

CONWAY MUNICIPAL BUDGET COMMITTEE

Wednesday, February 15, 2023
Loynd Auditorium
Kennett High School, Conway, NH

Chairman Peter Donohoe called the meeting to order at 8:38 PM. The following Budget Committee members were present: Vice Chair, Frank Jost; Bill Marvel, Jim LeFebvre, John Colbath, Stacy Sand, Bob Drinkall, Dave Jensen, Kit Hickey, Randy Davison, Terry McCarthy, Ellin Leonard, and Quentin Lewis. Also present, Lisa Towle, Recording Secretary.

PRECINCTS:

Center Conway - \$328,155

Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Mr. Marvel to recommend the Center Conway Fire Precinct's operating budget. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

East Conway - \$61,490

Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Mr. Drinkhall to recommend the East Conway Fire Precinct's operating budget. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

Red Stone: - \$118,700

- ▶ **Ms. Sand** inquired if the Budget Committee should be voting on the special articles separately from the operating budget. **Chair Donohoe** advised the Budget Committee votes on the bottom-line budget as stated in the article. A discussion ensued.

Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Mr. Drinkhall to recommend the Redstone Fire Precinct's operating budget. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

SCHOOL ARTICLES:

Article 2: Expendable Trust Fund for Kennett High School - \$54,443

Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to recommend Article 2 KHS expendable trust fund. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

Article 3: Expendable Trust Fund for Kennett Middle School - \$17,086

Mr. Davison moved, seconded by Ms. Sand to recommend Article 3 KMS expendable trust fund. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

Article 4: Expendable Trust Fund for Elementary Schools - \$9,900

Mr. Davison moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to recommend Article 4, elementary expendable trust fund. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

Article 5: CEA Contract

- ▶ 2023-24 = \$565,894
- ▶ 2024-25 = \$566,722
- ▶ 2025-26 = \$588,613

Mr. Davison moved, seconded by Ms. Sand to recommend Article 5 CEA Teacher Contract. Motion Carried. (8-5[Chair Donohoe, Mr. LeFebvre, Mr. Marvel, Mr. Drinkhall, Ms. McCarthy]-0)

Discussion:

- ▶ **Mr. Marvel** stated, “there is no way in hell I am going to recommend this contract”. The raises in this contract will increase the budget by \$1,725,000 because the district has the highest proportion of teachers to students as well as general staff. “I am sick to death of the School Board accommodating an excessive growth of staff year after year and this is where I draw the line.” **Lisa Towle with permission from Chair Donohoe**, suggested comparing the school and town budgets where the town has 1/5 of the employees but their budget is \$14 million. There are special need students that often require multiple teachers to be successful and they deserve an education just like students in a regular classroom. A discussion ensued.
- ▶ **Mr. Davison** stated his vote will be that of the School Board as he would typically abstain as his wife is a member of the faculty.

Article 6: Operating Budget - \$40,254,150 with a default budget of \$40,121,558

Mr. Davison moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to recommend Article 6 operating budget as amended. Motion Carried. (9-4[Mr. Davison, Mr. Jensen, Mr. Colbath, Ms. Hickey]-0)

Mr. LeFebvre moved, seconded by Ms. Sand to cut \$1.2 million from the operating budget bringing the total request to \$39,054,150. Motion Carried. (9-4[Mr. Davison, Mr. Jensen, Mr. Colbath, Ms. Hickey]-0)

Discussion:

- ▶ **Mr. LeFebvre** stated this recommended 3% decrease is not the committee telling the School Board where to make the cut but offering an opportunity to look at potential savings and efficiencies. The \$1.2 million came from the estimated staffing cost of 936,196 and savings on infrastructure at \$300,000, if a school was to be closed
- ▶ **Ms. Sand** stated based on decreased enrollment she wanted to see a significant reduction in the budget and that did not happen, therefore she supports the amendment.
- ▶ **Mr. Jensen** stated closing and selling a school is a financial gamble. Although, the population is declining, there is strong evidence the trend may be reversed with new housing opportunities. If a new school was to be constructed it would cost between \$74 and \$176 million. Along with the pending contracts with sending towns this is a risk, he does not support.
- ▶ **Mr. Marvel** stated the subcommittee looking at closing a school found \$1.3 million only in staff reductions and did not take into consideration savings related to maintenance and revenue from selling the building. He doesn't know how people are able to pay the increased taxes.
- ▶ **Mr. Davison** discussed the decreased enrollment, noting KHS started with 946 students and is down to 648. Noting families can not afford to live in Conway and other towns are consolidating their neighborhood schools. He explained current facilities will need \$10 million in repairs to windows and roofs.
- ▶ **Ms. Sand** discussed the sense of community that is formed within the individual elementary schools which comes from teachers and staff working together not the building. The town cannot continue to support this amount of infrastructure.
- ▶ **Mr. Colbath** implored the School Board to do their job and make the right decision. Noting the School Board has returned \$3 million over the last two years.

Mr. Marvel moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to reduce the operating budget by \$2 million, bringing the total request to \$38,254,150. Motion Failed (5[Mr. Marvel, Mr. Lewis, Mr. LeFebvre, Chair Donohoe, Mr. Drinkhall]-8-0)

Discussion:

- ▶ **Mr. Marvel** stated previous massive cuts to the school budget have been irresponsible, dangerous, and counter productive and the budget must be whittled down gradually. Every year the deliberative session is full of teachers and other school staff who refuse to cut the budget and illustrate self-interest dominated process. Further, restating his position related to alleged disproportioned staff to students and low academic performance. This cut is safe and significant.
- ▶ **Mr. Colbath** stated if voters don't like the decrease in the budget, they can vote for the default budget.

Article 7: Equipment / Bus Capital Reserve - \$250,000

**Mr. Davison moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to recommend
Article 7 for equipment / bus capital reserve fund. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)**

Article 8: Building Maintenance Fund - \$200,000

**Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Vice-Chair Jost to recommend
Article 8 for building maintenance fund. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)**

Discussion:

- ▶ **Mr. Davison** stated this fund established in 1995 is outdated and encourages the committee to vote for it.

Article 9: Petitioned Warrant Article to Close one of Conway's Three Elementary School by 2024 - 2025 School Year

Discussion:

- ▶ **Ms. Sand** stated the article is not worded correctly and does not offer any direction.
- ▶ **Mr. Richard** asked for point-of-order, inquiring if it is the committee's prerogative to vote on non-financial articles. Mr. Donohoe stated this subject has been debated many times and they are able to do so base don HB 1392 and RSA 32:14. A discussion ensued.
- ▶ **Mr. Davison** stated the School Board did not vote on this; therefore he will be abstaining.
- ▶ **Mr. Colbath** stated this did not come before the select board and he too will be abstaining.
- ▶ **Ms. Hickey** stated she will vote no, as it is inappropriate to vote without a School Board recommendation and she does not agree with it just saying elementary school. Further, there is not enough information to make a decision, similar to the parking program.
- ▶ **Mr. Marvel** stated this article reflects a lack of confidence in the School Board in making a decision.
- ▶ **Mr. Guerringue** stated the article was written in accordance with direction from counsel and the implication is to direct the School Board.

**Vice-Chair Jost moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to recommend
Petitioned Article 9 to close an elementary school by 2024-2025.**

Motion Carried. (7-3[Ms. Sand, Mr. Jensen, Ms. Hickey]-3[Mr. Colbath, Mr. Davison, Mr. Lewis])

TOWN ARTICLES:

Article 14: Operating Budget - \$14,325,657 and \$12,918,097 Default Budget.

**Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to recommend
Article 14 town operating budget as amended to \$14,075,742.
Motion Carried. (12-1[Mr. Marvel]-0)**

Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Mr. Davison to decrease Article 14 by \$249,915 to remove the cost of the parking program and decrease utility cost, bringing the total request to \$14,075,742. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

Ms. Sand moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to decrease Article 14 by \$155,000 removing remodeling of Town Hall and remove one new employee, bringing the total request to \$13,920,742. Motion Failed (3[Mr. Davison, Ms. Sand, Mr. LeFebvre]-10-0)

Discussion:

- ▶ **Ms. Sand** stated this motion could remove the remodeling of Town Hall and one of the new employees from the operating budget.
- ▶ **Mr. Colbath** stated he understands Ms. Sand's principle, but it is not the job of the committee to micromanage the Town.
- ▶ **Ms. Sand** stated it is too much all at once in a year with high inflation. The Town has never had an Assistant Town Manager and we are not ready to expand the building department to add an administrative assistant and new inspectors. In addition, the court's decision on STRs is still pending.

Mr. Marvel moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to decrease Article 14 by \$81,000 for the cost of the revaluation, bringing the total request to \$13,994,742. Motion Failed (6-7[Ms. Sand, Ms. Leonard, Mr. Jensen, Vice-Chair Jost, Ms. McCarthy, Mr. Colbath, Ms. Hickey]-0)

Discussion:

- ▶ **Mr. Marvel** stated his motion is made to put off the revaluation for another year and allow residents an opportunity to stay in their homes for another year and it would drop the operating budget below \$14 million.
- ▶ **Mr. LeFebvre** stated there is no good reason for the revaluation to be done this year and the town should follow the law and do it next year.
- ▶ **Mr. Colbath** stated the law provides latitude for the revaluations to be done early. He reminded the committee they town pays a significant amount to the consulting firm, who provided this recommendation as the Town is missing tax assessment revenue from utility companies. Town Hall's job is to weigh both sides and do what is best for the taxpayers. A discussion ensued.
- ▶ **Ms. Sand** stated real estate values are not going down, but the sales have slowed due to lack of inventory.

Article 15: AFSCME #93, Local 859 Public Works CBA - \$28,259

Mr. LeFebvre moved, seconded by Ms. Sand to recommend Article 15 highway department CBA. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

Article 17: Conway Police Department CBA - \$111,635

Mr. LeFebvre moved, seconded by Vice-Chair Jost to recommend Article 17 Police Department CBA as amended. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

Ms. Sand moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to decrease Article 17 by \$5,000, bringing the total cost to \$105,920. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

Article 19: Capital Reserve for Infrastructure Reconstruction (\$500,000)

Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Ms. Leonard to recommend Article 19 for infrastructure reconstruction capital reserve fund. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

Article 20: Capital Reserve for Highway Equipment (\$425,000)

**Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Mr. Drinkhall to recommend
Article 20 for highway equipment capital reserve fund. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)**

Article 21: Capital Reserve for Solid Waste Equipment (\$225,000)

**Mr. Drinkhall moved, seconded by Vice-Chair Jost to recommend
Article 21 for solid waste equipment capital reserve fund. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)**

Article 22: Capital Reserve for Landfill Expansion (\$100,000)

**Ms. Sand moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to recommend
Article 22 for landfill expansion capital reserve fund.
Motion Carried. (12-0-1[Mr. Lewis])**

Article 23: Capital Reserve for Maintenance for Town Buildings and Facilities (\$125,000)

**Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Mr. Drinkhall to recommend
Article 23 for maintenance of town buildings and facilities. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)**

Article 24: Capital Reserve Fund for Maintenance of Leased Buildings and Facilities (\$75,000)

**Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Mr. Drinkhall to recommend
Article 24 for maintenance of lease buildings and facilities capital reserve fund.
Motion Carried. (9-4[Mr. Davison, Ms. Sand, Mr. Lewis, Ms. Hickey]-0)**

Discussion:

- ▶ **Ms. Sand** stated after signing a long-term lease, Town Hall should not require additional remodeling to accommodate more staff as it should have been done prior to moving in 2 years ago.
- ▶ **Mr. Colbath** explained there is a need for spaces to be made more confidential and to update certain features.

Article 25: Capital Reserve Fund for Parks Department Vehicles and Equipment (\$25,000)

**Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Vice-Chair Jost to recommend
Article 25 for parks department vehicles and equipment capital reserve fund.
Motion Carried. (13-0-0)**

Article 26: Capital Reserve Fund for Police Vehicles (\$74,000)

**Mr. Drinkhall moved, seconded by Mr. Colbath to recommend
Article 26 for police vehicle capital reserve fund. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)**

Discussion:

- ▶ **Mr. LeFebvre** stated this is an essential article and encourages everyone to vote for it.

Article 27: Public Educational / Government Cable Television (PEG) Trust Fund (\$119,359)

**Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Vice-Chair Jost to recommend
Article 27 for PEG Trust Fund. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)**

Article 28: Eastern Slope Regional Airport (\$12,000)

**Mr. Drinkhall moved, seconded by Mr. Colbath to recommend
Article 28 For Eastern Slope Regional Airport.
Motion Carried. (8-5[Mr. Lewis, Vice-Chair Jost, Mr. Marvel, Mr. Jensen, Ms. Hickey]-0)**

Discussion:

- ▶ **Mr. Marvel** stated he continues to oppose this article as in prior years, as he finds the argument of Life Flight irrelevant and does not like seeing taxpayers pay for the rich to have a place to park their plane.
- ▶ **Mr. Colbath** stated Life Flight is very relevant and because of their services 5 lives were saved or expanded and you can not put a number on that.
- ▶ **Ms. Sand** stated these funds are combined with other town contributions which allows for matching federal funds to improve infrastructure at the airport. Conway made a commitment to support the airport when the airport previously located at Settlers Green was combined with Fryeburg.

Article 29: Readopt All Veteran's Property Tax Credit (non-monetary)

Vice-Chair Jost moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to recommend Article 29 for the all-veteran's property tax credit. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

Article 30: Readopt Optional Veteran Property Tax Credit (non-monetary)

Mr. LeFebvre moved, seconded by Vice-Chair Jost to recommend Article 30 for the optional veteran's property tax credit. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

Article 31: Hardware and Software for a Public Computing System for Conway Public Library (\$12,140)

Mr. LeFebvre moved, seconded by Mr. Colbath to recommend Article 31 for hardware and software for public computing system at Conway Public Library. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

Article 32: Communications District

Mr. LeFebvre moved, seconded by Ms. Leonard to recommend Article 32 to establish a communications district. Motion Carried. (12-0-1[Mr. Lewis])

Discussion:

- ▶ **Mr. Lewis** stated the Budget Committee was not briefed on this and does not understand what it means.
- ▶ **Mr. Colbath** explained this is from the Town voting to be a part of a Country wide communications committee that will be able to accept grants and other funds to support country wide internet, Wi-Fi, etc.

Article 33: Appointment of Fire Chief

Mr. Lefebvre moved, seconded by Vice-Chair Jost to recommend Article 33 To appoint a fire chief. Motion Carried. (12-0-1[Mr. Lewis])

Article 34: Authorizing Fire Department to aid another city, town, village, or fire district

Mr. LeFebvre moved, seconded by Mr. Drinkhall to recommend Article 34 to Authorize the fire department to provide mutual aid. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

PETITIONED ARTICLES:

Article 35: Accept Royal View Drive, Camelot Court, Regal Circle, and Palace Court as town roads

Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Mr. Drinkhall to recommend Article 35 To accept Royal View Dr., Camelot Ct., Regal Cir., and Palace Ct. as town roads. Motion Carried. (12-1[Mr. Marvel]-0)

Discussion:

- ▶ **Ms. Sand** stated after several attempts to be accepted as town roads, they did the work to bring them up to town standards and should be accepted.

- ▶ **Mr. Marvel** stated this is one of the measures some towns use to slow things down and say we are full. It does appear all of them meet the standards, paying taxes and not receiving the benefit.

Article 36: Accept Sargent Road and Nickelback Road as town roads

**Mr. Drinkhall moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to recommend Article 36
To accept Sargent Rd. and Nickelback Rd as town roads.
Motion Carried. (12-1[Mr. Marvel]-0)**

Article 37: Accept Barnes Road Extension as a town road

**Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to recommend
Article 37 Barnes Road Extension as a town road.
Motion Carried. (9-4[Ms. Sand, Mr. Marvel, Mr. Drinkhall, Ms. Hickey]-0)**

Article 38: Accept Settlers Green Drive and private portions of Common Court as public rights-of-way

**Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Mr. Jensen to recommend Article 38 for acceptance of
Settlers Green Drive and portions of Common Court as public right of ways.
Motion Failed. (4[Ms. Leonard, Vice-Chair Jost, Mr. Jensen, Mr. Colbath]-9-0)**

Discussion:

- ▶ **Mr. Marvel** stated he does not feel they deserve to have the town take care of their roads.

Article 39: Operation of Keno

**Mr. LeFebvre moved, seconded by Vice-Chair Jost to recommend
Article 39 for the Operation of Keno. Motion Failed. (0-13-0)**

PETITIONED ARTICLES (NON-PROFITS):

Mr. Colbath offered a spreadsheet showing the voters support the non-profit articles 70-90% of the time.

Article 40: North Conway Community Center (\$65,000)

**Mr. LeFebvre moved, seconded by Ms. Sand to recommend the
North Conway Community Center's request for \$65,000.
Motion Carried. (11-1[Ms. Leonard]-1[Chair Donohoe])**

Article 41: Tri-County Community Action Program (\$22,100)

**Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Ms. Leonard to recommend the
Tri-County Community Action Program's request for \$22,100.
Motion Carried. (8-4[Mr. LeFebvre, Mr. Marvel, Chair Donohoe, Mr. Drinkhall]-1[Mr. Lewis])**

Discussion:

- ▶ **Ms. Sand** expressed concern with the combination of the transportation and weatherization services. She would not have voted for the transportation portion as the per person, per ride cost is \$94.00. **Mr. Colbath** agreed and noted this is the second year they have combine their services, but they provided outstanding services for the homeless. **Mr. Marvel** stated the request for contributions to the homeless by town has not been provided.
- ▶ **Mr. Davison** stated this request seemed fair and equitable among the towns they serve.
- ▶ **Mr. Drinkhall** stated he would not support this based on the way they run their programs as witness with his tenants.

Article 42: Gibson Center for Senior Services (\$36,500)

**Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Mr. Drinkhall to recommend the
Gibson Center for Senior Services' request for \$36,500. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)**

Discussion:

- ▶ **Chair Donohoe** and **Mr. LeFebvre** recognized the Dr. Jackson and George Cleveland for their outstanding presentations.

Article 43: Children Unlimited Family Resource Center (\$14,000)

**Mr. LeFebvre moved, seconded by Ms. Sand to recommend the
Children Unlimited request for \$14,000.
Motion Carried. (9-3[Mr. Davison, Mr. Marvel, Mr. Drinkhall]-1[Mr. Lewis])**

Discussion:

- ▶ **Mr. Marvel** stated the services provided are still vague to him, the clientele is shrinking, and they spend a considerable amount per family.
- ▶ **Mr. Davison** expressed concern with the only 17% of their clientele comes from Conway and with the abatement they receive \$30,000.

Article 44: Vaughn Community Service (\$17,000)

**Mr. LeFebvre moved, seconded by Ms. Sand to recommend the
Vaughn Community Service's request for \$17,000.
Motion Carried. (11-1[Mr. Drinkhall]-1[Mr. Colbath])**

Article 45: Vaughn Learning Center (\$5,000)

**Mr. LeFebvre moved, seconded by Mr. Jensen to recommend the
Vaughn Learning Center's request for \$5,000. Motion Carried. (12-0-1[M. Colbath])**

Article 46: Starting Point (\$17,804)

**Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Ms. Leonard to recommend the
Starting Point's request for \$17,804. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)**

Article 47: Mount Washington Valley Adult Day Center (\$12,500)

**Mr. LeFebvre moved, seconded by Ms. Leonard to recommend the
Mount Washington Valley Adult Day Center's Request for \$12,500.
Motion Carried. (6-4[Mr. Davison, Chair Donohoe, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Marvel]-
3[Mr. LeFebvre, Ms. McCarthy, Ms. Hickey])**

Discussion:

- ▶ **Mr. Marvel** stated this appeared to be a charity in search of a problem as they are only serving a fraction of what is needed to subsist and questions their ability to survive. However, their motivation is commendable.
- ▶ **Ms. Sand** stated the elderly are the fastest growing population in Carroll County and this is a little ask for what they can provide. When they reach their 50 people hopefully the ask with decrease.
- ▶ **Mr. Davison** expressed concern with the amount that was asked of Conway especially with the tax abatement they receive, and they should ask all the towns they support for funding. **Mr. Marvel** concurred.
- ▶ **Mr. LeFebvre** stated in his experience these types of facilities often run into staffing situations.
- ▶ **Chair Donohoe** expressed concern with transportation constraints and potential flawed model.
- ▶ **Mr. Colbath** stated in his experience child and adult care are among the top five needs within the community and shared the research to support his position.

ADOPTED
MARCH 22, 2023

Article 48: Conway Area Humane Society (\$10,000)

**Mr. Drinkhall moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to recommend the
Conway Area Humane Society's request for \$10,000. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)**

Discussion:

- ▶ **Mr. Marvel** stated his prior disappointment with the Humane Society as they had been taking in animals from various disasters and selling them and acting more as a business than a non-profit. However, this does not appear to be their continued practice.

Article 49: White Mountain Community Health Center (\$35,600)

**Mr. Colbath moved, seconded by Mr. Drinkhall to recommend
White Mountain Community Health request for \$35,600. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)**

The Budget Committee will hold an additional session, date / time TBD, to vote on the missing Petitioned Charter Commission Article, which will placed on the warrant prior to the non-profit articles.

Mr. Marvel moved, seconded by Mr. LeFebvre to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 p.m. Motion Carried. (13-0-0)

Respectfully Submitted,
Lisa E. Towle,
Recording Secretary