

# Greensboro Selectboard

## December 12, 2024 – Minutes

[This was a hybrid meeting held at the Greensboro Free Library, with some participants joining remotely]

**SELECTBOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Eric Hanson

**SELECTBOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Ellen Celnik, MacNeil, David Kelley, Bobbie Nisbet

**OTHERS PRESENT in person:** Kim Greaves, Josh Karp

**OTHERS PRESENT remote:** Christine Armstrong, Jennifer Lucas, Elaine Cole-Kerr, Rod Kerr, Gary Circosta, Janet Long, Wilfried Sieg, Naomi Ranz-Schleifer, DeDe Stabler, Diane Irish, Glenn Olds, Lise Armstrong

### FY26 Budget

Eric began the meeting at 6:30 PM. The selectboard has been working since October on a draft FY26 budget. At this point there's an overall budget increase of about 7%. Eric detailed aspects of the budget, including:

- 3.5% wage increase for town employees. Federal COLA is 2.5%, the board agreed to add an additional 1%.
- Health insurance costs have increased about 20%. The board agreed to leave health care plans and employee contributions unchanged from last year.
- The town's mandated contribution to the VMERS retirement system increased by about 10%.
- Highway budget increases are mitigated by long-time, part-time employee Wizzy Hall retiring from his town work.
- Sand and salt costs have increased.
- The board budgeted \$25k for 'special projects' on town roads; these are long-needed improvements Tom has identified.
- \$40k was allocated for gravel pit overburden removal. This has not been budgeted for historically; it's possible that an every-other year allocation will be adequate moving forward.
- The town has seen a substantial increase in the grand list, which will help moderate the municipal tax rate increase for many residents.
- Josh estimates the town will receive \$400-500k from FEMA above and beyond what the town borrowed for the 2023 flood repairs. This is reimbursement for road crew time, equipment use, and town gravel used for flood repairs. These funds could be used for any number of things including increasing the HERF and Capital Budget balances. The board is conservatively planning on using \$60k of this money to offset some FY26 budget increases.

While the past two years of flooding has been difficult, these additional funds will be a real economic benefit to the town.

- John Schweizer worked with Tom on the Highway Equipment Reserve Fund (HERF). \$124k is allocated to the HERF for FY26, an increase of 3.5%. In FY26 the town will be replacing the grader (\$415k) and town pickup (\$60k). The current sidewalk clearing machine has been troublesome and Tom would like to replace it with a skid steer, a versatile piece of equipment that could be used year-round for many tasks. This would cost around \$60k including sidewalk attachments. This discussion is ongoing and the skid steer has not been included in the HERF at this time.
- Jennifer Lucas has been assisting with the Capital Budget (CB). \$175k has been allocated to the CB in FY26, the same amount as in FY25. FY26 CB expenditures include paving the library parking lot (\$25k) and SCBA equipment for the fire dept (\$46k). The FY28 projection includes the first new town garage

payment of \$114k, based on \$1.5 million financed over 20 years. Also included in FY28 is the first new firetruck payment (\$68k annually for ten years) as well as the purchase of a Jaws of Life (\$20k). The last firehouse payment (\$64k) will be made in FY29, along with a new firehouse roof (\$100k).

- The FY26 Orleans County Sherrif contract of \$200k reflects a price increase of just 2.5%.

## **Q&A**

- Christine asked whether there's been raises for library staff, similar to town employees. Jennifer said library staff have also received the 3.5% pay increase.
- Christine urged the board to be conservative as it allocates the additional FEMA reimbursements discussed earlier.
- Christine asked whether the board has considered sharing personnel with other towns. Kim said a few years ago the town discussed sharing a grant writer with Glover but it didn't work out. Christine said she's aware of a number of grants the town has missed out on, and suggested board consider hiring a grant writer. If the town agreed to enact the 1% local option tax on rooms, meals, and alcohol the proceeds could be used to pay for a grant writer. Eric said there's been significant staff reconfiguration at the town offices and it will take some time for the staff to settle in to new roles. Lily will be working more hours than Jeanne did and will take on more tasks. Josh's hours have been increased with the assumption that as his FEMA work winds down, he can shift to other projects such as grant writing.
- Wilfried asked why the Highway Revenue numbers vary so much between FY23 (\$831k) and FY25 (\$132k). Gary said it appears that the FY23 figure is inaccurate.
- Eric said ideally we'd be finishing up the FY24 outside audit but with Brett on leave, we haven't been able to get this completed. We'll have some catching up to do early this coming year, he said.
- Josh: we're looking at huge costs for fire trucks, it seems like all small towns must be facing this fiscal challenge. Has there been any talk of regional fire departments, or towns merging fire departments? Or, would response time be too negatively impacted for this to be practical. Gary said the town bought used fire trucks in the past and asked why only new trucks are now being considered. Jennifer said part of this is that new OSHA requirements require fire departments to invest in modern equipment. Gary asked whether we'll have enough firefighters to operate these expensive trucks in the future, and wondered if the response time of our volunteer fire dept. may not be so different from a regionalized fire department.
- Eric and the road crew went to a talk describing the Hyde Park highway department's salt brine system. Hyde Park has seen a 30-40% reduction in salt use since they instituted this system. Eric said our road crew is planning to outfit one truck next winter to apply the brine. Greensboro could buy brine from Hyde Park for the time being so we wouldn't need to invest in the whole brine production system. Christine said it's very important to reduce our salt usage and urged the board to follow through and make sure this brine trial happens.
- Gary said as he understands it, the reappraisal fund currently has enough funds to cover the 2026 reappraisal. This means the board can likely remove the \$21k budgeted for this expense in the FY26 budget.

The meeting concluded at 7:30 PM.

*Respectfully Submitted, Josh Karp-Selectboard Clerk*