MINUTES

Town of Goshen BUDGET COMMITTEE Meeting January 20, 2025

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Present:
Barbara Paronto, Chairperson (2025)
Ashley Cleary Haslam (2027)
Trish LaBossiere (2025)
Renee Frost (2027)
Doug Frost (2027)
Steve Belden (2026)
Robin Brigham (2026)
Bonnie Belden – School Board rep
Dianne Craig – Select Board rep

Absent:
Alicia Baker (2025)
Ernie Dennis (2026)

Agenda: Public Hearing on School Budget and Warrant Articles for 2025-2026 School Year
Review Departmental Budget Requests and Warrant Articles for 2025

Barbara Paronto opened the public hearing at 5:47 p.m. by stating the Budget Committee had learned at its meeting with Jamie Dow of the NH Department of Revenue Administration that under RSA 32 it is the duty of the Budget Committee to prepare the School budget in addition to the Town budget. Ms. Dow had conceded that the Budget Committee could delegate the submission of budget figures by the School Board as has been done in the past, similar to the Board of Selectmen's submission of the Town budget. Ms. Dow had pointed out, however, that the Budget Committee must hold the public hearing.

Barbara turned the floor over to Dr. Gail Paludi, Superintendent, for presentation of the proposed 2025-2026 School Budget. Dr. Paludi introduced Jim Fenn, Business Administrator, and stated that Sarah Vogel, Special Education Director, was not able to attend the public hearing. Also in attendance were Melissa Salinardi, recording secretary, Peter Brigham, School Board Chair, Bonnie Belden, Vice-Chair, James Carrick, John Scranton and Caleb Howard, School Board members.

Dr. Paludi gave a detailed presentation of the proposed budget which is based on the tuition costs and known needs of 70 students and allowing for the enrollment of an additional 5 students. She explained that enrollment numbers fluctuate even after the budget figures have been submitted but in the past few years the anticipation of 5 additional students had been a good estimation. She noted that the District may need to access the Tuition Stabilization Expendable Trust Fund.

The proposed budget of $1,737,912, is down from the previous budget by 9.27 percent, or $177,561. Claremont serves as Goshen's anchor school and transportation is included in the contract. Newport also provides transportation to students attending their schools. Parents are required to provide transportation for students attending other schools. Currently, Goshen students are enrolled in five school districts.

Dr. Paludi explained the purpose of the School District's Trust Funds and stated that transfers to those accounts are only made if there are excess funds at the end of the budget year. First priority would be given to the Tuition Stabilization Expendable Trust Fund, then the Special Education Expendable Trust Fund, and finally the Legal Trust Fund.

There were no questions or comments from the general public. The School Board and the Budget Committee had previously voted to approve the proposed budget and, there being no changes, there was no need for further action. Barbara Paronto called the public hearing closed at 6:05 p.m.

Immediately following, the Budget Committee continued with its work session. Renee Frost pointed out that references to Robin Brigham on the first page of the January 13th minutes should be corrected to Renee Frost.

Barbara stated that at the January 13th meeting several questions had arisen and Dianne had offered to look into them and report back. Dianne stated that Chris Moen was continuing as the Town's Emergency Management Director and Forest Fire Warden but he had stepped down as Fire Captain and would remain on as a non-ranking fire fighter. A call had been made to request repair service or bulb replacement of street light by the library. The reason the Audit line item was underspent by $6,125 was due to the fact that, as Trish Labossiere had suggested, the financial paperwork had been scanned and sent to the auditors instead of them making a site visit. Dianne suggested that the full amount remain in the proposed budget because we don't know if the auditors will follow the same procedure or physically come to the Town offices to do their examination. Dianne reported that the amount spent on Legal fees for 2024 was, in fact, $947 as reported. Dianne also reported on efforts to get the Library phones and alarm systems upgraded. The cost of a changeover will depend greatly upon whether or not the equipment currently in place will be of any use under the new configuration. Discussions with Tasco are ongoing. Trish reported that the Library Trustees had met in a closed-door session to discuss employee compensation and had voted to revise their budget request to reflect an increase in the librarian's wages.

The Budget Committee continued its review of the following departmental budget requests:

	appropriated in 2024 budget	requested for 2025 budget	noted reasons for significant change
Highway Operations	$136,385	$150,100	

Barbara stated that she had contacted Shae Simino, Road Agent, and that he would come in to discuss his budget request, so the Committee would pass over that budget for now.

Street Lighting	$ 750	$ 750	
Transfer Station Admin.	$23,000	$25,688	wage increase
Transfer Station Operations	$57,550	$54,415	removed canister rental
Sewage Disposal	$ 1,215	$ 1,215	
Health Agencies	$ 8,687	$ 8,549	
Health & Pest Control	$ 2,585	$ 2,300	removed animal control
Welfare	$ 4,530	$ 8,250	need to reduce by $4,000*
* funds are available in the Welfare capital reserve account for Direct Assistance			
Historical Society	$ 300	$ 300	
Library	$48,867	$55,113	wage, supplies, repairs, telephone
Patriotic Purposes	$ 800	$ 1,600	Old Home Day – September 27
Conservation	$ 750	$ 750	
Debt Service – TANS	$ 500	$ 500	

Discussion began on the Capital Reserve Account requests but input from the Road Agent was needed before forming any consensus on the Highway accounts. Dianne explained that the $60,000 requested for Bridge Maintenance included money for Ball Park Bridge. The Fire Department's request for $20,000 for Personal Equipment and $15,000 for Fire Truck were consistent with prior years, as was $10,000 for the Police Vehicle. The $14,000 for the Revaluation account allows the Town to meet its contractual payment for the cyclical town-wide revaluation. The $3,600 requested by the Planning Board for updating the Master Plan was formerly included in the operating budget. The Master Plan called for $15,000 to be added to the Town Buildings Maintenance and Improvements account in order to cover costs of future improvements and repairs.

Dianne briefly described the proposed Warrant Articles.
The Plow/Dump Truck Lease - $26,060
Final payment of the lease purchase.

Offset Transfer Station - $35,000
If necessary funds would be transferred from the Transfer Station Special Revenue Fund to help pay the cost of operating the transfer station. The funds are derived from the sale of dump tickets and recyclables.

Internet Bond - $51,155
The annual bond payment to the New Hampshire Municipal Bond Bank for town-wide internet access. This is a user-based fee and no funds are raised from taxation.

Transfer Station Trash Canisters - $20,000
Instead of paying $3,600 per year to rent canisters for the transfer station, the Town would transfer funds from the Transfer Station Special Revenue Fund and purchase two canisters. No funds would be raised from taxation.

Since only the Board of Selectmen can put a warrant article on the Town Warrant, unless it is a petitioned warrant article, Barbara asked Dianne about whether the Board of Selectmen would consider using funds from the Unexpended Fund Balance to apply another layer of pavement on Lear Hill Road. She explained that the skim coat that was applied over the summer would likely only last a couple years, but if an additional layer was applied the useful life was estimated at 12 years. Dianne stated that she didn't believe the Unexpended Fund Balance could be used for any purpose other than reducing the tax rate. Barbara stated that warrant articles are approved nearly every year to accomplish projects with those funds. Dianne stated that additional improvements to Lear Hill Road will probably need to be bundled with other costly projects and paid with a bond.

Based on several discussions that took place during the meeting, Dianne will look into and get back to the Budget Committee on what lights are covered under the Street Lighting line item, the total amount of the proposed operating budget, and use of the Unexpended Fund Balance.

Trish moved, and Renee seconded, a motion to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

Barbara Paronto, Chair