

**Board of Selectmen  
Special Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, March 17, 2022  
Preston Town Hall - Lower Level**

**1. Call to Order**

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M.

**2. Roll Call**

***Members***

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier  
Jerry Grabarek  
Ken Zachem

***Also Present***

Kimberly Lang, Recorder

**3. New Business**

**a. Budget FY 2022-3**

The Board reviewed the draft of their proposed budget discussing various items. After considering the inflation rate, the past 2 years' minimal increases, and Social Security and COLA increase; they unanimously agreed on a 4% salary increase. It was briefly discussed that going forward they would like to see a pay scale and performance evaluation to justify salary increases. They felt that this process would be more fair and equitable to the town employees.

Health and Dental care are calculated at an 8% increase, but it hasn't been finalized yet. Last year they were given a higher expected increase and later in the Budget Season the increase rate was dropped, it is hoped that the same scenario will occur this year, but the town needs to budget for the 8%.

There is a significant saving with the newly appointed State Troopers.

CIRMA has a 5% cap increase for the next three years.

It was discussed to use ARPA funds instead of placing certain items in the budget. The ARPA funds would be used because of their immediate need or they are a non-recurring expense.

It was decided to budget \$5,000 for Personal Property Tax Audit because it could generate as much as \$135,000 in revenue for the town.

It was decided not to increase the Town Planners' hours at this time. Then the Zoning Enforcement Officer was discussed and it was suggested to move this position to SCCOG. SCCOG

would pay for benefits and that would help the town. Also, Preston would need a person for about 8 ½ hours, it is hoped that SCCOG can find a person that could cover Preston's needs.

It was pointed out that the Library pays their Health and Dental separately.

It was stated that multiple items were moved within the budget, they have been noted and highlighted; it was felt the moves were necessary to reflex spending more appropriately.

After reviewing the Budget draft, noting the changes and areas to finalize, the Board looked over the numbers. If the draft were presented as is, there would be an 8.7% increase over last year. With current inflation rates, and cost and services increases, the increase in the budget is unavoidable. It was further discussed that if the Park & Rec mower for \$19,000; Library repairs for \$11,050; and Highway Garage trailer for \$8,500 a total of \$48,550 were paid with ARPA funds that would help reduce the budget. Parks & Rec's request of \$10,000 for their Summer Program could come out of Non-Recurring Fund further reducing the budget. It was also suggested that for the Fire Department truck, to budget \$30,000 this year and \$30,000 next year to cover that cost.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier reviewed data received from the Library regarding the increase in circulation and Library use since subscribing to LIONS, Interlibrary Online Consortium. The circulation in Nov. 2021 was 453, and then in December, which was when the Library switched to LIONS, circulation went up to 917. In Jan. circulation was 937 and in Feb. it was over 1,200.

The Board has not received the requested data from Park & Rec. The requested data was a comparison of fees with other area towns, program analysis, and a list of fundraisers.

There were concerns that with the cost of oil and gas continuing to rise that those line items don't have enough funds in them.

It was questioned whether the additional firefighter should be listed in the budget. The answer was no. It will be phased in so it does not have to be included in this year's budget. The first year ARPA pays 100%, the second 75%, the third 50%, and the fourth year 0%; so the cost is phased in over a 4 year period.

On the bright side, the Grand List has increased by 4%, and perhaps SCCOG through its consortium could be helpful in securing fuel for the town.

#### **b. Future Dates**

It was decided that the next meeting would be Thursday, March 24, 2022, at 7:00 P.M the BoS Regular Meeting.

**4. Public Comment** - No public

**5. Adjournment**

*Ken Zchem motioned to adjourn at 6:55 P.M... Jerry Garbarek seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

*Kimberly Lang*

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