

Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS Budget Committee Meeting

Meeting Called By: Budget Committee

Date, Time: 1/13/2022, 5:00 PM

Transcribed By: Beth Joslin

Location: Tilton Town Hall
Downstairs Meeting Room
257 Main Street
Tilton NH

Call to Order

Katherine called the meeting to order at 5:10 PM.

Attendance

Commissioner Eric Pyra, Charles Broughton, Katherine Dawson, Kevin Waldron, Scott Lewandowski, and Administrative Assistant Kathy Tobine

Meeting Minutes

December 22, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Charlie made a motion to accept the minutes of December 22, 2021 as written. Kevin seconded the motion. There being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed.

Warrant Articles

Article 05) Add to Land & Building Fund

To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00) to be added to the Land & Building Capital Reserve Fund previously established.

Katherine asked how much was in that fund. Kathy replied that at the end of summer there was \$555,279.22. Katherine asked Kevin what plans and conclusions the building committee has achieved. Kevin gave a brief summary including building a station in Northfield, the meeting with Alan Clark of REI, and contractor proposals for design build. Katherine had questions regarding what the fund could be used for and requested that they wait for Commissioner Pyra to arrive before continuing with the article. The committee agreed.

Article 06) Fire Prevention ETF

To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Nine Thousand Six Hundred Twenty-Seven Dollars (\$9,627.00) for the purpose of adding to the existing Fire Prevention Expendable Trust Fund with said funds to be withdrawn from the Unassigned Fund Balance. Funds appropriated from this fund do not affect the tax rate.

Kathy noted that this is money that was raised in fees for various permits that involve someone going out to inspect. Katherine asked what the money is used for. Kathy replied that it is used for the smoke detector program, the fire prevention trailer, kids' programs, and training crew members to perform inspections. Kevin asked why fire prevention has its own budget. Kathy replied that it was set up to help defer costs from taxation. She also noted that eventually the fire prevention trailer will need to be replaced and that will come from this fund.

Kevin made a motion to recommend Article 6. Charlie seconded the motion. Being no further discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed.

Article 07) Fire Prevention Budget

To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Four Thousand Four Hundred Eighty-Eight Dollars (\$4,488.00) for the purpose of purchasing materials, tools, and equipment

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related to public education, code enforcement, training, etc. with said funds to be withdrawn from the Fire Prevention Expendable Trust Fund. Funds appropriated from this fund do not affect the tax rate.

Kevin makes a motion to recommend Article 7. Scott seconded the motion. Being no further discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed.

Article 08) Health Insurance Deductible ETF

To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two Thousand Eight Hundred Thirty-Six Dollars (\$2,836.00) for the purpose of adding to the existing health insurance deductible expendable trust fund with said funds to be withdrawn from the Unassigned Fund Balance. Funds appropriated from this fund do not affect the tax rate.

Kevin asked what the balance of the Unassigned Fund was. Kathy replied that at the end of last year it was \$623,117 but noted that that amount was prior to any monies deducted at district meeting. Katherine asked what the fund was for. Kathy replied that it reimburses employees health insurance deductibles and noted that they keep \$5,500 in it and this amount is to replenish the account.

Scott made a motion to recommend Article 8. Charlie seconded the motion. Being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed.

Article 09) Communications Tower ETF

To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) for the purpose of adding to the existing Communications Tower Expendable Trust Fund with said funds to be withdrawn from the Unassigned Fund Balance. Funds appropriated from this fund do not affect the tax rate.

Kathy noted that in 2021 they received a payment for \$5,000 and the warrant article last year was worded to split the monies earned between the trust fund and the budget. Kevin asked how money is to be spent from the fund. Kathy replied that it is to help offset costs related to repairs, maintenance, construction, radio infrastructure, etc. Katherine asked if it was for the Shedd Road tower. Kathy replied that it was the tower at Park Street. Katherine asked why it couldn't be used for the Shedd Road as well as it was not specified in the warrant article for a specific location. Kathy replied that yes it could be used for either tower as it is for radio infrastructure. Katherine commented that she would have liked to see the full \$5,000 go into that fund.

Charlie made a motion to recommend Article 9. Scott seconded the motion. Being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed.

Article 10) Dry Hydrant/Cistern ETF

To see if the District will vote to establish a Dry Hydrant/Cistern Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 31:19-a, expenditures from this fund will be used for the design, engineering, purchasing of materials, installation, and any fees or permits required to install dry hydrants and cisterns within the District and to raise and appropriate One Dollar (\$1.00) to put in the fund, with this amount to come from Unassigned Fund Balance; further to name the Board of Commissioners as agents to expend from said fund. Future funding will come from warrant articles at annual district meetings.

Scott asked if they could wait till Commissioner Pyra arrived to discuss Articles 10 and 11 because he had questions. The committee agreed to wait for Commissioner Pyra's arrival.

Article 11) Add to Dry Hydrant/Cistern ETF

The committee agreed to wait for Commissioner Pyra's arrival to discuss Article 11.

Article 12) Establish Contingency Fund

To see if the District will vote to establish a contingency fund per RSA 31:98-a and raise and appropriate Twenty-Nine Thousand Four Hundred Four Dollars (\$29,404.00) to put in the fund. This sum to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance. Any appropriation left in the fund at the

end of the year will lapse to the general fund. Funds appropriated from this fund do not affect the tax rate.

Kevin asked if the Contingency Fund was voted down last year. Kathy replied that she believed that it passed but would check. Kevin commented that he believed that it had been voted down at some point. Kathy commented that with this they can access money without going to DRA, they just need to have a meeting and a purpose/reason. For example, with needing to replace the furnace this past year they would have had to use the contingency fund had the chief not cut back on training and other spending to cover the cost. Kevin commented that he would prefer the process of going to DRA over having a Contingency Fund. Katherine commented that she wished training wasn't cut, that money was there to be used.

Kevin asked if there was a trigger that caused the Contingency fund to be created. Kathy replied that there was a time several years ago that they had to go to DRA to over spend the budget. Scott asked if the money is returned to the Unassigned Fund Balance if not spent? Kathy replied that it was. Discussion ensued regarding DRA approval vs Contingency.

Kevin made a motion to not recommend Article 12. Katherine seconded the motion for discussion. Charlie asked if there would need a to be a public hearing to petition DRA. Kathy replied there would not and outlined the process. Scott asked if the fund has ever been used. Kathy replied that it has not. Scott asked if it is not approved, could some of the funds be used for offsetting taxes or would the money remain in the unassigned fund balance. Katherine commented that the Commissioners could use money from the unreserved fund to offset taxes. Charlie asked if it was a percentage of something. Kathy replied that it is a percentage of the prior year's Budget. Being no further discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed, three to one.

Article 13) Pressurized Hydrants

The committee agreed to wait for Commissioner Pyra's arrival to discuss Article 13.

Article 14) Apparatus & Equipment Fund Budget

To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate One Hundred Sixty-Two Thousand Six Hundred Three Dollars (\$162,603.00) for the purpose of purchasing Fire, Rescue, EMS Equipment and Ambulance Charges, with said funds to be withdrawn from the Apparatus and Equipment Special Revenue Fund established under RSA 31:95-C (Adopted March 7, 2005). Funds appropriated from this fund do not affect the tax rate.

Scott made a motion to approve Article 14. Charlie seconded the motion. Being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed, three to one.

Article 15) New Car 3

To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifty-Three Thousand Nine Hundred Eighty-Four Dollars (\$53,984.00) for the purpose of purchasing a current model year Ford Expedition to be used by the deputy chief with said funds to be withdrawn from the Apparatus and Equipment Special Revenue Fund established under RSA 31:95-C (Adopted March 7, 2005). Funds appropriated from this fund do not affect the tax rate.

Kevin stated that he would vote to recommend but would amend it on the floor because he is concerned about it specifying "current model year" because that means that is all that can be purchased as well as specifying that it is for the deputy, while it will be assigned to him, if someone else is seen driving it that could raise some hell. Katherine commented that that it was an interesting point. Kevin also talked about his concerns regarding the car being out of the district on nights and weekends. He stated that he was not opposed to the price, he felt like it was a good deal for a fully equipped vehicle. Scott agreed with Kevin's comments on the wording.

Scott made a motion to support Article 15. Katherine seconded the motion for discussion. Katherine commented that she has trouble supporting an article now that errors have been pointed out. Kevin stated that the Commissioners may be able to change the article before the

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meeting. Discussion ensued regarding amending the article on the floor. Being no further discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed, three to two.

Article 13) Pressurized Hydrants

To see if the District will vote to authorize the Commissioners to enter into a five-year agreement (beginning January 1, 2022 and ending December 31, 2026) in the amount of Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$500,000.00) for the purpose of providing pressurized hydrant services necessary for fire suppression and raise and appropriate the annual cost of One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00) for this year.

Scott commented that they were waiting for Commissioner Pyra to get an update on the situation with the Water District. Commissioner Pyra shared the latest news that a trial has been set for late November/early December, so there will not be a remedy any time soon.

Kathy commented that she believed the Commissioner had the Article for the Pressurized Hydrants as a good faith gesture. Katherine asked why don't they use it to see how the voters feel. Kevin asked how the commissioners came to this number when they were talking about much different numbers previously. Commissioner Pyra stated that it was a compromise among all the Commissioners. Kevin asked why the department doesn't just pay for what they use. Discussion ensued regarding hydrant rates in other towns. Katherine clarified that this was a dart figure and not based on any calculations.

Kevin made a motion to not recommend Article 13. Scott seconded the motion. Charlie asked if we still have access to the hydrants. Commissioner Pyra replied that they do because of a court injunction. Charlie asked how much legal has cost so far. Kathy replied that it has cost \$16,000 plus. Being no further discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed, four to one.

Article 10) Dry Hydrant/Cistern ETF

To see if the District will vote to establish a Dry Hydrant/Cistern Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 31:19-a, expenditures from this fund will be used for the design, engineering, purchasing of materials, installation, and any fees or permits required to install dry hydrants and cisterns within the District and to raise and appropriate One Dollar (\$1.00) to put in the fund, with this amount to come from Unassigned Fund Balance; further to name the Board of Commissioners as agents to expend from said fund. Future funding will come from warrant articles at annual district meetings.

Scott asked if this was a back up plan in case things do not go well with the water department. Commissioner Pyra replied that it's a combination of the uncertainty of the hydrants as well as other areas of the district needing a water source. While it may not solve the problem immediately it will get things started and they may be able to install one cistern and one dry hydrant per year. Kevin commented that he thought it was a great idea, he had suggested it to a previous chief and there had been no interest. Scott asked what the cost of a cistern was. Kathy replied that it starts at \$30,000. Commissioner Pyra added that there are other costs included such as landowner permission and the legal fees that go along with that.

Charlie made a motion to recommend Article 10. Kevin seconded the motion. Being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed.

Article 11) Add to Dry Hydrant/Cistern ETF

To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00) to be added to the Dry Hydrant/Cistern Expendable Trust Fund previously established.

Kevin made a motion to recommend Article 11. Commissioner Pyra seconded the motion. Being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed.

Article 05) Add to Land & Building Fund

Scott asked Commissioner Pyra if the fund was to offset building cost. Commissioner Pyra stated that it was. Katherine commented that she much prefers bonds because current tax

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payers are paying for the services they use if new people come to town they will contribute and if people move out, they won't have paid for a building they didn't see get built. They are paying for something that hasn't been approved.

Katherine made a motion to not recommend Article 5. Kevin seconded the motion for discussion. Kevin commented that he saves money for what he wants and knows they will have to borrow money but thinks the less they have to borrow the better. Scott stated that he sees the point from both sides but believes they will have a better chance of seeing a building get approved if they have a little bit of a cushion than if they don't. Katherine disagrees that that would help. Charlie commented that lowering the bond amount will get you a better rate. Being no further discussion, vote was taken. Motion failed, four to one.

Kevin made a motion to recommend Article 5. Commissioner Pyra seconded the motion. Being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed.

Article 16) Operating Budget

To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee recommended sum of Two Million Eight Hundred Seventeen Thousand Nine Hundred Two Dollars (\$2,817,902.00) for general municipal operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately.

Scott made a motion to approve Article 16. Charlie seconded the motion. Being no discussion, vote was taken. Motion passed, four to one.

New Business

Public Hearing

Kathy commented that they had chosen Friday, February 4, 2022 for the public hearing. Kevin commented that no one will show up on Friday night. Katherine asked if that day still worked for everyone. Discussion ensued regarding meeting dates and locations. The Committee chose a public hearing on Friday February 4, 2022 at 6 pm and will be held at Tilton Town Hall in the upstairs meeting room.

Discussion ensued regarding public awareness and advertising. It was decided to advertise the meeting on Facebook, town bulletins, and see if they are able to use Tilton Police Department's electronic sign. Katherine suggested Kevin post to Facebook.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:29 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Joslin

Beth Joslin
Office Clerk

Next Meeting Date, Time, Place:

February 4, 2022 at 6:00 PM.
Tilton Town Hall, Upstairs Meeting Room
257 Main Street, Tilton NH