

TOWN OF EPSOM  
BUDGET COMMITTEE  
NOVEMBER 18, 2021

**Attendees:** Marylou Keane, Chairman; Joni Kitson, Vice Chairman; Gary Kitson, Water District Representative; Virginia Drew, Selectmen's Representative; Meadow Wysocki; Joy Sheehan; Mary Frambach; Joyce Heck; Len Gilman; Linda Hodgdon

**Not in Attendance:** Penny Graham; Michael Muise, School Board Representative

**Other Attendees:** Stuart Yeaton; Cheryl Gilpatrick

Marylou opened the meeting at 7:05 P.M.

**Stewart Yeaton, Fire Chief**

Chief Yeaton gave the committee copies of Incident Reports from 2020 and 2021.

Chief Yeaton noted the major increases in the Fire Department budget would be payroll and overtime. He noted they are not finding the part-time/volunteers to work.

Chief Yeaton noted there is a vacancy that he hopes to fill with a Paramedic. The wages are scheduled at \$30.00/hour. He noted that people are moving from departments. Joel French has been promoted to Captain and was given a pay increase.

Chief Yeaton noted that they have seen an increase from the Nursing Home of COVID patients taken to Concord Hospital. Chief Yeaton noted there is crowding at the hospital. Often these patients are treated in the Emergency Room and returned to the Nursing Home.

Chief Yeaton increased the Diesel Line and discussed increasing the Gas Line also. The Vehicle Repair Line has been overspent for 2021.

The Dispatch Line is reduced \$640.00. The lights are being replaced in the station with LED lights. They are still doing repairs on the station. He is obtaining costs to replace the carpeting on the second floor. The renovations of the second floor have helped with noise and other factors.

Increasing the Diesel and Gas Lines was discussed. Len suggested increasing the Gas Line by \$500.00 to \$1,500.00.

Len suggested increasing the Diesel Line to \$10,000.00. from the proposed \$9,000.00.

**Len motioned to increase the Gas Line by \$500.00 to \$1,500.00, Meadow seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**Len motioned to increase the Diesel Line by a \$1,000.00 to \$10,000.00, Meadow seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

Joni asked if they had any items to use the Fire Road Maintenance Line in 2022. Chief Yeaton indicated he wanted to clear brush on some Class VI roads. He noted Granny Howe Road also has issues.

Chief Yeaton discussed the Call Volume Reports. Linda questioned the number of building fires in 2021. Chief Yeaton noted they have had many small fires.

Joni questioned what EMS calls were. Chief Yeaton noted they are medical calls that were not automobile related.

Len asked if there was anything Chief Yeaton would like to see changed in the Town, people and/or equipment that would make the Fire Department function better. Chief Yeaton noted the Town is looking to hire a Maintenance Person to repair items. He noted the employees attempt to complete all the repairs at the station. Chief Yeaton discussed part timers that he has and how he is working to keep the members. Chief Yeaton discussed that he sees the need for round the clock coverage in the next few years.

Len discussed we live in a different world than we did a few months ago.

Chief Yeaton discussed two warrant articles he will be presenting. One is to replace the Command Vehicle and the other to replace the overhead doors on the station.

There was a discussion of the issues with crowding at Concord Hospital. Chief Yeaton noted they are seeing more social issues, etc. Chief Yeaton noted they have seen more deaths from drug abuse than COVID.

Meadow asked if there are programs we should be trying to bring into Epsom to assist with these issues. Chief Yeaton noted he completed a survey for the school, and he included mental health as the number one issue. Len noted that rehab does not always assist a person. Virginia noted drug abuse sometimes starts in elementary schools. She discussed it is a stressful time for the children.

Joni asked the potential cost of five (5) overhead doors. Chief Yeaton indicated about \$37,000.00. It was noted it would be a Warrant Article.

The tax rate and increases were discussed. Joy asked what taxes businesses brought into Town. It was discussed whether or not the Town is taxing the properties fairly.

Len asked if the Fire Department could purchase some doors next year and others in another year. Chief Yeaton indicated that it could be done that way.

Gary asked Virginia why more money was not taken out of the fund balance. Virginia noted that the Town works to keep their tax rate down. It was discussed the School Budget keeps increasing.

Marylou asked if the fund were reduced to 15% how much would it drop the tax rate.

Linda calculated that \$142,000.00 represents 1% of the Reserve which is 17% as recommended by DRA. Gary noted that it is the people's money in the Undesignated Fund Balance. Virginia discussed the Selectmen are trying to do what they should be doing to have a responsible budget.

Gary noted that the school was understaffed last year – where did the money go. The issues were discussed. Joy noted she would like to have the School Budget early so it could be reviewed before the meeting.

Meadow asked how much the Committee could impact the School Budget. It was discussed not much due to contracts, etc. The SAU costs were discussed.

Len discussed that the Committee understands the budget, but the general public does not understand the budget. People do not want to listen and do not pay attention. He noted that it is a dollar thing.

Virginia noted that Meadow and she had attended a Town Hall Renovation Committee meeting, there will be a cost to complete renovations to the Town Hall.

Linda asked to review the Diesel Lines for all departments. She also noted that the BCEP budget has not been set.

Gary asked about the 5% raises. He asked for the dollar increase including Medicare, retirement, etc. He wanted to know the total increase in the budget, percentage wise.

Linda would like to total salaries, benefits and utilities cost. She noted it would be showing where we are spending the money. Len noted this might create a problem.

## **Minutes**

The minutes of November 9, 2021 were reviewed and amended.

**Mary motioned to approve the minutes of November 9, 2021 as amended; Joy seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**Mary motioned to adjourn the meeting; Joy seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

Marylou adjourned the meeting at 9:09 P.M.

Respectfully,

Betsy Bosiak  
Recording Secretary