

**Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting
Budget Workshop
Wednesday, February 15, 2023
Preston Plains Middle School Cafeteria**

Call to Order - Sandra Allyn-Gauthier called the meeting to order at 5:36 P.M.

1. Roll Call

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier

Jerry Grabarek

Ken Zachem - arrived at 5:40 P.M.

Also Present

Cindy Varricchio - Financial Director

Kimberly Lang - Recording Secretary

Members of the Public - 1

2. Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes

- February 8, 2023 - Special Meeting Budget Workshop Minutes

Jerry Grabarek motioned to approve Special Meeting Budget Workshop Minutes of February 8, 2023 as presented. Sandra Allyn-Gauthier seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

- February 8, 2023 - Regular Meeting Minutes

The following corrections were noted:

- The motion at the bottom of pages 1 and 2 need to be eliminated.
- The motion at the bottom of page 3 needs to be moved to page 4 after the first two lines.

Jerry Grabarek motioned to approve Regular Meeting Minutes of February 8, 2023 as amended. Sandra Allyn-Gauthier seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

3. Correspondence - None

4. Reports - None

5. Appointments and/or Resignations - None

6. New Business

a. State/Federal Bridge Program Update

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier shared the letter to Bartholomew P. Sweeney, P.E. stating that the Town is prepared to move forward with the Parks Road over Broad Brook and Cooktown Road over Unnamed Brook bridge projects. She explained that once this letter is received the subsequent steps include press releases, notification to appropriate legislators, informing the abutters, with several other steps leading up to Public Hearings for each project.

Ken Zachem motioned to approve Sandra Allyn-Gauthier, First Selectperson, to sign the presented letters to Bartholomew P. Sweeney, P.E. on behalf of the Town of Preston. Jerry Grabarek seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

b. Agricultural Forum

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier shared the draft flier for the upcoming *Agricultural Forum* to be held Saturday, March 11, 2023 from 10-12 at the Ekonk Community Grange in Sterling. She shared that a variety of agencies will have representation as well as several key legislators or their representatives. It is hoped that farmers and wineries will have ample time for networking before and after the Forum which will present information on funding and grant opportunities, subsidies for rising costs of material fees, and a chance for agricultural workers to share ideas and concerns with local and state representatives and agencies.

c. 2023 - 2024 Budgets for:

1. Preliminary State Revenues from CCM

Ms. Allyn-Gauthier shared the proposed Governor's FY 2024 State Budget with the Board. She pointed out that it stayed flat in most areas, however the Town can expect a \$96,897 cut in the ECS. It was added that all the towns in the eastern part of the state saw reductions in their ECS. And she reminded the Board that as they plan the budget the Municipal Revenue Sharing can't be part of the budget even though the Town received over \$90,000 this year from MRS.

2. Inflation and other relevant Statistical Data

It was stated that even though inflation has slowed in recent months the energy costs have increased by 23%. Several rates of inflation were shared, the highest being food at 10.4%. It was shared that salary data is still being compiled. And while these are areas of concern that after careful research and negotiation the Town has locked in diesel at \$3.1166, gasoline at \$2.8674, and heating oil at \$3.0509 for the next fiscal year. With prices locked in and based on this year's consumption; those budget items can be calculated more accurately for FY 2023-2024 Budget. It was noted that electricity could not be locked in at this point in time.

3. Public Works

The Public Works narrative and budget were reviewed by the Board, there was a question of looking into the Town's propane use. It was noted that the volume of use may not be enough to make changes at this time.

The Transfer Station budget was reviewed separately. New information was added during the discussion noting that the electricity line item was not increased by 20% as it should have been correcting that Line Item to \$6,600. There was a short discussion on the increased hauling and tipping fees, as well as Castella's 2.9% increase. It was mentioned that with the possible addition of Blue Earth to the Transfer Station, that could help reduce the impact of the increases the Town is seeing in the waste management area.

4. Fire/EMS

Upon reviewing this budget it was mentioned that by breaking apart the two jobs that the Chief Wucik does into the Fire Chief and the Emergency Medical Director (EMD) that there is a possibility of obtaining a \$10,000 grant to help cover the cost of the salary. A designated Line Item for EMD is required for the grant. It was stated that after a discussion with the Fire Chief he feels that about 80% of his time is Fire Chief and 20% of his time is devoted to EMD. This will be looked at further when salaries are discussed.

The Board was informed of a possible \$6,000 savings with CIRMA, but that has not yet been solidified.

It was also noted that the dispatch service has stayed flat at \$25,000 for 12 years and that they are asking for an increase. They wanted to increase the cost to \$40,000; after some negotiation it was settled that they would receive \$32,500 for the next 4 years.

5. Parks and Recreation

It was noted that they are requesting additional seasonal working hours due to more park usage with the mild-winter weather. Other than staff request increases this budget only saw a \$2,000 increase.

6. Resident State Trooper

It was noted that the Town is waiting for the projection from the State for benefits package because they are still in negotiation with the State Police Union. The salaries are set at a 2 ½ % increase. Looking at what was budgeted last year and the information known at this time, the State Troopers' budget is looking at a savings of roughly \$13,000.

7. Public Health Administration

This budget includes Uncas Health District, which provides technical and professional services. They calculate the Town's cost per capita which comes to \$34,863. UCFS which

provides dental, medical, behavioral, the food pantry for seniors, as well as other services requested \$38,703, which will be budgeted.

8. Legal Services

After reviewing and discussing the needs of various Boards and Commissions, and the Norwich Probate increase of \$500; the Board of Selectmen decided to increase the Legal Services Line to \$47,500.

9. Follow up and discussion

The following items from the last Budget Workshop were noted:

- Registrar of Voters have been told the Early Voting may not be implemented until 2025 so for now no amount will be entered for that cost.
- Still waiting for the IPS training costs from Kathy Warzecha.
- Amos Lake Association request of \$5,000 was reviewed and it was decided that the Board would like a breakdown of how the \$5,000 would be spent.

7. Old Business - None

8. Tax Refund - None

9. Public Comment and Questions

Andy Depta, 6 Young Court, had two questions for the Board. The first was the recording and reporting of the fees the Parks and Recreation Department collects during the course of the year. It was answered that the fees are not rolled into the budget and that at present they have their own books and account. The Town is working towards having all departments using one financial software program for more transparency.

Mr. Depta's other question was regarding the actual hours the two State Troopers work. The hours each work was explained, and it was agreed that a printed out report could be provided.

10. Adjournment

Ken Zachem motioned to adjourn at 6:44 P.M.. Jerry Grabarek seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Lang

Recording Secretary

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PRESTON, CT.

2023 FEB 16 A 11: 50

J. Keitch
PRESTON TOWN CLERK

BoS Feb.15, 2023 Budget Workshop Motions

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2023 FEB 16 A 11:50

Jill Keith
PRESTON TOWN CLERK