

Town of Canterbury  
Selectmen's Meeting  
December 6, 2021

Selectmen Present: Cheryl Gordon  
Art Hudson  
Bob Steenson  
Town Administrator: Ken Folsom

The meeting was called to order at 4:59 PM.

Chairwoman Cheryl Gordon opened the meeting at 5:03 p.m.

Bob made a motion to sign the Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$36,705.89, seconded by Art. All in favor; motion passes.

Cheryl signed a letter to petition the change of the Town's website from .org to .gov domains.

The engagement letter from Plodzik and Sanderson was discussed and the question came up what the difference between the contract with Melanson-Heath, the Town's former auditing firm, and the new firm chosen. Ken said the only real difference is Melanson included a management discussion; it can be done but it's not a big deal. The price between the two companies is the same, and it is a three-year contract. The contract was signed.

The deed for land at 15 Friar Tuck Road (Map 102 Lot 107), purchased by Rachel Burkland at 13 Friar Tuck Road, was signed by the selectmen, and it was noted that the property shall be merged with the buyer's existing lot.

Bob made a motion to sign the contract with Sander's Searches for the lien and deed research, seconded by Cheryl. All in favor; motion passes.

Bob made a motion to sign the Intent to Cut at property on Intervale Road (Map 250 Lot 002) owned by Brookford Farm, seconded by Art. All in favor; motion passes.

An Application for Current Use for David Noel on 52 Baptist Hill Road was signed by the selectmen. Bob questioned if the form needs to be updated.

An Abatement for a timber tax in the amount of \$378.29 for Rose View Properties was signed by the selectmen.

Under New Business, there were several documents to review. Bob passed out a notice from the Department of Transportation noticing the Town that a paving job had been completed. Comcast sent a notice that they are updating their prices to customers. The Merrimack County Budget for 2022, totaling \$97 million, was passed around. Bob suggested the document be made available for residents to see.

Bob made a motion to approve the November 15, 2021 Meeting Minutes as drafted, seconded by Art. All in favor; motion passes.

The Budget Committee (Kelly Short, Tyson Miller, Bob Scarponi, Kent Ruesswick) came into the meeting for their appointment at 5:30 p.m. Bob Steenson started the review by stating that his hope

41 is that the budget will be trimmed to \$3 million by Town Meeting 2022. Cost drivers are an area  
42 of focus this coming year and include the amount of compensation with the Police Department and  
43 also staffing in the Highway Department.

44 Ken made an overview of the 2021 budget and how it was spent. This included a camera and  
45 speakers system for meetings, heaters in the Highway garage, LED lighting at the Municipal  
46 Complex, painting at the Municipal Complex (with labor by the Department of Corrections).  
47 Increases on the year's budget came from the tent and chairs for the May '21 Town Meeting. The  
48 Fire Command vehicle, and the SCBA for the Fire Department are all set, Engine 2 is good, and  
49 the two new hybrid Police Cruisers will be delivered in two weeks. The old Police truck was  
50 transferred to the Highway Department, but the new Ford F550, in Ken's opinion, is probably a  
51 lemon and needs more work from Grappone. The Road Grader is good, but they are putting more  
52 money into the backhoe, which to date has received \$38,000 worth of work. This is a savings  
53 compared to a new backhoe which would run \$150,000. The server was installed at the Town  
54 Office and the Building Software from Avitar is complete. The Highway budget purchased three  
55 new trailers for the Transfer Station cardboard system. The alarm panel at the Transfer Station was  
56 upgraded. Revenues for the year were a little higher than anticipated, with a stumpage of \$24,000  
57 for the Sawyer's Ferry lot project run by the Conservation Commission, ARPA Funds came in at  
58 \$128,000, and four town lots were sold this year for another \$11,000.

59 For the 2022 budget, the wage CPI is 6%, which is an increase from last year. Health care plan  
60 costs went down. Buildings will need some maintenance in the coming year, including the library,  
61 which will use Department of Corrections labor to paint the exterior. The Police department is  
62 fully staffed with Officer Smith's return. Flooring at the Municipal Complex needs replacement,  
63 and fans at the Highway Garage and Fire Dept. high bays need to be added. The Solid Waste  
64 Committee wants to purchase a baler for cardboard and upgrade the electrical system for a cost of  
65 approximately \$80,000. The Fire Chief is going after a grant that should help cover the cost of  
66 radios. A new fire truck needs to be looked at as well, costing some \$650,000. There is currently  
67 \$300,000 in the capital reserve account. Costs for Penacook Rescue Service, though much less  
68 than Boscawen, are also rising. The Highway Department wants a welder and plasma cutter costing  
69 \$7,250, and an upgrade for a water tank that will be put in a dump truck, costing \$42,000. In  
70 discussion with John O'Connor, the Road Agent, two miles of paving a year is the goal, which  
71 will run \$330,000. The Town has received a quote for new railing at the Gazebo for \$5,000, and a  
72 new flagpole for \$25,000. The Library's budget will increase with more wages, increased  
73 healthcare and retirement costs. In the overview, payroll is the largest category of monies spent in  
74 the 2022 budget, and \$1.3 million is represented in payroll, health care and NH Retirement System  
75 plans, and payroll tax costs.

76 Bob Steenson outlined a new incentivization plan to keep police and other town staff from leaving  
77 the Town's employ with a smaller pay increase and use an incentive bonus twice a year. Chief  
78 Labrecque thinks this plan is workable, and Bob pointed out that the cost of replacing employees  
79 is much more than working to keep what we have for staff. Art pointed out that police officers are  
80 in high demand, and they are receiving sign-on bonuses to join other town's departments. Tyson  
81 asked for clarification and Bob noted it would be a 7% CPI increase and an 8% bonus. The bottom  
82 line goal is \$3 million or under. Ken did a wage and hour survey with Loudon, Boscawen,  
83 Salisbury and Canterbury is not competitive at approximately 15 below the other towns. There is  
84 a similar discussion going on with Chief Gamache for the Fire Department. The Highway Crew  
85 was run two people short this year, and Evan and David have received adjustments this year for

86 their work. There is a competition for talent in the workforce. The idea behind the incentive is to  
87 keep people. Bob Scarponi asked who else does this, and Bob Steenson stated it was an unusual  
88 program for a town but it says, “we value you here”, to the Town’s employees. Art agreed that it  
89 is worth it. Chief Labrecque is behind it. There was a discussion about salaries of the police  
90 department and how this plan would work for them. Kelly Short asked if they would be explaining  
91 this to the employees. Bob Steenson noted yes the incentive program will be documented and  
92 explained thoroughly and that Deb, the secretary for the Police Department, has taken on much  
93 more work for the Fire and Highway Departments, and is still at her original compensation. Kent  
94 Ruesswick suggested the program be tried for a year and see how it works for the Town.

95 Discussion continued on how much the health care would cost, and the budget continued to be  
96 reviewed. It was pointed out that under the Town Clerk’s line, a decrease would be made in the  
97 Deputy salary line, and an increase made for healthcare for the Town Clerk. The Clerk will  
98 assuming full time hours, and there was a revenue offset of \$2,300 for the employee’s contribution.

99 The Library Trustees Ray Craigie and Linda Reindeau, and director Sue LeClair and Rachel Baker  
100 were attending the meeting to discuss the Library’s budget. There are changes to the budget as a  
101 staffing shift is occurring with a new director and children’s librarian. Kelly Short asked for  
102 clarification on how many employees, and Sue LeClair answered that the staff will be remaining  
103 at 2 full-time employees, and three part-time employees. The discussion moved to the Capital  
104 Improvement line, and the vinyl flooring does not need to be encumbered into next year if the job  
105 is happening this year. The budget for paint for the exterior of the building will be approximately  
106 \$500 to \$600. Rachel pointed out that the heating system is 16 years ago, and that there is interior  
107 paint work that needs to be done. The Trustees asked for a moment to go over their budget.

108 Resuming the discussion regarding the general budget, the Patriotic Purposes and Cemetery  
109 Budgets remain the same. Kent Ruesswick asked about getting a company to clean up the leaves  
110 each fall. Bob Steenson commented that a quote for leaf pickup would be good for the Cemetery  
111 Trustees’ budget. The cemetery wages line is severely under budget, mostly due to staffing  
112 shortages. The Building Inspector is asking for an additional \$10,000 in his budget for the increase  
113 in work the position takes, and the data entry necessary for the new software. The revenue for the  
114 past year was \$12,000 so this helps pay for the jump.

115 The Police budget was discussed next. Officer Aaron Smith was on active military duty leave for  
116 the year, but has returned. Healthcare for the department was brought up, and it was suggested the  
117 buyout amount be raised from \$2,500 to \$5,000. A single plan costs the Town \$11,700 and offering  
118 a buy-out saves the Town \$6,700. The budget with the new wage plan, is only increasing by 4.

119 Chief Gamache of the Fire Department was commended for his careful spending of his budget,  
120 and he is seeking grants to help fund projects. Bob Steenson commented the \$20,000 budgeted for  
121 volunteer reimbursement is short money compared to a paid department. Engine 3 was scheduled  
122 to be replaced in 2020. It’s still operational despite the failure of the pump test. The Fire Chief is  
123 applying for a grant to help fund the replacement.

124 The Highway budget included adjustment in the Road Agent’s wages, and for the three full-time  
125 employees. Kelly pointed out that news of the incentive program for Fire and Police will circulate  
126 and why not include the Highway on this plan as well? It was commented that a wage study should  
127 be started, and perhaps include longevity bonuses for employees. Art pointed out that the Highway  
128 department was reasonably competitive.

129 The Library budget was resumed, and with confusion about the amounts cleared up, Kelly Short  
130 pointed out that the budget increase was explainable at Town Meeting. The Trustees and Director  
131 thanked the committee and left.

132 A warrant article is being proposed by the Solid Waste committee for \$80,000 for electrical  
133 upgrades at the Transfer Station and a cardboard bailer. Discussion was held concerning the  
134 bailer, how and when it would be operated, and the future of the transfer station at its current site...

135 The Parks and Rec Department didn't have enough volunteers for all their programs in the 2021  
136 budget so their 2022 budget is for the soccer program and for Halloween.

137 The new bond for the 2021 vehicles and Morrill Road Bridge is a five-year note and is included in  
138 the long-term debt. The Gold Star Bond still has two more years to go to pay it off. The total budget  
139 for the year as proposed comes to \$3,029,794 currently. There are several warrant articles  
140 proposed, including the bailer for the transfer station, a welder and a plasma cutter, a fire truck, a  
141 slide-in water tank, fans for the high bays at the Highway Garage, LED lighting at the Municipal  
142 Complex. The solar panels came up and a discussion ensued about how much energy was used by  
143 the town and how much the panels produced. Kelly Short clarified where the revenue from the  
144 Sawyer's Ferry timber cut was on the budget.

145 The Board thanked the Budget Committee for attending.

146 Bob Steenson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Art Hudson seconded. Motion passed,  
147 and meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

148

149 Respectfully submitted,

150 Sam Papps for Jan Stout