

1 CONWAY MUNICIPAL BUDGET COMMITTEE AGENDA
2 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER
3 KENNETT MIDDLE SCHOOL
4 CONWAY, NH

5
6 January 08, 2024, at 6:30 PM
7
8

9 The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM. The following Budget Committee members were
10 present: Ryan Shepard, Michael Lacey, Dave Jensen, Bob Drinkhall, Bill Marvel, Steve
11 Angers, Vice-Chair Frank Jost, Chair Peter Donohoe, Steven Steiner, Quentin Lewis, Ellin
12 Leonard, Stacy Sand.

13
14 **Absent-** Terry McCarthy, Randy Davison, and Jim LeFebvre.

15
16 **Pledge of Allegiance-** The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chair Peter Donohoe.

17
18 P. Donohoe- John Eastman is here for an update on the Police Dept Warrant article.
19

20 J. Eastman- Ryan Shepard and Peter Donahoe met with the Board of Selectmen to discuss
21 this article. I then had Kathleen reach out and get three prices and Drummond & Wilson is who
22 we have used in the past, because we are going through the NH Bond Bank, the attorney at
23 Drummond & Wilson was very clear in his response that he would not like the Board of
24 Selectmen to incorporate a \$200,000 fund balance into the warrant article. His main reasoning
25 was the IRS would not look too favorably on this. They want you to borrow what you need so
26 you, if you have the fund balance you have, and this would put the Town in a pinch. Boards
27 each year in the future could decide what to do with fund balance as opposed to someone now
28 committing the people out 25 years. We also asked if interest can be paid down, and the
29 answer is if we use a private lending institution it can be but if we use the bond bank it is a
30 violation of that. I am meeting with the Selectmen and discussing that, and the
31 recommendation would be for the Budget Committee to withdraw and rescind that motion.
32

33 K. Golding- we are also not allowed to pay it off early, the interest or the principal. The warrant
34 going on this year will not include any payments, it will be just to approve the bond purchase.
35 The BOS have the authority to use the \$200,000 as they see fit to offset the operating budget
36 etc...
37

38 P. Donohoe- so I am clear there will be no fiscal impact to 2024?
39

40 K. Golding- correct.
41

42 J. Eastman- in talking with the Selectmen a couple of them felt it left more power/responsibility.
43 As the Boards can change yearly. It really does put the power back to the Selectmen based on
44 the voters. They want to keep it cut and dry.
45

46 **Town Presentations-** Updated Town overview & reports from Precincts (except Ctr.
47 Conway), Conservation Commission, Executive, Elections, Library, Assessing, Legal,

48 Planning and Zoning, Ambulance, Fire, Emergency Management, Building Inspection,
49 Health, and Welfare. Administrative items.

50

51 **East Conway Presentation**

52

53 Peter Campo East Conway Fire Precinct Commissioner- our budget in 2023 was \$61,490,
54 in 2024 the proposed budget is \$64,564. This is a 5% increase across the board, we have
55 not increased it in 3 years, we did just 5% on every line item.

56

57 Q. Lewis- I see discrepancies in expended, what happened to the truck? You expended
58 \$16,014 in 2023 and only plan to expend \$8,000 in 2024.

59

60 P. Campo- that was due to a furnace expense that we had to take from another line.

61

62 **Assessing Presentation**

63

64 Mary Beth Walker and Cory Hilton from Assessing- our budget in 2023 was \$325,113 our
65 proposed budget for 2024 is \$270,418 that a decrease of 16.82% the difference being we
66 are not paying for another reval this year. In wages we have a proposal for a 16-hour
67 position as the Assessing Clerk, we also have to update the server this year, and the
68 contract with the mapping services company has gone up.

69

70 F. Jost- I suspect we will see abatement request this year, have you accounted for that?

71

72 M. Walker- The contract we currently have where the Town does not cover revaluation
73 being done a year early. So, processing the abatements was not part of this current
74 contract that we have. So, what we have proposed and worked out was a set amount that
75 will come out of the overlay to help cover our processing abatements. As well as if any
76 money were to be abated on properties that would normally come out of the overlay
77 anyway. That is a normal part of the budget at this stage of the game.

78

79 S. Sand- The 16-hour assistant position. Is this a permanent position or temporary as you deal
80 with a rival?

81

82 M. Walker- It is my understanding it is a permanent position. In the past, we have utilized some
83 of our team from Cochrane Consulting. Some of the tasks. When Corey has an
84 overabundance, so assessing runs in clinical, we typically have exemptions and credits except
85 will come in and they are due in April, abatements are due March. Then we have the rest of
86 the year. We have data entry that must be done. So, we are taking on that area. Corey's been
87 working a lot of overtime. And this is to help alleviate some of the overtime and allow our team
88 to go back to doing what our team is certified to do. Which would be task that require
89 certification for the Department of Revenue.

90

91 S. Sand- So how much of your \$16,000 in increase in wages goes towards the part time
92 position? And does it include any benefits?

93

94 J. Eastman- So obviously the budget would have to pass. So, this would be something that
95 would be May 1st, so it is 8 months. It is approximately \$12,000 dollars, 16hrs a week, \$22 an
96 hour, give and take. We felt that this was the most cost prohibitive way, when you add up the

97 hours of overtime onto Cory, it could exceed the \$12,000 very easily. Then there is the burnout
98 and overworking of staff. Corey has Certifications from the state of New Hampshire that she
99 has worked extremely hard to get and just doing assessing and clerical jobs that are part of her
100 position. It does not have the extra help to do that. She cannot move on and continue to grow
101 to be at an assessor level or further herself like she would like to because she does not have
102 the time to have training and the education that she needs. So, getting this extra position will
103 help her, which will be of benefit to the community in the long run.

104

105 B. Marvel- is 16 hours enough?

106

107 M. Walker- that is something that we will have to evaluate.

108

109 Q. Lewis- it looks like the association dues and conferences were underspent but this year we
110 are budgeting it at the same.

111

112 M. Walker- the association's dues have to be paid. The previous assessor would also have
113 IAAO dues, and at some point, Cory should be at a higher level; that she would also need to
114 pay this. She did not go to a lot of meetings or classes in Concord due to not having enough
115 time and being to bust at work.

116

117 **Conservation Commission Presentation**

118

119 S. Sand- a \$10,000 increase is significant based on the total amount of your budget when you
120 did not even spend your budget items in terms of appropriations.

121

122 Matt Lucy Conservation Commission Chair- we did spend our budget. The CC budget has
123 been flatlined for almost 12 years. The biggest increase is taking care of our trails and our
124 visitors and our people that are using them. We will place three portable toilets on the trail
125 heads, which will be an increase of \$2,000 and we need to do some trail work.

126

127 B. Marvel- I thought the CC got Current Use penalties for revenue?

128

129 M. Lucy- Yes but that is for land acquisitions only. We have a Town forester who is under
130 contract and manages all the timber sales and is more land management, we have various
131 dues and fees, we have someone who takes our minutes, toilets, trail maintenance, parking lot
132 maintenance.

133

134 K. Golding- their invoices have not been posted yet and will probably be by the end of the
135 month.

136

137 **Executive Budget Presentation**

138

139 John Eastman- the executive salaries decreased by 2.82% the reason for that is Paul is
140 retiring in 2025 and we have in this years budget an engineer line item, and so she does 1/3 of
141 engineering, she does 1/3 in highway and 13 in solid waste, so we broke it out to cover all 3
142 depts that she works for, because we broke it out that way the wages were reduced by
143 \$11,000, had it been there it would have been a swing of \$7,000 in wages. Insurance &
144 benefits went down, social security went down. Similar to what Mary Beth said conference and

145 dues are at \$2,000. There are a lot of trainings that Krista our HR Director attends, I also
146 attend the State Town Managers Association meetings, this year you will be happy to know
147 that I didn't spend any money on lodging as North Conway's was the host Town, I got
148 volunteers to do all kinds of social events for the Town Managers around the State, I also
149 attend the NH Municipal Association 20day conference in Manchester. I do try to get as much
150 training as possible in this position because Conway is a complicated Town, and you require
151 that we have as much knowledge as possible. Info technology went up and that is due to
152 changes to our website, we are revamping our website to make it more user friendly. Part of
153 the revamp is implementation of a 311 system, where if someone see graffiti all over the park,
154 they can immediately email the Town of Conway, an email goes to the Rec Department, he
155 acknowledges he sees it and he goes out and addresses the issues and can email you back
156 when the clean up happens. This will be an important communication tool for the Town when
157 roads are closed, trees and lines are down, shelter in place, etc. and people can go to the
158 website and see what is going on in real time. You can see the level budgeting of supplies,
159 postage, telephone. Mileage went up a little, we added one new vehicle, one used vehicle to
160 our fleet. We had an accident with one an the chief was kind enough to recycle some of his old
161 cruisers over here, by the time we get them , they have 160,00 170,000 miles we use them to
162 the fullest, they still use them in Parks N Rec. we lost 2 one to disrepair and one to an
163 accident. In my case the Town Manager gets a car, I do not want a car I do not need a car. If I
164 travel, I get paid mileage at the IRS governed rate. Advertising is going up slightly, Reference
165 books are also going up, the purchase of E-Code is going up, this is used in our Planning and
166 Zoning dept.

167

168 S. Sand- why wouldn't that be under Planning?

169

170 Paul- the codes of Conway span well beyond Planning and Zoning. It also includes housing
171 standards, and rental licensing agreements. It is where it has been historically, you make a
172 point, maybe in the future we will break it down into smaller pieces.

173

174 S. Angers- with Paul retiring and doing two jobs is there a plan to groom someone to take
175 those positions?

176

177 Paul- when the Selectmen and John reorganized a year ago of Deputy Town Manager, when
178 Earl was here, I was made the Assistant Town Manager, and that meant backup Earl. We
179 could all see that populations increase, Towns become busier, there is a lot more development
180 and there were issues that just were not being handled. So, under reorganization, again arose
181 but we renamed it and called it the Deputy Town Manager. The Deputy Town Manager is
182 assistant and backup to the Town Manger, but has the responsibilities for management of
183 planning, zoning, building code, compliance, engineering, construction administration, DOT
184 liaison. A year ago, when we first talked about this, and I announced I was leaving the
185 Selectmen wanted the first hire to be the engineer. We persuaded them that there was enough
186 time to fill that position as we needed to do other things first. There was expansion in the
187 building dept, we now have a full-time code compliance officer, etc., etc. We did not advertise
188 last year for the engineer because over the years I have taken intern every other year. There
189 were two such folks who were interested but we were unable to attract either one of them, the
190 private sector is embracing remote work and lumping in sick and vacation week together
191 upwards of 8-10 weeks to use as they wish, and we cannot compete with that. Everyone I
192 have spoken to has said it is difficult to hire for this area of work. Our next step is to hire a

193 recruiter, the intent is to have them start May 1st after April's Town Meeting. My contract ends
194 in October, so the thought was to mento form May till October.

195
196 S. Angers- in the long haul the Town might be a little better off spending the money now to
197 prepare people for the job.

198
199 J. Eastman- I agree, and we are in front of it, and we are thinking about it.

200
201 N. Marvel- money does not seem like the issue but time off is what is important to new hires.
202 Would it be worth dividing the job between a few people who have the same qualities?

203
204 Peter- we have done that before. We get to a point where things change. The money is
205 commensurate, we are going to have to look at our benefits packages because were not
206 structured that way for the millennials, and we are also not set up for remote work from home.

207
208 **Welfare Budget Presentation**

209
210 J. Eastman- the welfare has gone up \$17,000 a major portion of that is wages. The welfare
211 dept is a 1-person dept. I went back and forth was that we got to pull the trigger, the reality is
212 that we are getting traffic all the time with people looking for help. The number one thing with
213 hiring another person in this dept is training and there are state statutes that must be followed
214 right down to confidentiality. The 16-hour position does not have benefits, and neither does the
215 position with 24-hour. At 24 hours you are eligible for 80% of vacation and sick time. I am
216 concerned about employee burnout.

217 Besides from all that you have your normal increases to retirement, association dues are level
218 fund, info technology dropped because she got a new computer. She also has software that
219 helps her track issues going on throughout the state.

220 In the general assistance budget, it was at \$30,00 in 2023, and at that for 3 years, part of that
221 was due to covid and the ERAP program which was funded by the Feds. It housed a lot of
222 people but when the program ended in April people were out of housing and on the streets
223 again. The budget was overspent this year at \$41,130, I budgeted it at \$60,000 due to the
224 history and the unknowns. Weather we go to 50 or 60 or 100 the Welfare and the Highway
225 dept when it comes to storms, is the only two depts, under the law that we can overspend the
226 budget. We finance housing if we do not find them housing, they come to us asking us for
227 financial assistance, and if they qualify, we assist, and we do try and recoup that money. I am
228 happy with the performance of the Welfare office over these past 3 years, BJ has done an
229 excellent job keeping it as low as possible.

230
231 D. Jensen- I believe in the past BJ did some grant writing that resulted in revenue.

232
233 J. Eastman- I was apart of that because Parks N Rec got to use some, it was a low-income
234 grant that we applied through from CDBG. It helped low-income children attend summer camp.
235 It was a 3-year grant at \$7,000 per year through the Rec. it is possible. Reporting and
236 accounting was a nightmare. If you asked me again if I would apply, I would say no.

237
238 **Library Budget Presentation**

239
240

241 David Smolan- the library's proposed 2024 budget is \$654,570, that is a 5.79% increase over
242 2023. Of that \$35,849 is in salary and benefits, there are some modest requests for increases
243 in book lines and information technology. There's a reduction in the electronic materials.

244
245 S. Sand- with your longevity I would think that your salary would be higher than the incoming
246 director.

247
248 D. Smolan- in this budget a request for a market rate adjustment. I went to John and spoke
249 with him about salaries, we did a 30 Town survey. When we did that, we saw that we were
250 below the average of 87.5%. There are market rate adjustments to reflect that in the amount of
251 \$8,500-\$9,000 for those two positions to get them to the 87.5% threshold. Usually when an
252 employee leaves, generally speaking there is an adjustment to get that position up to the
253 87.5%.

254
255 B. Marvel- I see a drop in electronic materials.

256
257 D. Smolan- electronic materials are rather expensive and generally speaking the things I tried
258 to promote have not gotten the return on investment that I really was looking for. The Libby
259 app is our downloadable book service that we use, is well used and that is worth every penny.
260 We are trying to keep the budget as low as possible and when I looked at the statistics this
261 was an area, I felt we could cut, and the Trustees agreed.

262
263 B. Marvel- I see that you have doubled the amount in legal expenses.

264
265 D. Smolan- there was a legal discussion on the Library Directors contract, I think it is a
266 legitimate use to have the legal line in the budget. It protects the staff and the Trustees. It is a
267 service. It is a bit of an assurance policy and a small amount to have in the budget. It makes
268 my job easier having access to a lawyer. It pays for itself by avoiding mistakes.

269
270 B. Marvel- how many full-time employees?

271
272 D. Smolan- 6.5

273 274 **Planning & Zoning Board Presentation**

275
276 Ryan O'Connor Town Planner- the budget for 2023 was \$259,034, the proposed budget for
277 2024 is \$297,430. The largest increase is legal. In the past legal has been captured in the
278 executive budget, and we have been working to break that up into the applicable departments.
279 The Planning dept is taking on \$12,000 of that expense. We do try and utilize NH Municipal
280 Association for free legal help as much as possible. Wages are slightly down from last year.
281 Consulting is a new line item, there are two items in there, which are existing categories. One
282 being meeting minutes; we do contract that out. The engineering reviews of Planning Board
283 applications, both of those are covered by planning board application fees, so it is something
284 we pay upfront, but that expense is then reimbursed from applicants. Consulting is a new line,
285 and this is something as we work through the master plan and we work on updating our
286 regulations, we'll be able to contract out with consultants to help us with that work. We cannot
287 do GIS mapping, grant writing, Association dues is for Holly and I. Info technology increased

288 due to the need for a new computer. Last year Planning Board application fees brought in
289 about \$54,000. We have recently revised those fees, so it is an average increase of 30%.

290
291 Q. Lewis- the info tech expense has been reconciled at 0.

292
293 R. O'Connor- that is \$1,500 for unexpected issues plus the cost of the new computer. We have
294 one computer in the works to be purchased. There was nothing spent last year.

295
296 S. Angers- so consultants are going to work with you to write grants? To save time, with my
297 work with Charter Unlimited, I wrote a ton of grants, what I wanted to check and make sure
298 was that the cost of those consultants writing the grants is written into the grants so that we get
299 paid back for that.

300
301 S. Sand- when I add up all the legal in all the departments, I come up with almost \$91,500
302 which is about a \$20,000 increase over last year. I cannot, however, clearly see what the
303 Planning and Zoning Board has spent, can we get a breakout of that.

304
305 J. Eastman- yes, what we have done is set up a code for each dept, so that when legal is
306 speaking with specific depts, they give them their code and they bill us according to that dept.
307 that way it is easier to separate and track. We will also be able to track better legal fees that
308 we can go back and get through the legal process, if we go to court and get back legal fees.
309 What I have added up so far is \$28,000 in executive, \$12,000 in planning, \$42,000 in code
310 compliance, \$5,000 in highway.

311
312 **Ambulance Budget Presentation**

313
314 Chief Solomon- the proposed 2024 budget is \$354,450, and in 2023 it was \$344, 660. It is a
315 33% increase and that is the contract between the Town and Action Ambulance, and the Town
316 and Conway Village.

317
318 **Fire Emergency Management Budget Presentation**

319
320 Chief Solomon- there is a decent increase there, a \$37,253 increase between 2023 and
321 2024. The budget proposal for 2024 is \$606,498. The only difference is within the non-precinct
322 fire contract and again that is contractual on the part of the Town and is made up the Fire
323 department budgets from all the Fire departments. The non-precinct fire amount only goes to
324 non-precinct taxpayers, not the Town as a whole. So, if you live out on Stock Road like I do,
325 you're paying that, but if you live in Conway Village, you're not.

326
327 S. Sand- can you explain what in the contract is increasing?

328
329 Chief Solomon- this is a contract we have been battling back and forth for a number of years,
330 this is the last year of the contract. In essence it allows the individual fire precincts to still
331 develop their own budgets and then the Town kicks in a proportion based on their total
332 budgets. The increase is mostly based on North Conway Fire Dept having built a 7.5-million-
333 dollar fire station and having a bond on it. Conway Village budget is up, so when you add
334 those two together, you add Center Conway which now includes Redstone and East Conway's
335 budget all together, that then becomes part of the formula for non-precinct fire. You then take

336 the assessed land covered by all the dept, divide all of that out and that is how that number
337 comes out. It will be a 78 cent per thousand hit to non-precinct taxpayers.

338
339 S. Sand- this seems like a big hit and the taxpayers have no say.

340
341 Chief Solomon- I have always had an issue with how this was arranged.

342
343 S. Angers- where are we for charging irresponsible hikers and fishers?

344
345 Chief Solomon- when fish and game tells you they are billing a hiker for doing a rescue, they
346 did not do that rescue anyway, we did and we do not see a dime of that, they take the money.
347 We had 27 swift water rescues in 2023, just in Conway Village. We have no enabling
348 legislation specifically says were allowed to bill people for those rescues. John and I talked and
349 think we should push this forward by coming up with a rate and bill for the rescues and let
350 them challenge us on it.

351
352 **Building Inspection Budget Discussion**

353
354 Jeremy Gibbs- our budget for 2023 was 361, 819 and the 2024 proposed budget is \$265,227
355 which is a decrease of 26%, you can see from the line items, decreased due to a retirement
356 and new wages being less than the employee before. Association dues stayed the same.
357 Conferences and meetings stayed the same. We added in some money to purchase some
358 new code books.

359
360 S. Sand- is the uniforms, fuel and vehicle repair a reallocation because it was unspent?

361
362 J. Gibbs- I added in the uniforms as I wanted to get the dept a uniform with the Town seal on it.
363 The fuel and vehicle repair are being broken out into different departments so that it can be
364 monitored better and have better transparency.

365
366 B. Marvel- I have lost track of how many people we have added.

367
368 J. Gibbs- there are three full time. In order to capture more revenue for the building dept to
369 help cover the additional fees for the additional staff and the vehicles and everything else that
370 we do, we did introduce new fees this year for residential, which I'm actually really excited to
371 announce that they're doing residential inspections in the Town of Conway now, which I think
372 is a great step forward, and the commercial fees were raised to better reflect the costs
373 associated with those fees and help capture that for the Town of Conway as well.

374
375 **Health Officer Budget Presentation**

376
377 J. Gibbs- The wages were reduced by \$250, health penalties appropriated were \$1,400 and
378 \$500 actually spent, it is a bit of a variable because you never know what the health issues are
379 going to be.

380
381 **Park and Recreation Budget Presentation**

382

383 Mike Lane Parks and Rec Director- wages are up, association dues, meetings & conferences,
384 info technology, office equipment, supplies, telephone those are all level funded. Electric is up
385 \$3,000. These are for Whitaker Home Site, Schuler Park, the pickleball courts that have lights
386 now in Center Conway that used to go under general government buildings, which has now
387 been shifted into our electrical line. The maintenance line jumps out at you, the School Board
388 members found in the lease agreement this past summer that as part of the lease agreement,
389 our dept is supposed to be paying 4% of the maintenance costs to the building in Conway.
390 There was a discussion with people above me about possibly trading off the payment of paying
391 for the paving of Eagle's Way for this, but it was decided by legal they did not want to do this.
392 Programs we drop down a bit. There is a slight increase in the fireworks for the 4th of July.
393 Overall, the budget is up \$34,612.

394
395 S. Angers- when we first decided to do the pickleball courts was lighting a factor in the plan?
396

397 J. Eastman- I do not believe it was part of the plan I believe the Selectboard added that in.
398

399 S. Angers- can we put in a pay meter so that those who want to use it can pay with their credit
400 card?
401

402 J. Eastman- that question was asked, and I did see this down in Concord. In my conversation
403 with other Rec professionals said it does not make sense, the setup too so it is just expensive.
404 They cover the costs by using LED lights and they are on a timer that can be controlled. They
405 are not on in the off season. The Selectmen really wanted to see lights there.
406

407 S. Sand- we provide a lot to the kids at no cost, and I think the adults deserve some recreation
408 as well.
409

410 **Old Business**

411
412 S. Sand- did we submit those questions? And did we get a time when they might
413 be answered?
414

415 P. Donohoe- I did not ask for time.
416

417 J. Eastman- we have gotten #11 done. It is not a shell game, what Kathy gave me
418 was all the information, evaluations come at various times of the year, so we are
419 giving you a snapshot as of December 31st. We have half of them already
420 answered and hope to plan on Wednesday.
421

422 **New Business**

423
424 B. Drinkhall- I think about 5 or 6 Budget Committee members were present at the
425 meeting with Marybeth and the explanation to the number of taxpayers that
426 showed up, but the overall concern was the taxes going up to the degree that they
427 are for homeowners. A lot of people are hurting and struggling with the increases.
428

429 S. Sand- yes there is a lot of misinformation out there as well. But I also hear a lot
430 of people saying, just vote the budget down, vote the Board out. I think we need
431 to do more explaining. The increase in benefits is not sustainable. We ask that
432 people give us feedback as to what services they can do without because that is
433 what it is going to come down to, if they want our employees to go without
434 benefits.

435
436 P. Donohoe- Those going to Concord tomorrow will get our first read on both the
437 proposed hotel tax as well as the proposed homestead exemption. In NH statute
438 we are to tax proportionally.

439
440 S. Angers- the gorilla in the room is the school budget, and that needs to be taken
441 care of. The school budget needs to be taken under control.

442
443 Discussion was had back and forth on ideas of how the Schools and Town have in
444 the past cut budgets and how they should cut budgets moving forward.

445

446 **Adjournment**

447

448 ***B. Marvel motioned to adjourn the January 8, 2024, meeting; seconded by S. Angers.***

449 ***Motion carries 12-0***

450

451

452 Respectfully Submitted,

453

454 *Alicia Jipson*

455 Recording Secretary

456

457

458

459

460

461