

**Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS District  
Joint Public Hearing  
Budget Committee and Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes of February 8, 2021**

**Commissioners Present:** Paul Auger, Jon Cilley, Eric Pyra

**Budget Committee Present:** Katherine Dawson, Jane Alden, Scott Lewandowski, Jason Wright, Kevin Waldron, Charles Broughton via remotely

**Also Present:** Chief Michael Sitar, Kathryn Tobine, Stephanie Giovannucci, Paul Blaisdell

Commissioner Paul Auger opened the public hearing of the proposed 2021 budget and warrant at 6:03pm at the Park Street Fire Station, Northfield.

Katherine Dawson, Chair of the Budget Committee opened the floor for discussion about the 2021 proposed budget at 6:04pm.

Paul Blaisdell asked if there are any major changes to the budget. Jason Wright stated that the grant they are receiving for personnel is going to pay for a majority of the four new crew members, but will not cover overtime, benefits above allowable average, turnout gear, etc.

Jane Alden added that the Opticom system was negotiated with the State to reduce the cost.

Mr. Wright added that the bathroom with shower at the Park St station was raised but not spent, this year it's in the budget again, however more expensive.

Mr. Blaisdell what is going to be a hot topic at the district meeting that is not being discussed tonight. Ms. Alden stated the Fire Hydrant warrant article, which was in the budget, but the Budget Committee chose not to fund it, so the Commissioners put it in as a warrant article. The Budget committee discussed purchasing a tanker.

Ms. Dawson stated that the Budget Committee will keep the Public Hearing open until 6:30pm incase someone shows up or joins remotely.

Commissioner Paul Auger opens the Public Hearing to discuss the 2021 proposed warrant articles at 6:15pm.

Commissioner Jon Cilley read through each article.

**Article 1 – Choose Fire Commissioner**

No corrections, comments or questions

**Article 2 – Choose Treasurer**

Change term from 2 years to 3 years, no comments or questions

**Article 3 – Choose Clerk**

Change term from 2 years to 3 years, no comments or questions

**Article 4 – Accept Treasurers Report**

No corrections, comments or questions

**Article 5 – Add to Land & Building Fund**

Correct article to state that funding comes from Unassigned Fund Balance, and add this article will not affect the tax rate.

**Article 6 – Design, Engineering & Architectural Fees**

No corrections, comments or questions

Kevin Waldron asked when the total of the unassigned fund balance will be available. Chief Sitar stated that once the audit is complete. Mr. Blaisdell asked how do we know we are not over

spending. Chief Sitar added that they have an idea of about how much is in the fund. Mr. Wright asked that Commissioners if they have ever utilized the Unassigned Fund Balance to lower the tax rate. Mr. Waldron stated that the Commissioners have never done that.

**Article 7 – Land Purchase**

Mr. Wright asked about the size of the property and how was the price come to be. Chief Sitar stated that the property is about 1/3 of an acre, and the price came from the state after they came up with an assessed value.

**Article 8 – Fire Prevention ETF**

No corrections, comments or questions

**Article 9 – Fire Prevention Budget**

No corrections, comments or questions

**Article 10 – Health Insurance Deductible EFT**

No corrections, comments or questions

**Article 11 – Communications Tower ETF**

Change Unreserved Fund Balance to Unassigned Fund Balance

No corrections, comments or questions

**Article 12 – Establish Contingency Fund**

No corrections, comments or questions

**Article 13 – Pressurized Hydrants**

Mr. Waldron stated that the Commissioners do not need permission to enter into a contract, he added that he objects to the wording of this as it says it's necessary for fire suppression and that this is a warrant article, but the hiring of personnel is not and that we should be looking at other sources for water. Mr. Cilley disagrees stating that pressurized hydrants are necessary.

Kathy Tobine stated that the contract was approved five years ago as a warrant article for a five-year contract. It has now expired.

Scott Lewandowski asked for justification on the price. Mr. Cilley stated that the price has not changed form five years ago. The Water District did not want us to use the hydrants for training, however they Fire Department needs realistic training whenever possible.

Mr. Blaisdell asked for clarification on the escape clause. Mr. Cilley stated that without the approved vote at district meeting they are not locked into the contract. In addition, if the voters refuse to fund the line item in the budget in any of the following years, they are not locked into paying and the contract will be null and void.

Mr. Waldron asked if this article fails at the meeting will the Commissioners sign the contract anyways. Mr. Cilley replied that there's no money in the budget to utilize towards this.

Mr. Waldron recommends paying by usage.

Chief Sitar stated that he does not recommend purchasing a tanker as they do not have enough manpower to run it or a place to store it.

**Article 14 – Apparatus & Equipment Fund**

Mr. Blaisdell asked for a breakdown of spending. Chief Sitar stated safety equipment, traffic vests, tools, turnout gear, hoses, meters, pagers, EMS disposables, etc.

**Article 15 – New Fire Engine**

Mr. Blaisdell asked for a balance in the fund. Chief Sitar stated that there is just about \$800,000 in the trust fund

Mr. Wright asked if we could receive a price match with last years prices from the manufacturer. Chief Sitar stated that this year we have a trade in, and we ordered the truck before the price increased.

**Article 16 – New Ambulance**

Correct written dollar amount

**Article 17 – Operating Budget**

No corrections, comments or questions

Katherine Dawson closed the public comment session for the proposed budget at 7:10pm

**Cilley/Pyra** moved to accept Warrant Articles 1-18 as corrected. **Motion Passed by unanimous vote.**

**Dawson/Alden** moved to accept the final Budget Committee approved budget in the amount of \$2,589,216.00. **Motion Passed.** Dawson-Yes, Alden-Yes, Wright-No, Waldron-No, Lewandowski-Yes, Broughton-Yes

There being no other business meeting Public Hearing adjourned at 7:20pm.

Chief Sitar presented the Commissioners with a request to roll over vacation time as he could not utilize his time due to COVID. Commissioners unanimously agreed to wait until the next meeting, so they had time to look over the policy.

There being no further business meeting adjourned 7:22pm.