**Grafton Budget Committee**

**Minutes January 12, 2023**

**Members present:** Ed Grinley (Chair), Catherine Mulholland, Maureen O’Reilly, Sandy Griffin, Cindy Kudlik (Select Board Ex-officio)

Others present: Paul Vogt, Jake Vogel, Karen Johnson, Gary Whitney, Leif Hogue

The meeting was called to order by Ed at 6:09pm. Minutes from the December 21, 2022 meeting were reviewed. Cindy made a motion to accept the minutes; seconded by Maureen. All in favor.

This Budget Committee meeting was scheduled to review monetary 2023 Warrant Articles (see attached Warrant Articles). The following decisions were made to add either the clause “The Budget Committee recommends this article” or “The Budget Committee does not recommend this article”.

#4 Ambulance – Sandy made a motion to recommend; seconded by Maureen. All in favor.

#9 Historical Restoration - Sandy made a motion to recommend; seconded by Maureen. Four in

 favor; Catherine abstained.

#10 Fire Apparatus - Ed made a motion to recommend; seconded by Sandy. All in favor.

#11 Highway - Sandy made a motion to recommend; seconded by Maureen. All in favor.

#12 Bridge - Ed made a motion to recommend; seconded by Catherine. All in favor.

#13 Paving - Catherine made a motion to recommend; seconded by Maureen. All in favor.

#14 Recycling - Maureen made a motion to recommend; seconded by Catherine. All in favor.

#15 Town Hall - Maureen made a motion to recommend; seconded by Sandy. All in favor.

#16 Property Revaluation - Maureen made a motion to recommend; seconded by Ed. All in

 favor.

#17 Veteran’s Park - Ed made a motion to recommend; seconded by Maureen. All in favor.

#19 Library - Catherine made a motion to recommend; no seconds. Maureen made a motion not

 to recommend; seconded by Cindy. Four in favor; one opposed.

A question was raised for establishing a capital reserve fund for historical records restoration (Warrant Article #9). Cindy explained there are 35 books to be restored with several being completed annually. The project could extend over a 10 year period. The Select Board felt it was prudent to establish the fund for facilitating access to funds which may be sufficient to cover several years of restoration rather than including a warrant article each year.

Maureen suggested leaving the Recreation Field Shelter Capital Reserve Fund open (Warrant Article #8) for the possibility of needing funds to repair the bandstand. Ed noted he has the funds for the repair work. Cindy commented it is prudent to have the fund closed since the account has a remaining balance of $.02 with no possibility of accrual.

Catherine requested the reason for Warrant Article #7. Leif Hogue said “there is more power to the people”.

A question was raised as to whether or not the Ambulance Warrant Article (#4) needs to have an affirmative vote clause associated with it since it extends into another fiscal year. It appears a 3/5 vote notation is required for the article. The RSA reads as follows:

**32:7-a Appropriations for Capital Projects. –**
In addition to any other appropriation authority, and notwithstanding any other provisions of law, at any annual meeting the legislative body may, by the affirmative vote of 2/3 of those present and voting, or by the affirmative vote of 3/5 of those voting on the question in a town or district that has adopted the official ballot referendum form of meeting, appropriate funds for a term beyond one fiscal year, but not to exceed 5 fiscal years…

Ed opened the Public Hearing at 7:20pm.

The meeting attendees received copies of a budget summary, spreadsheets for each town department’s budget, and the calculation for the default budget.

Gary Whitney asked for clarification on the default budget. The default budget is adopted as the 2023 budget if the proposed budget does not pass.

Jake Vogel commented on the inflation rate (7.1% - November 2022).

Ed noted that the Select Board’s budget includes all town dispatch fees. Later in the meeting Gary asked if the dispatch fees were all for Hanover. Cindy explained that aircards and active 911 are not included.

Jake asked what Animal Care in the Police Budget was for. Ed explained it is for relocating strays, lost animals or biters to the Humane Society. Jake also asked what happens to unexpended wages in the Highway Department. Ed responded that it goes into the General Fund. No hiring decisions have been made yet due to waiting on background checks. In addition, Jake asked whether the Legal Fees line item ($20,000) in the Select Board’s budget is for a retainer. Cindy responded it is for hourly billable time.

An exact figure was not readily available to Gary’s question of what the unexpended fund balance was. He suggested using some of those funds to cover some warrant articles. As an example of that happening, Cindy referenced Warrant Article #12 whereby $50,000 (if passed) would be placed in the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund. She also noted it is best to leave some money in the fund so the town does not have to borrow.

Gary asked about the Health Agencies line item in the Select Board’s budget. Those funds are used for charitable organizations that benefit such as Tri-County Community Action Programs, Visiting Nurses Association, Grafton County Senior Citizens Center, etc.

Ed closed the Public Hearing at 8:20pm.

The Budget Committee received several requests from department managers for budget increases. The following line items were approved:

*Police Department*

Cindy reported an increase in the contracted price for computer support.

Dispatch Fees/Phone/Air card: $8,522 + $383 = $8,905 Total Budget: $209,992

Cindy made a motion to increase the budget to $209,992; seconded by Maureen. All in favor

*Select Board*

 Cindy reported the following needed increases due to the agreed stipend to Sue Smith for

Doing the Town Report, EFax service for the Select Board’s office, a

miscalculation for Health Insurance, and the contract with Avitar for mapping being a three year contract.

Finance Administration Wages: $5,800 + 1,200 = $7,000

 Phone/Fax/Internet: $3,000 + $250 = $3,250

 Health Insurance: $41,382 + $5,174 = $46,556

 Reappraise Prop: $16,575 + $2,665 = $19,240 Total Budget: $349,075

Cindy made a motion to increase the budget to $349,075; seconded by Maureen. All in favor

*Ambulance*

Due to numerous paperwork headaches with having the Fuel line item in the Gross Basis/Revolving Account portion of the budget, Cindy requested including Fuel in the Operating Budget and moving a portion of Vehicle Repairs and Maintenance to the Revolving Account. Totals remain the same, while facilitating payment processing.

Vehicle Repairs & Maint *(Operating Budget)*: $6000 - $2500 = $3,500

 Fuel *(Operating Budget)*: $0 + $2,500 = $2,500

 Fuel *(Revolving Account)*: $2,500 - $2,500 = $0 Total Budget: $44,694 *(no change)*

*Parks & Recreation*

Due to miscommunication, the Select Board did not place an article on the warrant the Recreation Committee requested. Two pieces of playground equipment (bouncy toys)

need to be replaced because of their poor condition.

Playground Equipment: $0 + $4,000 = $4,000 Total Budget: $7,670

 Ed made a motion to increase the budget to $7,670; seconded by Maureen. All in favor

*Library*

Karen Johnson, Library Trustee, presented a case for increasing the library’s budget. She stated that the Media/Subscriptions expenditure was only $484 due to a donation of $1,000 by a family member with no future commitment. The approved 2022 budget amount for this line item was $1,500. The Budget Committee recommended $1,200 for 2023.

The total approved budget for 2022 was $19,874 with a total in expenses of $16,903 (difference of $2,972 - 85% of the total budget). Ed maintained that since the total 2022 expenditures were and have consistently been under budget in past years, there was no justification for increasing the budget.

The actual expenditure for 2022 in Wages was $12,849 which is higher than the recommended 2023 amount of $12,000. Sandy made a motion to increase the recommended 2023 Wages from $12,000 to $13,000 for a total budget of $19,240; seconded by Catherine. Two in favor; three opposed. The motion did not pass.

Sandy made a motion to adjourn at 9:20pm; seconded by Ed. All in favor.

**Notable Dates: Saturday, February 4, 2023 –** Mascoma Valley Regional School District

 Deliberative Session 9am

 **Saturday, February 11, 2023 –** Town Deliberative Session 10am

 **Tuesday, March 14, 2023** – Elections

Respectfully submitted,

Sandy Griffin