

# Town of Danbury

## BUDGET COMMITTEE BUDGET HEARING MINUTES

Thursday January 16, 2025 7:00 PM

**Members present:** Lenny Ryan-Chair, Ashlynn Comeau-Co-Chair, Tracy Feinauer, Bree Huntoon, Jessica Hatch-Selectmen, Anna Hullinger, James Phelps.

Lenny Ryan opened the meeting at 7:00pm, explaining he would go through the 2025 budget line by line and give people the opportunity to ask questions on each section.

413010 EX \$72,475.00.

Karen Padgett asked for Explanation of the EX Salary line \$10,000. It was explained this amount is for the 3 selectmen, 2 getting \$3,000 each and the Chair getting \$4,000.

413030 Town Meeting \$1,900.00

414010 Town Clerk / Tax Collector \$60,890.00

Tricia Taylor asked why line item 414033190 Recording, was lowered from \$600 to \$50. She advised she does use that line and will go over if left at \$50, Jim Phelps asked why line item 414010900 was \$1,100 was not used and does that line need to stay at \$1,100. Tricia advised it could be reduced by a couple hundred but it would depend on how much deeding she needed to do.

414020 Elections \$1,151.00

415010 Trustees \$481.00

415020 Auditors \$1,000

415050 Treasurer \$4,100

415090 Budget Committee \$75

415210 Assessors contract \$19,750,

Jessica Hatch explained this is our contract with our Assessors

415310 Legal Expenses \$10,000

415510 Health Insurance \$170,230.00

Question if this is an increase in Salaries, Jessica Hatch explained that this line shows an increase in the Retirement line to include the Police Chief Full time retirement and an increase in the amount paid to the existing retirement plans from \$40 per week to \$50 per week for full-time employees. Health insurance also increased by an additional full time employee.

Question if the NH Retirement would be offered to all Full Time employees, Jessica Hatch advised that an additional amount was not added at this time, they are trying to decide how that will be handled if the Police department budget is approved with the full time employee.

A Resident asked what the percent was for the NH Retirement enrollment. Jessica Hatch advised for Police or Fire it was 31%, and for Highway and Executive it 12%. Ruby Hill advised that by law the Town is not obligated to offer Nh Retirement to all employees.

419110 Planning Board \$2,450.00

419139 Zoning Board \$800.00

419419 General Government Buildings \$ 34,3500.00

Question on the security system line, as it was over spent last year, Question was-was this a one time expense. Jessica Hatch explained that the Town installed a new system at the Highway garage and also had some issues with the Town Hall System & the Community Center.

419510 Cemetery \$20,000.00

Question on the uniform line, Lenny Ryan explained they were hoping to purchase Tee Shirts, Polo Shirts and hats for the employees that work at the Cemetery, to make them recognizable as an employee and make them look respectable for times they are working a burial. Question was asked if there is a limit on the time an employee would need to be employed and how long would they stay as an employee.

Question on the salary line, asking what the increase was for, Lenny Ryan explained there was additional work that was not completed this year. Jessica Hatch also advised that the employees were extremely underpaid and this increase will cover the additional wages.

Question on the Burial Expenses line, it was overspent last year. Lenny Ryan explained this is a line item that covers the cost incurred when a person is buried, but that monies come back to the town in the Cemetery income line to cover these expenses so it is a wash. it appears to be over spent because unfortunately they did more burials than expected but that also shows in the income line.

419620 Property Liability \$41,100

419710 Non-Profit Appropriations \$31,400

419910 Gasoline & Tax Mapping \$8,500

Karen Padgett asked what vehicles we use gasoline in. Jessica Hatch advised the 2 police cruisers, the Highway small engines and the cemetery equipment.

421010 Police Department \$208,311

Stanley Phelps asked what was going to be purchased as the Office Equipment line went from \$300 to \$6000. Chief Kelby advised there are some operating systems and equipment that needs to be updated to be compliant with reporting. Kelby also advised it would be for the purchase of laptops for the cruisers so the officers are able to connect while out on the road.

Question on the PD Equipment line increase, Kelby reported this would be for Tasers and the recording.

Question on the Full time Chief position being voted on or was it included in the budget. Jessica advised the Selectboard and the Budget committee agreed and the FullTime position was included in the budget.

Melissa Suckling asked what the proposed salary for the Police Chiefs position was. James Phelps advised the wage was \$90,000. Melissa asked how many studies were done on the Chiefs position salary. Jessica Hatch advised no studies were done.

Tim Martin advised he would have liked to see the change in the position from Part Time to Full Time be on the ballot for the people to vote on the position. Tim also asked what the hours were if this was only for 40 hours or is it over 40 hours. Tim also asked if the Town was paying for the Police Chiefs commuting time. The Chief explained he signs on duty when he is able to respond to calls safely. He advised he lets dispatch know he is on his way into town but does not count that as time worked, when he gets close to Danbury he signs on duty with Franklin dispatch and can take any calls that come in.

James Phelps advised some towns have residency requirements, Jim asked Chief Kelby if he was to get this position would he be willing to move to Danbury. Chief Kelby advised NO.

Chief Kelby advise of 2024 statistics and the need for a full time position

Stanley Phelps if the town wanted to deny the Full time police Chief position how would someone go about this? Jessica advised if you come to a deliberative session you could lower those line items.

Jessica advised the Legal and they stated that this position has been approved by the Selectboard and the Budget committee and is included in the operating budget which means that it was approved by both and shouldnt be put in a warrant article.

Jason Potter questioned the Elected to appointed Police position, Jessica advised it has been appointed for some time.

421510 Ambulance Contract \$136,428.00

Lenny Ryan explained this is a contract price with Bristol.

Jim Phelps advised next year it will be over \$200,000.

Ruby Hill advised some of the medical calls are taking them longer due to traveling to the appropriate hospital. Stanley Phelps asked how many times Bristol comes to Danbury. Chief Martin advised approximately 120 times per year. Jessica Hatch advised that the formula is based on many things including insurance payments that bring the cost down each year.

A Resident asked how many calls come from the ski area. Ruby Hill explained the numbers are down due to the fact that they have better management of the injuries and some can be transported by vehicle rather than ambulance.

422101 Fire Department \$69,981.00

James Phelps asked why the equipment maintenance line was over spent, Jessica Hatch explained it was an encumbrment that was missed the year before and needed to be paid out of the 2024 budget.

429010 Emergency Management \$10,125.00

James Phelps asked about the increase in the Emergency management Line, Jessica Hatch advised The emergency Management director was able to get a Grant to update the hazard mitigation plan, this grant would be for 75% of the \$10,000 grant but the money needs to be in the line to cover the cost of the update. when the grant money is received it will go back into the general budget.

429040 Forest Fire \$3,000

431110 Highway \$408,300.00

Jeremy Cornell advised the Uniform line covers Uniforms, Tee shirts, Sweatshirts, rags , rugs. Jeremy Martin asked why the Road agent wasn't paid the full amount that was budgeted. Jessica Hatch explained that the raise does not take place until the first of April.

A resident asked why the Road Agent Mileage line was overspent in 2024. Jessica Hatch advised that Town Trucks were in the shop last year , and the guys used their own vehicles for work and were paid mileage.

Tim Martin asked if the Raises were a percentage or just a dollar amount. Jessica Hatch advised it was decided to do a dollar amount. Lenny Ryan advised the thought process behind this was to bring all the highway guys up to \$25 per hour, 2 were at \$23 and the third one was at \$22, he advised that \$25 is still less than all the towns around us and if we needed to replace one of these employees we would need a reasonable pay rate.

Tim Martin advised we have the cheapest taxes around.

Lenny Ryan commented the Road agent is on the low end of all around us.

431210 Highway \$314,000.00

Lenny Ryan explained there was a \$20,000 cut in the winter sand line. A resident asked why there was no Tree Removal done in 2024, Jeremy Cornell advised coordinating with the tree company and the electric company is complicated and did not happen in 2024, He advises he still intends on doing it.

Deb Phelps stated she wants to make sure there is enough money in the culvert line so something can be permanently done about the Beavers damming the Ragged Mountain road culvert. Deb Phelps requested the Culvert have grates put over the ends of the culvert.

431630 Municipal Lighting \$5,000

432410 Transfer Station \$ 189,420

Lenny Ryan explained there was a jump on the wage line, they were making \$17 and will now be making \$20 per hour, there was also an increase in the solid waste contract.

441520 Health care Non-profit appropriations \$7,525

A resident asked what the Lakes Region VNA covered, It was explained they bought NANA

444210 Welfare \$6,000

452010 Recreation \$21,900

455010 Library \$16,685

458310 Patriotic \$700

458910 DCC & Historic Society \$35,800

Total operating budget recommended by the Selectmen \$1,944,327 and by the Budget committee \$1,920,827

TAN note interest is \$1000 it was explained that that number will increase. We have spent almost \$5000 in interest on the TAN in 2024 and we have until the end of January to pay the note off so it is expected to be approximately \$5000 more.

#### Proposed Warrant articles

Road Construction Capital reserve, The Selectmen and the Budget committee recommend \$75,000

This is for the reconstruction of Ragged Mountain Road from New Canada Road to the top of the Hill.

Jessica Martin advised we have hired an engineer to do a plan, Ragged has had a lot of construction and a lot of water problems and this is taking out our road. Current balance is \$144,135 plus another \$8000 will be removed to pay the Engineer.

Police Vehicle Capital Reserve \$0 Current Balance \$8.67

Highway Equipment Capital Reserve. Selectmen and the Budget committee recommend \$50,000. Current Balance \$144.31

Bridge Fund Capital Reserve, Selectmen and the Budget Committee recommend \$100,000  
Current Balance \$45,426

Fire Truck Capital Reserve \$0 Current Balance \$4,329

Jessica Hatch explained we originally had Money in the Fire Truck Capital Reserve & the Police Vehicle Capital Reserve but they decided because they were going for the Bond for the Emergency services Building and the \$200,000 if the bond failed, they removed these 2 others. We are trying to keep the dollar amount down..

Property Revaluation Capital Reserve Selectmen and Budget committee recommend \$7,000  
Current Balance is \$21,161

Emergency Service Building Capital Reserve, Selectmen and Budget Committee recommended \$200,000 if the Bond article fails. Current Balance \$39,908.

Fire Truck Capital Reserve \$0 Current Balance \$4329

General Gov Building Capital Reserve, \$0 Current Balance \$23182

Total for Capital Reserve Warrant Article, Selectmen and the Budget Committee recommended \$432,000

Jessica Hatch advised the default budget is \$1,753,539. This is last year's Budget plus any contract increases.

Jessica Hatch also advised there will be a Question & Answer session in reference to the Proposed Safety Services Building Project January 30th 7pm At Town Hall 23 High Street. There will be a mailing go out for a reminder.

*Respectfully submitted, Maggi Winn, Administrative Assistant*