

TOWN OF EPSOM
BUDGET COMMITTEE
JANUARY 7, 2021

Present: Marylou Keane, Chairman; Joni Kitson, Vice Chairman; Gary Kitson, Water District Representative; Virginia Drew, Selectmen's Representative; Meadow Wysocki; Joyce Heck; Len Gilman; Brian O'Sullivan, School Board Representative; Penny Graham; Mary Frambach; Joy Sheehan;

Virtual: Linda Hodgdon

Other Attendees: Patrick Connors; Michael Wiggett; Peter Warburton; Fire Chief Yeaton

Marylou opened the meeting at 6:35 PM.

School

Mr. Connors noted the School Board removed the tuition for the 5 additional high school students. This dropped the budget increase to 3.85% from 4.4%. He noted they are at the point that the supplies and books for the classrooms would be cut next and also, they might have to institute pay to play. He noted the supplies that are remaining that would have to be cut next. Mr. Connors noted there are situations where there could be a surplus in some lines.

Marylou asked if the Committee wanted to have further cuts or was just cutting the tuition for the 5 students acceptable. Mr. Connors noted the 3.4% increase is the default budget amount.

Penny asked the number of students in the default budget. Mr. Connors noted the same as with the 5 cut from the regular budget.

Joy asked when the negotiations would be for the next teacher's contract; Mr. Connors noted 3 years with the current contract to end in 2023.

Linda asked if the teachers' contract was multi year. It is for three years. Joy suggested it would be nice for the teachers to look at all the items the Town pays for, i.e., insurance etc. with the next contract discussions

There was a consensus to accept the School Board's proposed budget.

School Warrant Articles

Warrant Article 1: Shall the Epsom School District vote to raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, herein, totaling \$12,276,388? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$12,223,585 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Epsom School District, or by law, or the governing body may hold one special meeting in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only.

School Board Recommends Approval
Budget Committee Recommends _____

If passed, the new estimated tax rate will be \$18.64 [per thousand], which will result in a (\$3.22) increase over the previous year tax rate.

[Note: Warrant Article # 1 (operating budget article) does not include separate Warrant Articles.]

There was no discussion on this Warrant Article.

Warrant Article 2: Shall the Epsom School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of up to forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) to be added to the Special Education Trust Fund previously established, with such amount to be funded from the June 30, 2021 unreserved fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2021? NO AMOUNT TO BE RAISED FROM TAXATION.

School Board Recommends Approval
Budget Committee does or does not Recommends _____

[Estimated tax impact per thousand \$.00]

There was no discussion on this Article as it has been on the Warrant in previous years.

Warrant Article 3: Shall the District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of up to forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) to be added to the Building Maintenance and Repair Trust Fund previously established, with such amount to be funded from the June 30, 2021 unreserved fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2021. NO AMOUNT TO BE RAISED FROM TAXATION.

School Board Recommends Approval
Budget Committee does or does not Recommends _____

[Estimated tax impact per thousand \$.00]

The amount in this Article was increased to \$40,000 from \$25,000 as the roof will have to be replaced in a few years.

The School Representatives were thanked for coming and for making the reduction in their operating budget.

Town

Marylou noted an e-mail from Deb Sullivan noting the Town does not have the final insurance costs. For the proposed new Fire Department employee, the family plan has been included in the budget.

Marylou discussed the amount for the Police Department employees sick pay reimbursement.

Fire Department

Chief Yeaton noted the vacancy in the Department occurred in the middle of December after his budget had been presented. He noted the person who left was on the lower end of the medical training. The Department would like to have an option to employ a Paramedic/Firefighter. Chief Yeaton noted there would be less intercepts with Concord that would save money. The position will be posted in February. He does not expect to fill the position until March.

Meadow asked the difference in the rate of pay between the Firefighter/EMT position and the proposed Firefighter/Paramedic position; approximately \$10.00/hour.

Joni asked if Chief Yeaton thought the \$10,000 would be enough to cover the costs. She asked if it included the retirement, etc. It was noted there was salary, etc. for the old employee in the current budget. Linda confirmed the potential employee has the ability to teach classes also.

Linda motioned to add \$10,000 to the Firefighter full-time wages, Joy seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Virginia noted the funds on the Forest Fire Line. Chief Yeaton noted last year they were busy with forest fires. He has an informal agreement with other towns that they do not charge each other for fighting forest fires. It was discussed the line was reduced to 1,000.00.

Len asked about the balance in the Ambulance Fund; Virginia noted there was \$784,000 in the fund with \$167,000 to be withdrawn if the proposed Warrant Articles pass. There is \$6,400 in the Trust Fund.

The Fire Department Warrant Articles were reviewed while Chief Yeaton was present.

ARTICLE 11: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty five thousand six hundred dollars (\$25,600) for the purpose of purchasing a Heart Monitor/ Defibrillator for the Fire Department, and further authorize the withdrawal of the same amount of twenty-five thousand six hundred (\$25,600) from the Fire and Rescue Apparatus Fund for that purpose? Majority vote required. This is a special Warrant Article and is in addition to the operating budget.

No tax impact

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

There was no discussion on this article.

ARTICLE 12: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of seventeen thousand dollars (\$17,000) for the purpose of purchasing a Portable Ventilator for the Fire Department, and further authorize the withdrawal of same amount of seventeen thousand (\$17,000) from the Fire and Rescue Apparatus Fund for that purpose? Majority vote required. This is a special Warrant Article and is in addition to the operating budget.

No tax impact

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Chief Yeaton discussed he has applied for a grant that may pay for the ventilator. It was discussed if the article is voted down, he would not be able to purchase the ventilator even with the grant funds.

ARTICLE 13: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of six thousand dollars (\$6,000) for the purpose of purchasing an Electric Hoist for the Fire Department, and further authorize the withdrawal of the same amount six thousand (\$6,000) from the Fire Apparatus Fund for that purpose? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and is in addition to the operating budget.

No tax impact

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Gary asked if wording could be included to note the hoist is for the hose tower.

ARTICLE 14: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred and twenty five thousand dollars (\$125,000) for the purpose of purchasing a Ford F550 Forestry Truck for the Fire Department, and further authorize the withdrawal of the same amount of one hundred and twenty five thousand dollars (\$125,000) from the Fire and Rescue Apparatus Fund for that purpose? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and is in addition to the operating budget.

No tax impact

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Meadow asked if he wanted to list the truck as a Ford F-550; it was suggested to list just a Ford Forestry Truck.

Virginia asked if the Selectmen have to vote to reapprove if there are wording changes. It was suggested they should.

Penny asked if a certain amount of money was put in the funds each year. Chief Yeaton noted DRA did not want an amount because if they did not earn that amount it would have to come from taxes to make up the difference.

Chief Yeaton left the meeting.

Marylou asked if there were questions on the Revenue or Default Budget. Linda noted the regular budget is lower than the default budget.

Virginia noted the Selectmen were asked to include \$600.00 in the Other Professional Services under Patriotic Services to add names to the monument at the Legion.

Virginia motioned to add \$600.00 to the Other Professional Services (Line 4583490); Linda seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Joni asked if there had been a response from the Conservation Commission; no one has.

Virginia noted Library discretionary funds were used toward the storage shed at the Library. Len reviewed the e-mail from Mrs. Curley. It was discussed that the salaries were not appropriated correctly. Linda noted that the Library is doing remote programs due to COVID.

Len noted that they decreased the Library Director's salary for a 12 month salary to 8 months. He noted that Libraries are important but it is not an essential. Marylou noted that if the budget comes in higher next year it can be cut again. Len questioned that Library cannot charge for use of the building, he asked where that rule came from. Virginia noted that there were RSAs governing Libraries. The cost of books was discussed noting the figures given to the committee previously as to the average cost of books.

Virginia noted it is RSA 202 that protect Libraries. Len reiterated the library is nice to have, but it is not a necessity. Linda noted they have a partnership with the school and they help people with reading. Virginia noted the Welfare Director often sends people to the Library to obtain information.

Marylou asked if anyone had revisions to the budget. Meadow noted the amount of the budget and the default budget.

Virginia noted the deductions from the 2020 and 2021 default budgets.

Virginia explained the Selectmen will have to vote on the sick time benefit as if it is part of the new Employee Handbook.

Virginia stated the State has told towns to estimate the room & meals tax and it should be about half of what was previously received.

Minutes of January 5, 2021

The minutes of January 5, 2021 were reviewed and amended.

Meadow motioned to approve the minutes of January 5, 2021 as amended; Joni seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The Warrant Articles were reviewed.

ARTICLE 1: Shall the Town of Epsom raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$ 3,543,729. Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$3,531,446 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town of Epsom or by law, or the governing body may hold one special meeting in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only.

The operating budget is estimated to have a tax rate of \$3.81, .14 cents less than the 2020 Tax rate. The default budget is estimated to have a tax rate of \$3.79, .16 cents less than the 2020 Tax rate.

Marylou noted the amount will change based on tonight's revisions.

ARTICLE 2: Shall the Town vote to establish a contingency fund for the 2021 year for unanticipated expenses that may arise and further raise and appropriate the sum of twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) from the Unassigned Fund Balance to go into the fund? Any appropriation left in the fund at the end of the year will lapse to the general fund. Majority vote required. This Article and its appropriation are in addition to the operating budget.

No tax impact.

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Virginia noted the Selectmen did not use the contingency fund in 2020 but recommended they have it if needed.

ARTICLE 3: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of eight hundred dollars (\$800) to be added to the previously established Cemetery Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund, with said funds to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance, which is equivalent to the total amount of cemetery plot sales for 2020? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

No tax impact.

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

It was discussed this money is from the sale of plots at the Town cemeteries and is used for cemetery expenses.

ARTICLE 4: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) to be deposited into the Capital Reserve Fund previously established for the potential future expansion of the public water system? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$.04 per thousand

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Virginia discussed the funds are to check for the viability of an additional wells. \$20,000 will be spent towards possible expansion of the water system. Len asked if engineering had been completed, it will be done. Joni asked who was doing the engineering; Underwood Engineering.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to be added into the Capital Reserve Fund previously established for a future Town Office with said funds to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

No tax impact

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Virginia noted these funds would be for new town offices with the hope of not leasing office space in the future.

ARTICLE 6: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to be added to the previously established Expendable Trust Fund for the Maintenance of Historic Town-Owned Buildings with said funds

to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

No tax impact

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Virginia noted this Article is to set funds aside for work that may have to be completed in the future.

ARTICLE 7: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) to be added to the previously established Government Buildings Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund with said funds to come from the Unassigned Fund Balance? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

No tax impact

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Virginia noted this is a new Article this year. She discussed how the funds may be used.

ARTICLE 8: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) to be added to the Capital Reserve Fund previously established for the purpose of reconstruction and improvements to town roads? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$.30 per thousand

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Virginia noted this article would allow for funds to complete road projects.

ARTICLE 9: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) to be added to the Capital Reserve Fund previously established for the purpose of purchasing motorized vehicles and equipment for the Highway Department? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$.02 per thousand

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Virginia noted this is an Article that is seen every year.

ARTICLE 10: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to be added to the Capital Reserve Fund previously established for the purpose of bridge replacement and repair? Majority vote required. This is a Special Warrant Article and its appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$.05 per thousand

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Virginia noted the amount of this Article has increased as funds were used from this Fund.

Articles 11 – 14 were previously discussed.

ARTICLE 15: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of four thousand dollars (\$4,000) to be used by the Northwood Lake Watershed Association to control Milfoil in Northwood Lake? Majority vote required. This appropriation is in addition to the operating budget.

Estimated tax impact is \$.01 per thousand

Recommended by the Selectmen 3 - 0

Virginia noted this money has been requested for several years. She also discussed that Deer Meadow Pond is also asking for funds. Virginia noted that the Association did give a report to the Town.

Virginia noted Betsy had asked the cash value of the undesignated fund. She noted they are looking into the balance as there are expenses coming out of the fund. She noted the fund has more than the 17% suggested by DRA.

It was discussed that the Trustees of the Trust funds do not get the deposits for Warrant Articles voted in March until December so she is unable to give a balance. She does not know when she will get the report.

Gary discussed the proposed Village Water District budget. He noted the increase will include money to put in the use of the contingency fund. They did receive some insurance money for the repair of a fire hydrant from an automobile accident.

Linda asked how residents could obtain a copy of the budget. It was discussed it could be posted on the Website as a draft and they could also request a copy from the Town office.

Marylou noted on Tuesday they would receive the Water District budget and the budget with the changes voted tonight.

Len asked why the Water District comes before the committee as it is not a Town entity. Gary explained they have to have a budget committee so they use the Town's committee.

Meadow was still struggling with site design for government buildings.

Meadow motioned to decrease the Site Design – Building (Line 4194310) by \$2000.00 to \$8,000.00: Gary seconded the motion.

Len asked why she wanted to decrease the line. Meadow thought some site work has been done and she did not feel \$10,000.00 would be needed for the remaining work.

Len asked what building the funds would be used for; Virginia indicated the Old Town Hall. Virginia noted to make it a useable building and to meet ADA requirements. It was discussed the line is really for engineering services for accessibility to the building.

The motion passed.

Meadow motioned to adjourn; Joy seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Marylou adjourned the meeting at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Bosiak
Recording Secretary