

At a Town Council Workshop with Budget Board holden in and for the Town of Gloucester on February 24, 2020:

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the Budget Board Chair at 6:30 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Members Present: Budget Board: Maureen McNamara, Chair; Henry P. Haczynski; David Lohr; Alfred Fuoroli; Michael Robinson; Kevin Lavoie; & Michael Morgan

Town Council: George O. (Buster) Steere, Jr., President; Walter M. O. Steere, III, Vice-President; Patricia Henry; and Julian (Jay) Forgue.

Absent: William E. Reichert

Also Present: Diane Brennan, Finance Director; Elizabeth Beltram, Financial Anaylist & Jean Fecteau, Town Clerk

III. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

IV. Workshop with Budget Board: Review of Budget for FY 2020/2021- Discussion and/or Action

Maureen McNamara, Chair of Budget Board, welcomed the Town Council and offered an interactive workshop.

D. Brennan, Finance Director gave an overview of the Budget Boards proposed budget at this point.

Highlights discussed were increases/decreases/ areas for more discussion:

Town Council: Town Council Contingency Fund & Advertising accounts were discussed. The Clerk explained the increase in advertising is due to advertising that will be needed if any questions are placed on the November ballot due to the current Charter Review.

Town Clerk: Other Purchased Services showed an increase. The Town Clerk explained it was for General Code to do a legal review of the entire code of ordinance as it has not been done in some time. (Actual quote was rec'd)

Board of Canvassers: D. Brennan explained these budget numbers represent an election year.

Bldg/Zoning Office: Slight increase in salary line due to change of employee benefit

Planning: Salary & Benefit increase due to the Planner requesting an increase of hours and a change in her Clerk's status from Clerk II to Senior Clerk. Council questioned the payroll deductions for a GIS Consultant. Discussion followed on the conceptual aspect of a consultant being paid as an employee.

There was a consensus to put this item (GIS Consultant) on the Town Council's next agenda for discussion and/or action.

There was a consensus to put the Planners increase of hours request on the next agenda for discussion and/or action after discussion of following a certain process, which would start with Council approval, when requesting salary and/or benefit changes.

There was a consensus that the change of the Clerk's status was already discussed and expected as an budget item.

- Economic Dev. There was discussion about this new line item.
- Planning Board: The line item for clerk was lowered due to past spending in that line item.
- Conservation: There is a proposed \$500 reduction from the assigned account for tree planting.
- Land Trust: D. Brennan explained the amount shown is an estimate of the percentage of the realty tax stamp funds anticipated. The Land Trust budget/balance was discussed. There was discussion about the percentage of realty stamps allocated to Land Trust and the process to change, if considered, through a charter amendment.
- Finance Director: D. Brennan explained the allocation for Education/Training is still proposed and that she or her staff will utilize those funds this year.
- Treasurer: Proposed change in salary/benefits line is due to a change in personnel. An increase in payroll/audit services was also discussed.
- Personnel Office: There was discussion about an increase due to a purposed additional day per week, which is a change from the original agreement, and an increase in benefits for the potential for dental benefits requested. Discussion followed on the uncertainty of this budget due to a vacancy in that position and other ways to fill that position. There was a consensus of the Town Council to include an agenda item for discussion and/or action at the next Council meeting.
- Tax Collections: There is a proposed increase to Tax Sale fees. D. Brennan explained the tax sale is a source of revenue.
- Tax Assessor: There was lengthily discussion about a proposed increase to Education/Training/Professional Organizations. Councilor Henry suggested funding at the same level as 2020, \$4,500 & \$1,000. There was discussion regarding a mileage reimbursement proposal for the Assessor. The consensus of Council was that the vehicles the Town currently has can be shared and, therefore, a mileage reimbursement wasn't

necessary.

Police Dept.: A new position was reflected in budget under salaries and benefits.

EMA: Discussion was held regarding the salary line item and the work done by this department.

Animal Control: D. Brennan stated there is a 3% increase instead of the flat amount (which is greater) in the salary line item. Other slight increases were discussed.

Public Works: Admin. - changes based on salaries and all other line items level funded.

Highway Division - Budget Board Chair stated there was a request received for two employees, Driver/Laborers 1, and the Budget Board has included one position in proposed budget, to date. Discussion followed on costs associated with and needs for new positions. Maintenance work on town properties was discussed. Discussion followed on determining costs for using contractors for landscaping town properties.

The line item for \$200,000 for paving/road repair/maintenance in the operations budget was discussed.

Discussion followed on funding road repairs through Operating and/or Capital Budget.

Snow & Storm - level funded

Maintenance for Bldg. & Grounds - reflects changes in personnel. Increase in tool line item.

Maintenance for Equipment/Maintenance reflects change in benefits.

Purchased Services and Miscellaneous Expenses increases were discussed and it was suggested that further back up information may be needed.

Waste Disposal Div.: Increase in tipping fees and increase to Other Purchased Services.

Councilor W. Steere questioned if a salary increase for part time employees was factored in. D. Brennan stated there was an \$.80 per hour increase.

Discussion followed on the number of line items for "Tools".

Recreation: There was a salary request that was reduced by Budget Board and they requested Town Council feedback. There was discussion about many new programs proposed by the Recreation Director. Council acknowledged the good work promoting Recreation programs but discussion followed on

considering cutting back on the proposed number of new programs.

Senior Center: There was an increase in Operational costs which reflects high utility costs

Human Services: The Budget Board stated a part time position was requested but not included in budget proposal.

Other Oper. Exp.: D. Brennan reviewed general increases for rising costs.

IT Office: There was a request for an increase in weekly hours by Matt Floor for work involving securing our computer network. Council questioned, for consistency, why this request didn't come before Council first and/or why it didn't come from his supervisor. Council explained it is a protocol issue.

Aid Requests: Libraries were funded as requested.
Budget Board made some changes to level fund everyone except for Gloucester Little league and Heritage Society (which reflects funds for historical cemeteries).
Discussion followed on whether to level fund libraries due to budget issues Council needs to address. All agreed the benefits to the community are high but perhaps the libraries can look at developing major fund-raising opportunities. Reference was made to the consideration Council discussed regarding cutting programs in our own Recreation program. Discussion followed on the possibility of level funding/cutting requests which will be considered by Budget Board.

The Budget Board Chair asked Council to supply the Board with some direction on what they would like the bottom line to look like as it would make their job easier.

D. Brennan stated there was a slight change in Debt Service for a decrease of \$1,649.

D. Brennan stated the Regional School numbers still appear to have ongoing changes and could effect the bottom line proposed. Councilor Henry stated she has been trying to get answers regarding the salaries proposed for the Superintendent and the other administrative offices.

Capital Budget: Proposed and actual requests were reviewed. A decrease to the Public Works proposal of \$700,000 to \$280,000 for a number of miscellaneous vehicles was discussed. The Budget Board felt the Public Works Director could use his own judgement as to which items to purchase.

Discussion followed on the successful purchases of used equipment the department has made in the past.

Discussion followed on the combined allocation of paving funds in capital along with an operation line item for a total of \$590,000. A multi year paving plan was recommended by Budget

Board members. Road repair was discussed by all. Councilor Henry stated she thought there was a five year road plan but she hasn't seen anything saying which road is getting done recently. Councilor G. Steere stated we asked for a priority list but he hasn't seen one. Councilor Forgue stated it would be nice to have a projection and someone should come in with that. The high level of repair, including the fixing of drainage issues, currently being done by Public Works under the direction of G. Treml was noted.

D. Brennan referred to the overall numbers:

Special Appropriations:

\$ 50,000	For Gloucester Public Schools (loss in state aid)
300,000	For Gloucester Public Schools renovations
372,000	Capital
50,000	For student proration
200,000	For future operations of Gloucester Public Schools

For total expenditures proposed at \$31,676,543 or a 4.67% increase.

D. Brennan then referred to the Revenues on page 2 of proposed budget, including the Motor Vehicle Tax Revenue & the State Phase out Reimbursement which she explained.

D. Brennan then explained the Amount to be Raised by Taxes before Adjustments section and explained the adjustments proposed:

\$ 200,000	Transfer from surplus set aside for the Region
200,000	Transfer from surplus for Gloucester Schools
800,000	Transfer from surplus (for budgeted items)
372,000	Transfer from surplus for Capital

Councilor Henry stated she has discussed with D. Brennan that these proposed transfers from surplus bring us down from 19% surplus to 15%, and Councilor Henry noted that state law requires a 12% surplus.

D. Brennan stated that bring us to a 3.38% increase with \$692,084.27 as the amount to be raised by taxes.

Council discussed how new construction will effect tax rate. D. Brennan stated the tax rate will come down as values rise. Councilor G. Steere questioned whether growth will effect the tax base. D. Brennan stated it will help in many places. Councilor W. Steere questioned what year we are in for the school renovations set asides. D. Brennan stated this is the forth year of that program with one more to go. Councilor W. Steere also stated we have not addressed the dam repairs necessary on the Land Trust property. Discussion followed on funding of the project and whether the funds the Land Trust receives from Tax Stamps could go towards those repairs.

Councilor W. Steere thanked the Budget Board for their efforts.

The Chairman of the Budget Board asked Council where they would like to see the Board go from this point.

Councilor G. Steere stated the board did a good job. Councilor Henry also commented on the boards work and stated they should be commended for what they do.

Grant funding and state assistance for the dam project was discussed.

Councilor Henry thanked all members of board as well as Diane Brennan for their work.

Councilor Henry stated the Chair of the Budget Board would like some direction. Councilor G. Steere stated he would like to consider putting funds aside instead of hiring a new Public Works employee and try to contract the grounds maintenance work out for a year or two. Councilor G. Steere stated he feels we will save some money. There was discussion as to what the employee was to be hired for. Council consensus was that more information was needed as to what the proposed employee(s) were being hired to do.

Councilor W. Steere stated Council will have to do some work on what to do with HR position and get that information back to Budget Board. Consensus was to add to next Town Council agenda item to discuss possible ways to fill that position.

Again, discussion followed on the Land Trust dam project. Consensus to add this item to the Town Council agenda.

V. Adjourn

The Budget Board adjourned by unanimous vote.

A MOTION was made by Councilor Henry to ADJOURN at 9:18 p.m.; seconded by Councilor W. Steere

Discussion: none

VOTE: AYES- G. Steere, W. Steere, Henry and Forgue
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED