

FARMINGTON SELECT BOARD
Wednesday, January 18, 2023

The meeting was conducted through remote access by telephone, video, and electronic means. The public could attend by viewing the live stream at <http://mtbluetv.org/program-live-stream-farmington-selectmen.html> or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/MBTV11/> and calling 578-7395 EXT 300.

Chairman Matthew Smith called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. with the following members present: Joshua Bell, and Byron Staples. Stephan Bunker and Scott Landry were unable to attend. Town Manager Christian Waller, Planning Assistant Cindy Gelinas, Parks and Recreation Director Matthew Foster, Public Works Director Phil Hutchins, Public Works Foreman Jim Kiernan, Budget Chairman Judith Murphy, James Andrews, and the Mt. Blue TV camera operator were also in attendance. Berry Talbot and Royer Certified Public Accountant Marc Roy, Members of the press and public, participated remotely as authorized by PL 209, c.617.

ITEM 1: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Chairman Matthew Smith led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

ITEM 2: Compensation Adjustments

Christian Waller distributed the spreadsheet that showed salary wages from \$40,000 up to \$100,000 in \$5,000 increments, along with the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) percentages from 6.5% down to 2.9% and its adjustment impact in dollar amounts. He said using the 6.1% COLA on salary and not utilizing any overtime comes to \$149,900; about \$165,000 would include 401Ks. Using 5% COLA is \$123,000, and about \$135,000 would consist of the 401Ks.

ITEM 3: Capital Improvement Plan/How to handle Capital Budget items

Christian Waller said he has the full Capital Improvement spreadsheet that he will email to the Board because it is too big a file to print, which lists the Capital Improvement projects submitted by the department heads. Most of these are short-term projects that are projected within seven years. He went over the list:

- Fire Rescue Department – Chief command vehicle and Engine 2 have been taken care of; utility truck; self-contained breathing apparatus air compressor at \$85,000; Tower 3 at \$2 million; squad vehicle at \$110,000; SCBA bottles \$200,000; extrication tool set \$40,000; and Engine 1 \$1.2 million.
- Parks and Recreation – Basketball/volleyball/skating rink lights at \$12,000; Community Center chimney and brick \$26,000; Community Center roof will be under contract by April; Community Center HVAC system \$100,000; Hippach grandstand \$15,000; Town-wide parks plan \$20,000; Hippach field maintenance and building \$20,000; Community center furnace \$30,000; skateboard park \$200,000; basketball \$10,000. Matthew Smith asked about the grant for the skateboard park. Matthew Foster said he is working on a grant, and he doesn't expect to use much in tax dollars, and we are looking really good to get a lot of other grants and fundraising. Byron Staples asked where the funding is listed in the budget for Parks and Recreation. Matthew Foster said none of these are listed for this year, but we have reserve accounts. Christian Waller said the Plan totals approximately \$3.1 million. Matthew Foster passed out a sheet showing the years these projects are scheduled, and once we know how much the roof will cost, we will know how much of the ARPA funds we will need to use.

ITEM 3: Capital Improvement Plan/How to handle Capital Budget items (continued)

- Public Works – Christian Waller said the garage is paid off, and they will be purchasing additional land they may construct another building on in the future, but most of the budget is for fixing the roads. Discussion followed regarding military surplus trucks, budget spiking, case loader status, grader, bucket truck, and Maine Local Road Assistance Program (LRAP). Phil Hutchins said he submitted a replacement list schedule in 2018, and the grader was to be replaced this year; however, we are behind. He said we need a front-line plow truck for \$250,000; two replacement vehicles - a 2002 F-150 and a 2008 F-250 costing a \$105,000 for both and they must be equipped with a plow and sander. Christian Waller said the Plan amounted to \$2.4 million.
- Police – Christian Waller said they plan on purchasing two cruisers every three years, estimated at \$55,000 each with inflation and market.
- Municipal Building – Christian Waller said most of these improvements are in the next 3-4 years; installing fire alarms in the fire bay, renovating the clerk’s area for office space, air ventilation system, repairing the front wall of the building along the gun range because it leaks, upgrading the garage bay doors, parking lot repairs and upgrades, all totaling \$100,000.
- Sewer – Christian Waller said the pumps are included in its operating budget, and the buildings are in good shape.

Christian Waller said the roads and fire truck are the big items, and the Rail Trail Bridge is in the operations budget at \$200,000. Joshua Bell asked what the balance was in the Downtown TIF account. Marc Roy said it was \$195,000. Joshua Bell asked if it should be in this budget and if we could use the Downtown TIF for the bridge, and Christian Waller said yes, it could. Discussion followed regarding Public Works setting a yearly road budget to lessen spikes, scheduling road repairs, and creating a maintenance plan. Marc Roy said you could alleviate the spikes by setting a figure of \$ 1.3 million for five years. It would drop to \$1 million, and the overall road cost is \$11.7 million, including infrastructure, equipment, vehicles, and building through 2037. Christian Waller said the road budget in 2022 was \$510,000; in 2023, it is \$883,000, an increase of 73%.

James Kiernan stated that the Public Works Department had the same number of employees for the past 40 years. He said we need the three extra employees, and he is concerned about safety for the employees and the public when are out plowing for 30 hours because you can’t leave in the middle of a storm like last night, and the safety limit is 16 hours. Discussion followed regarding adding three extra positions, including foreman, seasonal and subcontracting winter drivers, maintenance duties, licenses required, sidewalks and roads, and overtime. Joshua Bell asked what amount went into the unassigned fund balance for 2022. Marc Roy said \$40,000 was deposited into the unassigned fund balance in 2022, totaling \$4.1 million. Marc Roy said the electric total for all buildings in 2022 was \$34,793, and the sewer was \$45,655 totaling \$80,448. Discussion followed regarding the Fire Rescue reserve account and debt service.

Joshua Bell moved to reduce the Fire Rescue Department equipment reserve line from \$400,000 to \$175,000; Byron Staples seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 3 ABSENT 2 MOTION CARRIED

Discussion followed regarding the cost for the Public Works loader, trade-in for existing loader, bonding equipment, John Deere loader, demo vs. new, and replacing a plow truck.

ITEM 3: Capital Improvement Plan/How to handle Capital Budget items (continued)

Joshua Bell moved to reduce the Public Works Department’s Equipment Reserve from \$405,000 to \$355,000; Byron Staples seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 3 ABSENT 2 MOTION CARRIED

Joshua Bell moved to reduce the Rail Trail Bridge reserve account from \$200,000 down to \$0, and to address it through the Downtown TIF, and other financial means if necessary; Byron Staples seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 3 ABSENT 2 MOTION CARRIED

Joshua Bell confirmed the Public Works 5-Year Road budget is \$3,771,627.28 over five years. Discussion followed regarding using a fixed dollar amount each year for budgeting roads, LRAP funds, a road reserve account, contracting with Pike Industries, and road maintenance.

Matthew Smith moved to reduce the Public Works Road Reserve account from \$883,573 to \$755,000; Joshua Bell seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 3 ABSENT 2 MOTION CARRIED

Marc Roy said these reductions total \$624,573, which brings the budget down to \$9.2 million and 21% over the 2022 budget of \$7.6 million. Discussion followed regarding the COLA percentage and wage adjustments as needed. Christian Waller said the salary adjustments for the 2023 budget total \$66,600, and using the 6.1% COLA figure, COLA would be \$98,300 totaling \$164,900, and health insurance went up approximately 4.5%. Discussion followed regarding splitting the COLA percentage, having an employee roster of wages/positions/years without names comparing 2022 and projected 2023, parity in the employee wages, property tax freeze for retirees, and Budget Committee and Select Board procedure for submitting a warrant. Joshua Bell asked for the difference in percentage in the 2023 road budget. Marc Roy said if you used the 2022 \$510,000 figure for 2023 instead of the \$755,000, the increase to the budget would be 17% instead of the 21% using the \$755,000 figure. Judith Murphy said the Budget Committee is meeting on January 26th and may vote at its meeting on January 31st. Discussion followed regarding the Budget Committee and Select Board procedure for the warrant, warrant deadline for the town report, Parks and Recreation reserve account, updated budget numbers, and ARPA funds used for Select Board iPads.

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Joshua Bell moved to adjourn 9:00 P.M.; Matthew Smith seconded.**

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 3 ABSENT 2 MOTION CARRIED

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cindy Gelinas.

Byron T. Staples - Secretary