

Greensboro Selectboard

December 4, 2024 Budget Meeting - Minutes

[This was a hybrid meeting held at the Greensboro Free Library]

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Eric Hanson, David Kelley, MacNeil, Ellen Celnik, Bobbie Nisbet

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT (in person): Peter Romans, Jennifer Lucas, Kim Greaves, Josh Karp, Brandy Smith

OTHERS PRESENT (remote): None

CALLED TO ORDER: 1:09 PM

Discussion of the FY26 budget.

Eric said the draft budget is showing a 7.1% increase over FY25.

Jennifer suggested looking at revenue. Discussion of the fact that a substantial increase in property values could lead to a reduction in the tax rate at current spending levels.

David talked with Sheriff Harlow about his concerns with the police budget. In response, Sheriff Harlow presented a renewal contract with the same coverage for \$6k less. A number of selectboard members responded that they are uncomfortable cutting the police budget. Peter said the town is getting great service from OCSD and saving a fortune over Hardwick Police. Sheriff Harlow didn't increase her contract the first year, maybe a little the second or third year, their budget is pretty bare bones. It's wrong to not pay the Sheriff what she's asked for, don't you think their expenses have gone up?

David said while he understands everyone is against cutting the police budget, other towns have a lower tax rate. Regarding police coverage, Ellen said she's talked with deputies about Rt. 16 being a corridor for drug activity and that a police presence is important. She added that the folks at Smith's Store really appreciate OCSD coverage in the Bend.

Peter suggested asking Sheriff Harlow what increase she would have proposed for the new contract, had David not contacted her. This amount could be the starting point for a budget discussion. Ellen said the board might consider an increase of 2.5%, the federal COLA. Eric will discuss the police budget with Sheriff Harlow.

Discussion: what amount of extra FEMA funds should be counted on to offset budget expenditures? Peter suggested removing costs for gravel pit overburden (\$40k) and road project materials (\$25k) from the budget, under the assumption that these costs will be covered by the FEMA funds. Jennifer said this is not an ideal approach from an accounting perspective, since these line items will go negative when the costs are incurred if no funds are budgeted for them. A better approach is to leave the amounts in there and instead include the extra FEMA money under revenue.

It was agreed to count on a revenue of \$65k in extra FEMA funds to offset the overburden and road projects line items. Josh suggested that these extra FEMA funds be used carefully, perhaps just for special projects or purchases. If they're used for recurring expenses, the tax rate could jump when these funds are depleted.

Ellen said old technology in the town offices will cost more in the long run, and we need to invest in keeping our hardware up to date and improve our data backup processes. Kim said I.T. consultant Andy Mosedale recommended that the town improve its approach to data backup. He, Ellen and Kim will be meeting with a backup service provider to discuss options moving forward.

Kim introduced Woodbury town treasurer Brandy Smith, who is helping out in Brett's absence.

Kim said she's asked NEMRC to process the town's W2s and 1099s this year. This will ease some of Kim's workload and she said the service is reasonably priced.

Regarding the road crew trialing a salt brine system next winter, Peter said a selectboard member needs to follow through and reach out to other towns that are using this system. The board approved Peter discussing this with other towns.

Eric said the selectboard will host two budget meetings to solicit public comment, on 12/12 and 12/16.

ADJOURNMENT

The board adjourned unanimously at 1:50 PM.

Respectfully Submitted: Josh Karp, Selectboard Clerk