Town of Rutland
Finance Committee
Minutes: February 20, 2020
Meeting Opened: 7:06 P.M.

Attendance:
Board Members Present: Iain McKinlay, Edward Purcell, Dave Lussier, Carol Martens, Karen Nahrwold, Peter O'Malley, Thomas Ruchala
Board Members Absent: None
Staff Members Present: Mike Nicholson (Town Administrator), Tomeca Murphy (Secretary)
Guests: Joe Buckley, Nancy Nichols

**Please note the meeting was recorded live for broadcast on Rutland Community TV and YouTube.**

Votes:
Motion to approve the meeting minutes of February 13, 2020—Motion made by Karen Nahrwold, seconded by Carol Martens; vote unanimous at 7:06 P.M.

Motion to close the meeting—Motion made by Ted Purcell, seconded by Karen Nahrwold; vote unanimous at 8:33 P.M.

New Business

FY21 Department Budget Review

Council on Aging

Nancy Nichols, Director of the Council on Aging, presented the budget for the current town population for FY21. As it stands right now, the Director’s position and one outreach worker total just shy of the hours of a full time employee. Nancy asked for an increase to add 2 hours/week for each of them because they often end up going over the budgeted hours while trying to help senior residents. She also asked for a $1,620 increase in Purchased Services due to the ending of the button battery recycling program which provided some income for the COA. Also the MCOA yearly dues will be increasing slightly. The COA is offering more programs and servicing more seniors in town. Carol Martens asked if the biggest use of extra hours is time spent on the phone and Nancy said it’s that and also walk-ins and time spent following up with seniors since they serve as a resource center for the community. Carol also asked if seniors are aware of the offerings in town. Nancy said they make their best efforts via monthly mailings to all seniors age 60 years and older (approximately 1,700 residents). There is also a FRIEND group offered for a $10/month membership fee. Peter O’Malley asked if there was an opportunity to survey seniors in town to gauge their interests, but Nancy said only a handful ever come back. She suggested one option would be to include it with the census to increase chances that it would get returned. Mike Nicholson shared that when Secretary Chen from the Office of Elder Affairs visited, she put Nancy in touch with a COA in the western part of the state who are partnering with the YMCA to execute their exercise programs. They also offer regional programs, which may help draw in more seniors as well. Ted Purcell asked how many people can be served before the budget would need to increase, to which Nancy answered that it’s already at that point. However, it still works due to the tremendous volunteers and support from the community. Also, the site manager who handles the meal distribution, is paid through Elder Services. Peter
asked if the COA will reach a point where services can't be rendered due to the number of people. Nancy replied that with about 1,700 seniors in town, it would impossible to serve them all. However, there are far more seniors who don't participate than those who do. Carol praised the work of the COA and emphasized the importance of compensating Nancy for her time and efforts.

Department of Public Works, Water & Sewer

DPW Director, Joe Buckley, presented the budget for FY21. He and Mike Nicholson weren't able to share any updates on the Water & Sewer budget yet because negotiations are still ongoing with the DCR. This year, Joe completely re-structured the budget in an effort to put specific line items in the categories that make the most sense. Karen Nahrwold did point out that 3-5 years of historical data is standard practice when presenting the budget and it wasn't included in Joe's presentation. However, Joe said he did have this information and could get it to the Committee following the meeting. Joe also provided the Committee with a memo prior to the meeting discussing some of the changes and the board had no questions on the memo. The budget presented was for the current population, as Joe noted that reaching a population of 10,000 would primarily affect capital improvements. It was also shared that the department is currently down by 4 employees, working with 15 staff members for everything. Peter O'Malley raised a concern about an increasing population and the demand that would create on town services. Joe clarified that technically the metric is not population driven—it's based on the miles of road and how quickly structures fail. Iain McKinlay also reiterated that these budgets only serve a partial need, as it's not possible to fulfill all of the town's needs and that's been the case for many years. Additional points made were that the snow removal machinery is an older fleet, so equipment repair is an important line item. Even with this being a lighter winter for snow totals, the town has already gone over the snow and ice budget (the only area where DPW can deficit spend). For example, the icy weather on February 18th cost $8,000 for salt/sanding (done twice during the storm). The shed can only hold enough salt/sand mix to make 3 runs in town and then more needs to be purchased.

Public Building Maintenance: Joe made some adjustments, but rarely more than a 1% increase. There are 2 full time staffers who clean the town buildings and one staffer gives ¼ of his time for repairs. This year, Joe included wages in the budget for specific line items/departments. The increase in wages are mostly union contracts and benefits.

Public Safety: The supplies for the Public Safety building include fuel, electricity and supplies needed (toilet paper, soap, etc.) Joe added that he could provide the board with a list of purchased services for this specific area.

Highway Administrator: The increases weren't significant and Joe further broke it down into more specific line items. Carol asked about the “OT and Stand By” line item and why new staff hasn't been hired instead. Joe clarified that most of the OT goes to snow services and would still happen even when fully staffed. David Lussier asked if Joe was aware of anyone else planning to leave the department and Joe said no. The plan is to hire additional water & sewer staff because there is currently no one working full time in that department. Peter raised a concern that the public at Town Meeting may get confused with the current format and it was clarified that it will be presented as a total number/percentage (increase or decrease) to the public. Joe would also like to hire a part time summer employee to help with the mowing. Right now from April through November, one employee is dedicated to only mowing, which isn't the best use of his time as a skilled laborer.

Highway Construction & Maintenance: There was a slight increase, mostly for materials such as gravel. Joe would also like to hire an engineering student intern to help with EPA compliance for Stormwater management. Joe noted that Stormwater management is an unfunded mandate and the town has until June 30, 2020 to get in compliance with current requirements. On a related note, Carol asked if there is any responsibility on the town for people who have a failed or improperly working septic system. Joe said they would only know if someone were to complain, but even then it would be an issue for the Board of Health because the town doesn't deal with private systems. Tom Ruchala stated that in recent history, money was spent on studying the sewers and he asked if there were any updates. Joe said that most of the issues have been followed up on, with
only a few outstanding repairs. He also stated that inflow and infiltration are the #1 priority.

**Snow & Ice Control:** Historically, only sand and salt have fallen under this category, but Joe added more specific line items this year. The $20,000 budget for fuel is now under this one and OT wages were added here because most are accrued during snow related work.

**Street Lights:** This budget decreased and updates to the town’s lights should be completed by July. All of them are being changed over to LED bulbs and the town did not have to pay for it. We only had to accommodate the installer’s schedule and National Grid will service them.

**Town Garage:** There was a minimal increase, mostly for fuel.

**Machinery & Maintenance:** There are 2 full time employees and half of their time is spent on snow related work. There’s a minimal increase as some has been moved to the snow budget.

**Town Vehicle Fuel:** This is fuel for all vehicles, including police & fire. $10,000 was moved to the snow and ice budget, leaving $75,000 for the town vehicles.

**Waste Disposal:** This increased mostly due to cleaning debris at and around the DPW facility. They already filled 2 commercial containers and expect to fill at least 1 more.

**Forestry:** Most of this budget is for wages. The town shares a forestry truck with 5 other towns. Also included is $2,000 for emergency tree removal by an outside company when the work exceeds the ability of the DPW staff.

**Parks & Fields:** Joe is seeking to hire a part time employee for 2-3 months/year to mow the grass on the town common, sports fields, schools, etc. Money is also in there for replacement of mower blades, which is needed often.

Karen asked if any repairs have been done at the playground at Memorial Field. Joe shared that a couple of swings have been replaced and plexi glass on one of the structures was replaced after being broken. Mike Nicholson added that there was an insurance claim taken against the town when a child injured themselves on the broken plexi glass.

**Other**

Tom Ruchala asked if there were any updates on the TIPS (Transportation Implementation Plan) project. Joe said it’s scheduled for FY22, but the state is in control of the timeline. The town has done everything that they can at this point, including the engineering work. They did ask for a piece of water main for Pommogussett Rd. to be added to the project. The town would have to pay for the water main, but not for the repair of the road.

Tom also asked about a discussion had with the previous DPW director regarding the sidewalks on Maple Ave. He had been told they’d be repaired long before now. Joe shared that the previous director had tried to do it with Complete Street funding, but was unsuccessful. Efforts are being made, but there just isn't any money for it right now.

Joe added that they are working on creating a list of all streets in town and areas in need of repair, but it's still a work in progress.

Dave Lussier inquired about the discussion at the previous meeting about amending the FinComm bylaw. Iain stated that any changes will come back to the board for approval before it will be presented at Town Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tomeca Murphy, Secretary