

TOWN OF WILTON

March 17, 2025

SELECTBOARD/BUDGET COMMITTEE MINUTES

Members Present: Gwen Doak, Kyle Fletcher, Richard Lumb, Randy Hall, Christian Waller, David Leavitt, Tiffany Maiuri, Keith Swett, Phil Hilton, Katharine Johnston, Maria Greeley.

(FULL RECORDING IS AVAILABLE AT www.mtbluetv.org)

Item # 1- Pledge of Allegiance

Item #2- Nonprofit Budget Presentations

Maria stated Maine Health EMS, the Wilson Library, Community Concepts, and Safe Voices here now.

Motion by Kyle Fletcher/ Second by Randy Hall- to appoint Gwen Doak the chair of the finance committee.

Vote- Unanimous

Motion by Gwen Doak/Second by Randy Hall - to appoint Richard Lumb as secretary of the finance committee.

Maine Health EMS

Steve Smith, the director for North Star, stated he is here to talk about the subsidies. Maine Health EMS, formerly known as North Star, is a department of Franklin Memorial Hospital. An ambulance service for the entire Franklin County, including Wilton. Depending on the year Maine Health EMS sees a huge number of patients, about 8,500, depending on the year. Steve states the patients are billed for transport and hope to collect as much as they can out of insurance companies. Due to the large coverage area and having staff Maine Health EMS does not break even. Every year the Maine Health advisory board gets together and starts talking about what next year's subsidies are going to look like. Over the past four years, it has had to increase quite dramatically. Steve states they believed they were getting 38 cents on the dollar, but they were only getting 30 cents on the dollar. Because of this, the projected loss of \$200,000 that was budgeted for jumped to a \$1.3 million dollar loss. The Hospital lost 1.3 million dollars on the ambulance service. Steve states the budget has gone back over, and they budgeted to lose \$800,000 this year. Subsidies across the board were raised to \$380,000. This was done by adjusting the subsidy formula Dave Row came up with years ago. Mill rate, cost of housing, and distant factors were taken into consideration. Maine Health Ems fiscal year starts in October. Steve states a lot of measures are being looked at as to why insurance companies aren't paying. Collections are around 30%. Steve states the chief financial officer thinks the last change should increase the outcome.

Richard Lumb asked what percentage of non-Franklin County residents are using the service? Steve stated he didn't have the exact percentage due to having both ski mountains and a lot of winter/summer activities. However, he states it is a small to medium percentage. He states in 2022, a law passed that private insurance companies only have to pay 200% of what Medicare pays, and Medicare doesn't pay very much.

Gwen Doak verified it was \$39,284 requested.

Maria states that it is correct and last year's budget was \$30,209, which is a 30% increase. Steve states the subsidy is the fairest way to do it. If the subsidy was divided by all the people in Franklin County that we cover, it is about \$28 per head.

Tiffany asked if there was an increase in a certain type of call.

Steve stated yes, there has been an increase in behavioral calls. Another type of call that has increased is cardiac and respiratory since COVID.

Keith stated the new Wilton rate is very helpful.

Steve states that services are always asking for higher payments from insurance companies and the insurance companies are pretty much always saying no.

Wilson Library

Jen Scott, library director, stated in 2024 the library circulated 14,907 items. That includes books, magazines, DVDs, eBooks, and audiobooks. There are also board games, passes to the state parks in Maine, and to the Western Maine Play Museum. There were 12,775 patron visits. In 2024, there were 148 formal library programs such as story times, craft times, events, and book events. There were 1,794 patrons who participated in these programs. There were 541 sessions of public access computer use. This does not include Wi-Fi access. The library currently has 2,716 registered active patrons.

Gwen clarified that the 2,283 residents with the library card don't count individuals within the family.

Jen states it also doesn't include numbers of outreach. Cassie, the children's librarian, goes to three different preschools.

Kyle asked how the library card usage looked over the last couple of years.

Jen stated it is a little bit down from last year but up from the year before. The Wilson Library is asking for the same amount as the previous year and none of the budget line items have changed. As a library what is being spent has been fine honed.

Richard stated the library has been actively fundraising.

Jen stated yes, there are tote bags for sale, the board is working on a murder mystery dinner, donations sent in, and quarterly book sales.

Gwen stated there has been some major repairs the library has had to make.

Jen stated the library is in the middle of a major drainage problem that is being corrected. The bank behind the library has continued to erode and water is coming inside the building and pooling. After that is finished, the carpets will be replaced. The current carpets are from 2001.

Community Concepts

Kelsey Miller, resource development manager, stated they are the community action agency that serves Franklin County with Head Start Services and it includes the Wilson Early Learning Center. The center supports children 6 weeks to five years old. Last fiscal year Head Start served 19 individuals and in Head Start 15 individuals were served.

Requesting \$2,000 to support Community Concepts this year, any donations help provide matches for federal, state, or private grants and funding gaps that our grants and contracts do not cover. In FY24 two clients were assisted in technical assistance, six clients assisted in home buyer education, one client assisted in financial capability coaching, and four clients assisted in mental health services. Community Concepts merged with Oxford County Mental Health services last year.

Richard stated as an observation he taught higher education and during a survey at University of North Carolina, Head Start made a positive difference.

Safe Voices

Grace Kendall, director of development and engagement for safe voices. Safe Voices is the domestic violence and sex trafficking resource center that serves Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford County. Safe Voices operates a 24-hour helpline that survivors or concerned others can call. Through the helpline 2,744 people were served last year. 520 being third parties meaning they were not necessarily survivors of abuse, but they were law enforcement, medical providers, or mental health providers working with a survivor and were calling for advice or connections to resources. In Franklin County specifically 197 to 205 people were served. In Wilton specifically, 27 individuals were served. Safe Voices operates the largest certified domestic violence intervention program in the State of Maine. It is a 48-week program of classes for offenders and people who have abusive behaviors. A goal of Safe Voices is for every single helpline call, within 15 minutes an advocate will call them back. There are three shelters across the service area including one in Franklin County. Due to federal funding concerns there is a risk of at least one of the shelters.

Richard asked how Safe Voices work with the police to assist with the repeat calls.

Grace states there is a community coordinated response team, and that team includes law enforcement, medical providers, and advocates. There are regular meetings with those people to talk about high-risk cases that are known to exist in the community. Training is offered and attended with the community partners.

Maria states there were other requests that came in, everyone who submitted a request received a questionnaire. A few were returned and they were all aware of the meeting.

Item #3- Police Department Budget Presentations

Maria stated there are two conversations that need to happen when preparing a budget, talk about operating expenses and talk about capital separately. On the budget workbooks this year, they are going to be separated out totals.

There is an increase in the training development line due to seeing not as many applicants that are qualified. The Police Department is seeing a lot of green pins that need to go through the proper training which costs \$5,000. It has been budgeted to send three people if needed, which is a \$15,000 increase.

Chief Kyes stated a little more was added to the active shooter training through Liberty Firearms. Liberty Firearms offer 30 different types of training.

Maria states the crossing guard has been taken over by the school. Employee compensation has been increased, this is contractual and reflects for the seven positions within that department. Maria states there was a decrease in employer contributions.

Chief Kyes stated the same vehicle improvement plan was being followed. The line has not increased in the last three years because not as much money is being spent on vehicle maintenance due to having new vehicles. It is time to start replacing the equipment in the cruisers. Only one out of the six cruisers are outfitted with brand new equipment. Two cruisers have nothing in it. The plan is to outfit the cruisers the same, so it is consistent.

Less maintenance has been put into the newer cruisers.

Richard asked who does most of your maintenance?

Chief Kyes states the Town Garage does. It is rare outside work is done.

Kyle asked when it is forecasted to have to replace a vehicle.

Chief Kyes stated the plan is to get each officer their own cruiser, a state police cruiser was bought to offset. A new cruiser was purchased 18 months ago. Since then, two new cruises have been purchased. Typically, every two years the department is up for a new one. A quote from a company fully outfitted was \$74,000. The car being \$48,000 and the rest being the equipment that goes into it. Farmington and Jay are currently using the same company. There is room in there for cuts. The goal is to get eight to ten years out of a cruiser. Typically for the laptops in the cruisers, the Bryne JAG grant comes out every year and \$2,300 is received and a laptop is purchased with that.

Maria stated the other line to discuss was the Public Safety building capital. There is a police side of the building and a fire side with one roof, so where does priority lie. Only part of the roof was done, which was the fire side. The police side is now many years behind. For the building structure itself, having a capital account specific to the building so the police chief can have a separate discussion if improvements want to be made on the police side of the building. The accounts have been separated out. A police public safety account of \$10,000 that has not been budgeted before. The fire public safety building account has requested \$5,000.

Keith asked if he was hearing three capital accounts being made for the safety building.

Maria stated there are two additional, correct.

Keith stated it was going to be a significant increase in requests for dollars.

David states there is one town, one public safety building, why isn't there one capital account that looks at the whole building, not personal people. What does the building need?

Randy Hall stated we have one building. Why have two or three different accounts for one building?

Maria stated there are two sides and two different ideas developing under this one building.

Gwen asked how that is listed separately from capital improvement under public safety building?

Maria states it is taken out of it. For this year, the \$23,500 that is being requested, we are asking to put away \$20,000 for the police side of the building that wasn't done four years ago. \$3,500 would be spent to upgrade the admin room.

Kyle Fletcher asked if it was police vs fire to determine what money they can use out of that account?

Chief Kyes stated kind of, what happened was half the building was done for \$60,000 now its \$100,000 to do the other section. Trying to figure out a way to improve what police and fire want individually. If separated, it could be tracked and have accountability. The police side's roof has been put off and the money spent on other things.

Kyle asks if the goal for the \$10,000 is to keep growing it until there is enough money for the roof?

Maria stated right, specifically for the police side is \$10,000. Last year it was one capital account and Ethan requested an additional \$10,000 and there was a three-year plan for upgrades to his side of the building. Maria stated the roof needs to get done before there is a major issue with it. The roof is from 1988.

Keith stated the insurance company went through and gave suggestions also and asked if it played into this at all.

Maria stated no, it was not on the list. I don't know if the insurance looked at the roof.

Christian Waller asked if it would take 10 years until the roof would be able to be done.

Chief Kyes stated no, there's three accounts. The police side and overall building is \$20,000. \$10,000 to make office improvements such as the evidence room.

Katharine Johnston stated that the public safety building itself would have a capital account of \$23,500. Money would start getting put away for the roof and things like that because what is happening is the account keeps getting depleted. Then there's no money for the roof. Then the police would have \$10,000 to make improvements on their side and fire would have \$5,000 to do what they needed to do. The idea is the public safety building. Katharine states that when the windows are done, all the windows are going to be done, when the roof is done, the whole roof is going to be done.

Tiffany states it is like a condo or homeowners association, anything exterior is shared and anything interior is not shared.

Maria stated to add clarity to the total in the account, it would be an increase of \$14,500. It is being separated out and trying to be more specific on the projects that are being proposed.

Kyle asked what the plans were for the \$10,000.

Chief Kyes states it's a three-stage process. Some quotes for redoing the office were \$22,000, \$16,000, and \$10,600. The goal is to redo the evidence locker for \$14,000 and do a lot of in house and do the office for \$5,000.

Tiffany agreed with David's suggestion in calling it maintenance repair instead of police public safety building capital.

Keith asked what the capital account was for the \$10,000 Ethan has now.

Maria states it was appropriate under the public safety building account. Last year there was \$24,000 with \$10,000 being allotted for Ethan for the police and \$14,000 was going to be used to start saving for the roof. But there were expenditures out of it.

Katharine states it's down to \$3,000.

Item #4- Other

David stated administration could be done tonight.

Administration Budget Presentation

Maria stated planning and code didn't really change much, the comp plan update did increase where the comp plan update is active.

Employee compensation decreased due to eliminating an additional part-time administrative assistant. Maria stated she tried to hire for the position but did not find the right fit. There are additional employees in the office right now and things are going better than they have. Maria stated she does not feel the need to fund that position. Employer contributions are being calculated better so that also has decreased.

Computer use and payroll services, an IT department will be talked about and taken out of admin.

Tiffany stated the reason for trying to hire a part-timer was to do things like updating the website and other things. What would be the plan for updating the website and what that specific halftime person would have done?

Maria stated it will be done in-house and there are some very willing and capable individuals who are willing to assist with that and will be working in the next couple of months to get the website up and running. Changing the foundation of the website, it will be more user friendly for us to do this in-house.

Maria stated the phone line is busy when no one is on the line and the voicemail is unable to be received easily. Expenet has been reached out to host our phones. In the works of transferring over service from Beeline to Expenet. It is an increase, but the phone needs to work.

Maria states there is not a huge capital plan for the town office. A roof and some siding will need to be thought about. Maria states another thing that has been helpful is Katie compiled all our capital accounts and have an unaudited account balance for fiscal year 2024. The unaudited balance is \$6,827.

The revaluation account for JEO Donnel for fiscal year 27 is going to cost \$252,250. Last year it was realized not enough money was being put aside in the revaluation capital account. So, for the next two years, \$64,150 to be able to fund the revaluation. This is the same as last year.

Assessing has increased by \$1,000, given by JEO Donnell. Still very happy with their services.

Kyle asked if TRIO was used for Wilton.

Maria stated Wilton currently has TRIO SQL and for assessing purposes the information is in there for collections and real estate information. JEO Donnell uses their own website which is user friendly.

Keeping contingent and legal at \$22,000.

Maria stated technology is the newest department. There have been a lot of changes to the Town of Wilton. Emails have been converted over to 365. All department computers are now backed up. Some departments like Parks and Rec, Public Works, Water, and Sewer had no way of backing up, it was all on the desktop.

Tiffany suggested going to a combined IT department because Microsoft end of support for Windows 10 is October 2025. Because there was no centralized IT budget, computers were not being replaced. Majority of the computers will not run Windows 11. A central IT budget will be easier to keep track and follow a replacement cycle.

Keith asked, are these new numbers or are they taken from various other categories and places here as a wash.

Maria states it is a combination of both.

Keith asked how much the increase was.

Maria states these are going to be hard discussions because things have been pulled out of each individual department and compiled into one.

Tiffany and Maria stated they can work on getting the numbers of what was taken out of the different accounts and revisit this.

Katharine stated computers have not been bought in a while.

Tiffany stated some computers are up to ten years old and it becomes a security risk. It will become a security risk come October 2025. Moving to a .gov to harden the infrastructure. Tiffany states it will be tabled until the next meeting, but it is going to be significant.

Kyle stated that the \$55,000 is probably added then and that it was additional to what was pulled.

Maria states yes, a computer is a big part of that. It includes contracts for TRIO and Expenet.

Tiffany states looking at the computers here, it is probably a total of \$3,000-\$4,000 for computers that was budgeted, and it should have been much more because now 20 computers need to be bought.

Keith asked if 20 computers was an actual number counted or a rounded number to make it easier?

Tiffany states there are 24 computers in total that need to be replaced.

Katharine stated hopefully with this, inventory management can happen and stagger it over a course of years.

Tiffany states high use computers should be replaced every four to five years.

David states if we are in that bad of shape, maybe money within this current budget should be looked at to use for computers instead of something else.

Maria states that it was talked about if there was money left over.

Maria stated insurance was swapped over to MMA for property casualty. The quote received for the first half of the year was \$33,000. The budget was set to \$67,000. Pension and benefits reserve, there are no expected retirements known to pay out benefits. Benefits and hiring reserve are typically used to help offset if Wilton were to purchase somebody who has a blue pin, who has a cost associated with their certification.

Item #5- Adjourn

Motion by David/Second by Gwen- To adjourn

Vote: Unanimous.

Out 7:24 PM