

Greensboro Selectboard

December 16, 2024 Special Budget Meeting – MINUTES

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

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Eric Hanson, Ellen Celnik

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: MacNeil, David Kelley, Bobbie Nisbet

OTHERS PRESENT (in person): Kim Greaves, Josh Karp

OTHERS PRESENT (remote): Gary Circosta, Lise Armstrong, Liz Steel, Christine Armstrong

FY26 Budget Discussion

Eric opened the meeting at 6:30 PM. The FY26 budget was discussed.

- Eric said the FY26 budget is up about 7%, but with revenue from an increase in the grand list and a conservative \$60k in 'extra' FEMA funds, most people should see their municipal tax rate go up very little.
- It's been determined that there are enough funds in the reappraisal fund, so \$21k can be removed from the Capital Budget.
- Gary asked about the purchase of two new fire trucks in FY28 and FY30. Eric said these purchases are a few years away and it could always be decided to purchase used trucks instead. The current plan is to finance two new trucks for ten years, with the FY28 truck purchase resulting in an annual payment of \$68,380 while the FY30 truck results in an annual payment of \$80,988.
- Gary asked about \$25,000 in the FY26 capital budget earmarked for paving the library parking lot. Eric said the lot is showing its age and has been recently damaged during plowing.
- Gary asked about the paving budget. Eric said the FY26 paving budget is \$200k, up from \$180k in FY25. The town tries to pave 1.5 miles a year to keep on track with a 7-8 year paving cycle.
- Eric said John Schweizer worked with Tom on the HERF, which they calculated needs \$124k in funding in FY26.
- Liz asked whether the FY26 Technology/IT line item, showing an increase of 36%, includes a website upgrade. Liz said the communications working group made a number of recommendations for website improvements, yet the board hasn't wanted to invest in this. Eric said the board has budgeted for some training for Lily, who could possibly undertake some website upgrades. Let's see what we can accomplish with the office staff this year, he said.

Kim said Maya McCoy does website upkeep for the town and is very responsive. Regarding the increase in the Technology/IT line item, Kim said some hardware upgrades in the town offices are needed.

Gary said he supports the recommendations made by the communications working group a few years ago, and as the board works to improve communications and heal some of the division in town, it should consider implementing everything the group is asking for.

- Liz asked why the Road Project Materials line item is up 525%. Eric said the \$21k increase is for hiring outside contractors to widen roads, improve ditches and replace culverts. Ellen added that much of this work is preemptive measures recommended by Tom based on recent flooding events and future climate change.
- Liz asked about the status of the driveway plowing contract. Kim said the contract was just renewed for three years. She explained that Perry's is paid a fixed fee no matter how many times driveways are plowed in any given winter.
- **Appropriations.** Kim said not all organizations have sent appropriation requests yet, and in a number of cases the FY26 budget reflects last year's requests. She'll put appropriation requests on the website as they come in. For new appropriations, the town requires a formal petition.

Eric said excluding Hardwick Rescue and the Nursing Home, appropriations amount to about 2% of the budget and are worth discussing. While many requests seem worthwhile, the town should come up with a way to review and assess these requests. Ellen said perhaps if a dollar threshold is exceeded, the town would ask the organization to provide an income/expense report so we can better understand how their organization operates. She said historically proposals to cut appropriations at town meeting have been voted down, with appropriations being increased in some cases.

Kim said while it's too expensive to include in the town report detailed descriptions of all organizations requesting appropriations, she and the board try to answer questions about these groups at town meeting.

- Liz asked whether the amount budgeted for zoning administration is adequate, given that people are looking for more development opportunities for their properties.

Christine said she was on the interview committee that hired the current Zoning Administrator, and at that time it was just a two-day position.

When she compares the way our town office staff is organized with other towns in the area, she finds our arrangement confusing. What about reorganizing the town offices? Can we more clearly delineate which staff member is doing what? Should we consider hiring a town manager to support Kim and the Selectboard?

Eric said due to the recent reconfiguration of town staff, this will be a year of reorganization at the town offices. As his FEMA work winds down, Josh will have more time to work on other projects such as grants administration. Lily has been hired as assistant town clerk and will be taking on a variety of tasks. Moving forward, we might consider separating the treasurer and zoning administrator positions.

- Gary said the Orleans County Sheriff is offering the town an incredible service at a very reasonable price, and he's concerned about David's idea to reduce the police budget. According to Ellen, David did more research and realized that the area towns with cheaper police contracts receive very limited coverage. He is no longer pushing for cuts. Christine said she appreciates that David did some comparison and analysis. Looking at the budgets of communities around us is pretty eye-opening.

Eric said the board needs to approve the FY26 budget at its Jan. 8 selectboard meeting so the town report can be completed and sent to the printer's.

The meeting was concluded at 7:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted: Josh Karp, Selectboard Clerk