



Nottingham Board of Selectmen Meeting October 30, 2023

Steve Soreff, MD, Nottingham Observer

Following a very rainy day, the Nottingham Board of Selectmen (BOS) met on Monday at 6:30 PM on October 30, 2023., in the Community Center. Present at the meeting were all 5 members of the Board, Ben Bartlett, Steve Welch, Matt Shirland, Tim Dabrieo, and John Morin as well as the Town Administrator (TA) Ellen White. In attendance were several interested department heads, members of the Facilities Assessment Committee, and members of the community. The BOS heard from department heads on their budgets and the prioritizations of findings of the Facilities Assessment Committee.



The Blaisdell Memorial Library

After the Pledge of Alliance, Fire & and Rescue Interim Chief Matthew Curry answered questions from the Board. There were questions about the pay schedule for the Chief and Deputy Chief. The breathing apparatus expenses came out of a Capital Reserve Fund. It was a 'bare bones budget' with few increases except for wages. Next Library Trustee Jennifer Phillips and Amanda Stevens, the Interim Library Director addressed the BOS. They noted since 2019 the library's operating budget has been flat and its wages were lowest in the area. They proposed staff get at least \$15/per hour and the directors' salary be competitive. E-book use has increased dramatically with a 15% increase in cost. The telephone system was copper wired connected and the library has switched over to Comcast which includes complementary Internet. Hours have been cut to 35 hours with a minimum of 2 staff on at all times. A local person voluntarily provided computer work which would usually cost about \$25,000 per year.



The sign at the Town Hall

Then Lori Anderson, the Town Clerk, addressed the Board, She said in the accounting schedule the salaries of the Clerk and Deputy Clerk were split. There will be 4 elections coming up-the Presidential Primary in either December or January depending on the way the State decides, March, State Primary, and the November one. These will add expenses for conferences about new procedures The office has a new credit card unit and scanner as well as purchasing a laptop. The office is staffed with one of the two there alone for 5 hours five days a week However, other towns have two workers there at the same time. She added the State ballots are printed in Oklahoma.

Next, Town Administrator (TA) Ellen White presented her budget reviews. There would be a merit increase of 5% where applied. The town is now used Office 365. The older computer has been moved to the Recycling Center and there is a new copier has been purchased. According to the Tax Collector, there has been a decrease in the number of deeds registered. The Aviator contract is on a 5-year plan with no change however its assessing software will have a 3% increase and new mapping will add \$1,000 to the budget. Town legal expenses will stay at \$30,000 but currently is over budget.

Personnel administration will show increases with health insurance up 12% and depending on the staff's preferences may be \$50,000. Retirement contributions are fixed by the State. For the Planning Board, Strafford Regional Planning Commission dues have increased to \$165,000, and \$1000 has been allotted to the long overdue Master Plan preparation. The Zoning Board is level-funded. In the Town Hall, the part-time cleaning set-up has been moved to a contract company. There will be a shoveling contract for the Town Hall. \$2,500 has been allocated for work on the Old Fire Station. With the BOS of the propane and oil bid accepted, there will possibly be savings there. Cemeteries are level funded. Animal Control will be paid as a monthly stipend. Historical Society allotment will be unchanged. For the Highway Department, Recycling Center, and Social Services more information will be provided at the BOS November 6, 2023 meeting.



The BOS said the budget information was “a lot to digest”, and welcomed 4 of the 5 members of the Facilities Assessment Committee (FAC) - Gary Anderson, Chairman, Charlotte Fyfe, Paul Dallaire, and Barbara Draper.

FAC said its guiding principles were “health and safety for the public and the personnel”. A long and full discussion involved two topics -the facilities manager position and immediate projects. One of the major ideas advanced by the FAC was that should be the position of facilities manager. The position paid \$40,000 but it needed clarification as to its job description. Was it management or supervisory or day-to-day fixing equipment? The TA would draft a proposal for the November 6, BOS meeting. That person in that job could help in the prioritization of town facilities projects.

Two immediate health and safety concerns were debated. One was the ramp and walkways at the Recycling Center. They needed prompt action. The other was the deteriorated condition of the backend of the Town Hall. It was critter-infested, moldy, and unsafe. In quick solution was to wall off that section, This would mean moving stored records out. The long-term issue was to gut and dismantle it or use the structure.

Since the talk was on facilities, several ideas were discussed. One was the creation of a new police station. One was moving to a new community center in a different location. One suggestion was to have a town survey to see what the residents wanted. The idea the highway crew needs a place to be while not plowing all night was discussed. Concerns were voiced about the cost of these changes, the impact of the tax cap, and that repairs of these facilities had been neglected.

It was clear that the subject of the budget and the facility's priorities will continue to be discussed. The BOS is scheduled to meet on November 6, 20 and 27, 2023. Its budget is due to the Budget Committee on November 30, 2023. The meeting was adjourned.