due to a changeover to LED lights.

The Board reviewed the Transfer Station budget.

The Board reviewed the Health and Welfare budget. There was a decision made to move all of these line items to a Warrant Article to allow the public to determine if these donations to local charities will be made. There was discussion regarding the Welfare line item. Karen Scott requested information regarding how many families in Town are serviced by the local charities.

The Board reviewed the Recreation Department budget.

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The Board reviewed the Library budget.

The Board reviewed the Patriotic Purposes budget.

The Board reviewed the Conservation & Energy budgets.

The Board reviewed the Recreation Department budget.

Donna Mombourquette stated that the overall operating budget originally showed a 15% increase over the default budget, but this has been reduced into the 13% range. The Board will likely review and discuss the updated budget at its January 29<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The Board reviewed the proposed Warrant Articles. The Board will vote on its recommendations for these Articles on January 29<sup>th</sup>. Regarding Article 6, for the operating budget, the numbers will be changed to reflect the reductions made.

Regarding Article 8, Bill McFadden stated that the COLA should be reviewed each year by the Board. The language proposed seems to indicate that the increase will be automatic moving forward. Finance Director, Jennifer Allocca stated that this was not the intent.

Regarding Article 28, Bill McFadden stated that he does not believe funding for this should come from the unassigned fund balance. If the voters choose to fund this, funding should come from new taxes. Karen Scott agreed. She expressed concern that this item is similar to the 2023 GIS item. The Town voted against the GIS system in previous years, but funding was found for it in 2023 and now the taxpayers are being asked for a large amount of taxpayer funding in order to keep this project going or else the work toward it will be lost. Similarly, there will be costs associated with this new Finance software that will eventually come through taxation. Staff will not want to move backwards from this software and so it will continue forward. Jennifer Allocca stated that she did not receive any comments from Department Managers against this proposal. She received 3-4 comments from those in favor.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Donna Mombourquette moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:47pm. Seconded by Bill McFadden.**

**Roll Call Vote: Kary Jencks – aye; Donna Mombourquette – aye; and William McFadden – aye; 3-0-0 motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Kristan Patenaude

**Next Scheduled Meeting: January 29, 2024**