MINUTES
SELECT BOARD & BUDGET COMMITTEE
TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH
Tuesday, January 28, 2025 – 5:00 PM 6R
1 Grove Street, Peterborough, New Hampshire

Present: Tyler Ward, Bill Kennedy, Bill Taylor, Rick Lesser, Carl Mabbs-Zeno, Mary Clark, Lesley Lewis, Richard Reynells, David Odland, Anthony Pascale, and Donald Parkhurst
Also Present: Seth MacLean, Danica Melone, Lilli Gilligan, Fash Farashahi, Tim Brezovec, Corrine Chronopoulos, Craig Fraley

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Chair Ward opened the meeting at 5:30 PM and introduced the Select Board and staff. He then turned it over to Budget Committee Chair Lesser who introduced the Budget Committee members.

BUDGET REVIEW

IT/GIS Department

Mr. Farashahi introduced himself and stated he would begin with the fun part of the department: the GIS work. Mr. MacLean navigated the Town website on the projector as Mr. Farashahi explained where the GIS mapping apps are available. Mr. Farashahi highlighted that the gallery includes apps such as the ParcelViewer, Natural Resource Inventory, flood mapping, trails maps, and more. He added that GIS staff also create apps for various Town department's asset management work.

Mr. Farashahi discussed that GIS had no capital requests this year and had recently conducted a flyover featuring 1-foot topography as opposed to 2-foot. He noted this was a big step providing much greater detail.

With no questions about GIS, Mr. Farashahi moved on to the IT Department. He introduced Mr. Brezovec, who specializes in IT and is typically behind the camera streaming Select Board/Budget Committee meetings. He noted that Ms. Elwell, who specializes in GIS and was key in creating the new Natural Resource Inventory app, was behind the camera streaming for tonight's meeting.

Mr. Farashahi discussed increases to his budget, such as increases in costs for cabling, UPS, and contract services. He explained that hiring out to have professionals who are experienced in installing/upgrading the Town's technology was a significant time-savings for his department and often yielded quicker success rates. He mentioned that the cost of Microsoft products, such as the Town emails and other software, was increasing and therefore his budget reflected that. In addition, his budget had also increased to enhance cybersecurity, clarifying that a secondary endpoint security was added for enhanced ransomware protection which will isolate computers if they detect a problem.

Mr. Farashahi discussed they are preparing to move the Police Department to a different email and government cloud due to the crime justice information system requirements. He clarified that Police would be segmented off from the Town's network and would have a different email domain.

Finally, he discussed an increase to the budget related to purchasing Password Vault which allows the IT department to archive staff passwords securely without staff keeping their passwords unsecured in their offices (such as on a sticky note) or on personal devices.

Mr. Mabbs-Zeno asked about Mr. Farashahi' s ongoing cybersecurity testing. Mr. Farashahi stated that the 'clicks' have dropped off dramatically through testing and education; he noted staff has shown great improvement over the past two years.

Ms. Lewis asked if any other Town departments may be segmented off the Town network in the future, like he had explained the Police Department would be. Mr. Farashahi responded that Town Clerk would be segmented off more in the future, primarily attributed to state security requirements.

Chair Lesser asked for clarification on the storage systems. Mr. Brezovec responded that the storage system will be broken into two units: one for backups and data retention and the other for active database use. He explained this storage strategy would provide faster database access.

Ms. Clark asked what the retention policy was of paper archives v. digital. Mr. Farashahi responded he was unsure if he was able to respond to the question due to legal constraints on some files. He discussed that the state required most things be kept as a paper copy.

Chair Lesser asked about the impact of AI on the department. Mr. Farashahi discussed that AI has been integrated into the Town's Microsoft suite, so staff have access to it. He discussed that the Town follows state AI ethics guidelines and encourages staff to use AI in certain applications. He added that some websites, such as ZenCity, utilize AI on the backend.

Finally, Mr. Farashahi discussed the Public Education Government (PEG) TV Station was funded by cable franchise fees, not taxes. He explained they are planning for a system upgrade, noting the last one was about 4 years ago. Mr. Brezovec explained that the upgrade would encompass enhanced meeting capabilities in the Select Board meeting room, including new cameras, new microphone array, and new backend broadcast system. Mr. Brezovec clarified that these upgrades would not only enhance the PEG station but would allow for Zoom meeting capabilities in the meeting room.

Chair Lesser asked if that was impacting this coming fiscal year. Mr. Farashahi noted it would be funded through the PEG revolving fund which was franchise fees.

Mr. Reynells asked what the PEG viewership statistics looked like. Mr. Farashahi noted that they did not receive data on viewership for Comcast Channel 22 but for those watching the U-Stream, they did receive data on live-viewership and views overall.

Mr. Kennedy questioned the PEG revenue. Mrs. Gilligan responded that the revenue this current fiscal year was $3,488 and was used to estimate what the PEG could expect in the coming fiscal year.

Chair Lesser asked if there were further questions, which there were none.

Recreation Department

Mr. Fraley introduced himself, noting he was newly appointed to the position in November of 2024. He began with stating the Department's mission and then provided an overview of the department staff which consists of 3 full-time and 2 part-time staff. He noted that 75% of the salaries for the Citizen Program Coordinator's and Administrative Assistant's salaries are paid from the general fund while the remaining 25% is supported through the revolving fund.

Moving on, Mr. Fraley discussed this year's capital projects, starting with the new skate park that has just recently opened. He stated that this park is much more beginner friendly. He added that the gazebo/pavilion at Adam's was renovated, and the pool has been converted to liquid chlorine so that the water department can assist with better oversight and more efficient use of chlorine.

Mr. Kennedy noted that the skate park was funded by donations. Mr. Fraley confirmed it was all fundraised with the exception of some staff support.

Mr. Fraley discussed that when he started the job in November, he asked his Recreation Committee to create a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the Recreation Department's infrastructure. (See below)

Strengths	Weakness
• Variety of facilities • Well maintained • Pool and pond • Lots of parking at Adams • Lights for night programming • Playground equipment	• Facilities look tired • Entrance at PCC • Lighting at PCC • Lack of field space • Cost to run the pool • Lack of youth programming
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Afterschool programming @ PCC • Off site/out of town trips • Partnerships with other community organizations • Utilizing the Recreation staff for more programming • More adult education style classes	• Other town departments having the ability to offer similar programs at no cost • Programming getting too expensive • Neighboring towns offering more youth sport programming

Ms. Clark asked for greater clarity regarding the first threat. Mr. Fraley explained that where some other departments, such as the library, could offer programs at no cost while the Recreation Department typically has to require some form of a user fee.

Chair Lesser asked about the need for field lighting evaluations. Mr. Fraley responded that this year's CIP budgeted funds to enable them to bring in professionals to evaluate the lights.

Mr. Fraley went on to discuss a SWOT analysis of their programming. (See below.)

Strengths	Weakness
• Summer Playground Program • Facilities to offer programs • Indoor space at both the PCC and gyms in the school district • Programs are well/fairly priced • Variety • MyRec Recreation Software.	• Lack of active older adult programs (besides pickleball) • Registration/refund policies • Recreation vans are not "Senior Friendly" • Lack of volunteers/instructors
Opportunities	**Threats**
• PCC • Utilize town trails to be more multi-model (mountain biking) • Dog Park • Updating meeting spaces to utilize better technology • Re-configuring the fields to meet the needs of the sports we offer	• Increased use at the pond/water quality • Degrading/older infrastructure • Lack of ADA accessible facilities • Funding to support all facilities

Finally, Mr. Fraley moved on to discuss a SWOT analysis of their staffing. (See below.)

Strengths • Knowledgeable staff • Dedicated to the mission • Solid foundation for seasonal staff • Great staff development opportunities • Modern and well-maintained equipment • Peterborough is a good town to work for	**Weakness** • National lifeguard shortage • Small team with a lot to oversee • Lack of marketing for staff hiring
Opportunities • Bringing back the Teens In Action program staff • Contracting programing/camps to take burden off Recreation Staff • Utilize volunteers to free up staff	Threats • Positive job market • Lack of lifeguard training venues • Youth labor laws

Mr. Fraley then spoke on the department's goals for FY26, as follows:

- Diversify Recreation programming to provide opportunities to all residents.
- Re-establish offsite recreational trips for all ages utilizing the department vans.
- Streamline registration process for Cunningham Pond Beach Stickers, Pool Pass waivers, and kayak rentals.
- Create an environmentally friendly turf management program for Adams Playground/Park property.
- Utilize existing recreation software to its full potential.

Mr. Fraley then discussed the department's funding sources, clarifying that he felt it was important to help the public understand that there was difference between general fund dollars and revolving fund dollars. He explained that things such as administration, operations, overhead, buildings & grounds, vehicles, equipment, maintenance, capital outlay, and aquatic programs are paid for through the general fund. In contrast, the revolving fund is 100% user fee-based and supports youth sports, adult programs, after-school, summer camps, and community centers.

Mr. Kennedy asked if Mr. Fraley could talk through the graph used on the slide. Mr. Fraley explained that the graph shows a trend since FY24 that the department increased their revenue from user fees, which helped to offset the total amount requested through the general fund.

Ms. Clark asked if they offered scholarships for students. Mr. Fraley confirmed that the department does offer them.

Mr. Fraley discussed proposed fee increases to non-resident beach stickers and for kayak rentals. Mr. Mabbs-Zeno asked about the cap for non-resident Cunningham Pond day passes. Mr. Fraley responded that 100 passes were available, adding that the Pond could accommodate more passes being sold. Mr. Mabbs-Zeno asked why he's not increased the number of non-resident passes available. Mr. Fraley responded that it was a Select Board decision.

Mr. Mabbs-Zeno asked about the useful life of a kayak. Mr. Fraley responded they last between 4-6 years, noting that rental boats tend to see quite a bit more wear and tear compared to a personally owned kayak. He added that a replacement costs about $1,000. Mr. Reynells asked about donations, but Mr. Fraley responded that most of the kayaks offered as donations are not at the caliber to be used as a rental.

Mr. Fraley discussed the skate park is planning to raise $40,000 in revenue to fund Phase 2 of the project. Chair Lesser asked where revenues came from, and Mr. Fraley responded it was donation based.

Chair Lesser asked about the reduction in computer services and Mr. Fraley clarified that it was attributed to moving the MyRec software out of the general fund and into the revolving fund.

Discussing changes to the revolving fund, Mr. Fraley then discussed the upcoming community center renovations which would result in a temporary closure which projected decreased revenue. He discussed that the food pantry and pantry services would hopefully remain open, but the farmer's market would need to be temporarily relocated.

Mr. Fraley added that the revolving fund budget also presents increased salaries for program staff. He advocated that increasing wages for these staff was crucial to the positions having a competitive advantage compared to other towns.

Chair Lesser asked how many pond stickers were given to residents. Mr. Fraley stated it was about 1,700 stickers. Chair Lesser asked if there was any consideration to add a fee for resident stickers (currently free for the first and $10 for the second.) Chair Ward indicated that when the pond was given to the Town, he recalled that there may have been a caveat that the amenity should remain free to residents; he suggested it be researched.

With no further questions regarding the Recreation Department, the Committee moved on.

Library

Ms. Chronopoulos introduced herself and began by explaining the Peterborough Town Library is run by a Board of Trustees who are in charge of overseeing the hiring of the Director, set policy, and approve the annual budget. Ms. Chronopoulos noted that the library had welcomed new Program and Outreach Librarian Rebecca Enmen, whose focus is on programming. She shared an overview of her many programs the library offers, ranging from specialized family, adult, & teen programming to Mr. Brezovec's tech drop-in days, and more. She discussed that recently the Kyes-Sage building was painted; stating the building consisted of a bookstore in front with a biomass system for the campus at the rear.

Ms. Chronopoulos stated she also wanted to highlight that the renovation of the library led to them receiving a New Hampshire honor award for excellence in architecture design.

She moved on to discuss the library catalogue, which was updated this past year. She noted it was clunky and difficult to use so it had been updated to a new overlay that looks like Netflix. Mr. Kennedy asked how users can access the app and Ms. Chronopoulos responded to go to the library webpage and you'll see a link to the catalogue at the top right.

Ms. Chronopoulos took a moment to thank volunteers who were a great assistance with keeping the library gardens looking beautiful. She remarked that the gardens were low maintenance, but not zero maintenance.

She also acknowledged the wonderful Friends of the Peterborough Town Library volunteers who assisted with fundraising for programs and equipment.

Ms. Chronopoulos discussed statistics of the library and their value statement. She states that they are open 48 hours per week, with a minimum of 3 staff at any given time, and average a total of just over 200 visitors per day.

Chair Lesser asked about the revenue generated from rentals. Ms. Chronopoulos discussed it was included in her budgeted revenue for the library but she did not have the exact numbers.

Ms. Chronopoulos summarized her budget increases attributed to merit/COLA, increased maintenance costs primarily stemming from the need for ongoing elevator maintenance, and a small increase in digital resources. Overall, the library budget increased 2.7%. She further added that another nonprofit affiliated with the library, the 1833 Society, serves the important function of raising money for the library's endowment.

Ms. Clark asked how much a non-resident library card cost and how many were given out. Ms. Chronopoulos responded that the annual fee is $85 and about 120 nonresident cardholders.

Ms. Lewis asked if the Town of Sharon had access to free library cards. Ms. Chronopoulos responded that Sharon residents are treated as a non-residents.

Mr. Mabbs-Zeno asked if she saw a trend in more teenage patrons using the library. Ms. Chronopoulos stated there has certainly been an increase in that demographic using the library. She stated that through the use of better targeted programming and offering some programs at the school.

Mr. Mabbs-Zeno asked if there was a plan to reduce the noise from the AC in the 1833 Room. Ms. Chronopoulos responded it was a difficult issue to address at this point. She stated that she currently tries to plan ahead for events in that space by turning off the system, however that results in no cooling or heating.

Chair Lesser asked if Ms. Chronopoulos could provide a breakdown of the revenue from the library. Mrs. Gilligan clarified that the revenue shown in the budget was just the revenue that the library was contributing to the Town, not the full breakdown of their revenue streams. Regardless, Ms. Chronopoulos stated she was willing to send the information to the Committee if they were interested.

With no further questions, Chair Lesser moved to adjourn at 6:38 PM, seconded by Ms. Lewis, with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Danica Melone
Director of Planning & Building (interim minute taker)

PETERBOROUGH SELECT BOARD:

Tyler Ward

Bill Taylor

William Kennedy

PETERBOROUGH BUDGET COMMITTEE:

Rick Lesser