

# Pownal Budget Committee

## March 22, 2022 Public Proceeding Minutes Approved

### Members Present:

Bo Chesney, Gennifer Giuliano, John Green, Brian Stornelli, Andy Wyatt

### Guests:

Andy O'Brien of the Select Board, Town Administrator Becky Taylor-Chase, Road Commissioner Dick Clarke, Residents Marcia Bowen and Paul Schumann

1. A quorum was established (all committee members present). The meeting was called to order by Chairman Green at 6:32PM.
2. Mr. Wyatt had provided draft minutes of the March 8, 2022 meeting. A dollar figure was corrected (\$160,000 from ARPA funds). Mr. Chesney moved to approve them as amended. Mr. Green seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
3. In the Public Comment period Mr. Schumann was invited to speak. He had comments about the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Schumann noted that the 2006 Comprehensive Plan recommended replacement of the Central Fire Station on Elmwood Road. A more recently completed Needs Assessment delivered the same recommendation. And, once again, the 2021 Comprehensive Plan recommends replacement of the Central Fire Station on Elmwood Road. He commented that "As a Town we don't do much with our comprehensive plans." Chairman Green voiced agreement with Mr. Schumann and thanked him for his comments. Mr. Chesney noted that the Planning Board *had* paid attention to the previous comprehensive plan.
4. In the Town Officials Comment period Ms. Taylor-Chase answered a question from this committee's previous meeting that it is the Budget Committee that oversees Select Board stipends.
5. Chairman Green provided a table of 'Pownal Financial Issues' and led a discussion of them. The issues included questions like:
  - i. Which body has the authority to allocate surplus (aka Undesignated Fund balance)?
  - ii. Should we better manage surplus to maintain it at the MMA-recommended ratio?
  - iii. Should we do better at estimating revenues (e.g. excise)?
  - iv. Should we use the services of a consultant to review property valuations of utility properties in town?

Mr. Stornelli asked Mr. Green if he could continue providing the budget comparison sheet that we used last year as we did find that to be a useful view.

Mr. Chesney reported that the Mallett Hall Building and Grounds committee does not expect to do any exterior painting next year. That committee intends to re-paint one side at a time, but not necessarily every year.

6. Road Commissioner Clarke led the committee through a review of the proposed Public Works budget. Notable changes in the FY 2023 budget include:
  - i. Fuel (diesel and gas) with a \$13,200 increase
  - ii. Electricity, propane and natural gas for the facilities with a \$3,200 increase.
  - iii. Fleet Maintenance with a \$8,150 increase.

Mr. Clarke's proposed budget represents a 9.6% increase over current year, without including the Compensation lines.

Mr. Clarke also requested an increased amount for tires, stating that use of studded tires on the plow trucks can improve handling and safety with the types of storms that have been occurring lately. Mr. Chesney asked whether or not there are other things related to climate change that we should consider when determining funding.

Ms. Taylor-Chase presented the compensation portion of the Public Works budget. Two versions of the spreadsheet were provided. Each included a breakout of compensation by employee. One included the addition of a part-time position funded at \$21,900, to provide more capacity for the public works projects and to enable the team to have a 'relief driver' during long-running winter storms. Creation of the part-time position is expected to reduce overtime expense. The addition of the part-time employee creates modest increases on other employment-related costs such as Medicare, FICA and ICMA (pension).

The compensation discussion also included funding of on-call pay at \$3,900. This provides \$150 per week for the November 1 to April 30 period to compensate the on-call employee for the burden of being always available to respond to Public Works needs.

7. Mr. Schumann and Mr. Wyatt led the committee through a discussion of the Capital Improvement Plan, which provides a schedule of replacement/refresh of Town assets over time. For next year, the CIP committee requests an appropriation of \$154,000, an increase of \$2,000 over current year.

Additionally, the CIP committee has requested that the Select Board include an article on the Town Meeting warrant to transfer a sum of money from the Undesignated Fund balance to the Capital Reserve Fund. (The balance of the Undesignated Fund is substantially higher than the Maine Municipal Association recommendation of 22% of the budget.) This would enable a reduction in the 'regular' appropriation projected over the next five years as well as resolve several factors that have created an anticipated 'thin spot' in the Capital Reserve account in FY 2027/2028:

- i. A \$60,000 inflation of costs for assets due for near-term replacement.
- ii. The \$1 appropriation in FY 2020/2021 done as part of a 'pull back' response to the COVID-19 problem.
- iii. The recent acquisition of the Public Works wheel loader, which had not been part of the long-term plan, but which had been justified by a cost/benefit analysis.

The CIP committee would request that the funds-transfer article precede the regular appropriation article so that the appropriation request could be adjusted accordingly. The CIP committee's discussion of the funds transfer had been centered around a \$150,000 transfer.

Mr. Stornelli provoked thought for the CIP members when he asked what sum of money would we need to reduce the capital appropriation to, say, \$140,000. The CIP committee members present were not prepared to answer that, but will give that more consideration.

8. The next meeting of this committee will be on April 5, 2022 at 6:30 PM. The budget proposals for Public Safety, Cemeteries and Pownal Center Water Association will be reviewed.
9. Mr. Green made a motion for adjournment. Mr. Chesney seconded. The motion passed with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Andy Wyatt