



Town of South Thomaston, Maine
125 Spruce Head RD
P.O. Box 147
South Thomaston, ME 04858-0147

Budget Committee Meeting

March 30, 2021

Attendees:

Budget Committee

Moira Paddock (Chair)
Katie-Lyn Greene-Rackliff
Linda Maltais
Jeff Northgraves
Beverly St. Clair
Robert Baines
Sondra Wallace
Camille Minikis

Select Persons

Walter Reitz
John Spear
Jan Guadio

Town Administrator

Terri Baines

Director of Ambulance Service

Amy Drinkwater

Assistant Director of Ambulance Service, and Deputy Chief of Fire Department

David Elwell

Chief of Fire Department

Chief Calderwood

Town Members

Pennie Alley

Meeting opened at 6:02 PM.

Moira Paddock leads a discussion about the minutes from March 29th meeting. One amendment noted—which was to update section 560 CEO and Plumbing Inspector per Terri's email sent to the committee on March 30th. Beverly St. Clair moved to accept the minutes as amended. Jeff Northgraves seconded: **Motion Passed 7 - 0.** (Camille absent from vote)



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Moira Paddock asked that the fire and ambulance department representatives introduce themselves for the 3 new budget members.

Moira Paddock then asked the 3 new budget committee members to introduce themselves to the department representatives.

Ambulance Service (580): (\$352,177) Director of Ambulance Service, Amy Drinkwater, presented the budget.

Moira Paddock asked about the costs of COVID dispatch and whether that will be reimbursed through FEMA. The answer is yes. How much will be reimbursed? Terrie does not know exactly, but estimates roughly \$30k.

Beverly St. Clair asked about the 2021 Salary & Stipends line. If raises, why is \$15k set for the Director for 12 months? Answer: No increase on Amy's salary.

Walter Reitz explains that the Board approved about a 3% increase all around (a combo of 2 increases) because 1) staff did well under difficult circumstances and minimally shut down the town office, and 2) increased what would we do in the normal course of events.

Beverly St. Clair asks again about the 2021 Salary & Stipends line. She asks how do we get to \$8,375 for 6 months?

$$16250/2 \times 1.03 = 8375 \times 2 \times 1.03$$

Sondra Wallace requests we add the math into the Salary and Stipends notes for next time we look at this.

Moira Paddock asks about how many calls they received this year over last year? Answer: they had 202 calls (down from 284 LY due to the Islands not calling the ambulance since no one wanted to go to the hospital).

Jeff Northgraves asks if coverage is 7 days a week. Asks if we need coverage for weekends? Amy says it costs \$187.50/weekend with our own staff, and Rockland charges medic \$750, and whole truck \$850, to take one of our weekend calls.

Moira Paddock asks if we started weekends this past January? Amy Drinkwater confirms.



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Moira Paddock asks if there has been any maintenance with the ambulance? Amy Drinkwater says any minimal maintenance was done in-house.

Sondra Wallace states that it was an atypical year due to COVID—less people using ambulance because they are afraid of going to hospital. Suggests we look at this item next budget cycle, as we don't have enough data to go on.

Beverly St. Clair asks why insurance is 6 months at \$12,822? Terri Baines explains it includes a \$4k bill from 2020. The \$18,812 is a guestimate.

Jeff Northgraves explains to Beverly St. Clair that you can't always double the 6mo and 12 mo budgets because some bills come due in Jan and June (pay some in 6 months and some in 12 months). For example, with WC, we're always updating last year's bill in the current year.

Terri Baines mentions that a Workers Comp (WC) audit was done which changes all WC numbers for every budget. WC increased.

Beverly St. Clair moved to preliminarily approve **\$352,177**. Sondra Wallace seconded:
Motion Passed 8 – 0. (Camille now present)

Ambulance Reserve (line 1203): (\$10,000) and **Ambulance Defibrillator Reserve (line 1204):** (\$5,000) Jeff Northgraves explains that we've drained the reserve to pay for the new ambulance in 2020. We are paying ourselves at 1.5% interest over a 4-year period. Therefore, we are not funding the Ambulance Reserve until we pay off the current ambulance. We can start funding the reserve again in year 6 (2024). We currently have \$118 in reserve.

Moira Paddock asks about the \$10k Ambulance Reserve and the \$5k Ambulance Defibrillator Reserve. Amy Drinkwater explains Defibrillators are roughly \$40k and replaced every 10 years. Also, the \$10k in the Ambulance Reserve was put in with prior administration. They are *not* requesting the \$10k.

Sondra Wallace asks how long ambulances last? Amy Drinkwater explains 10-15 years.

Jeff Northgraves suggests that we will need to put more than \$10k in the Ambulance Reserve starting in 2024. Robert Baines says we are kicking can down the road. Walter Reitz defends the decision saying it's a brand-new vehicle and that the Board can find a creative way to fund the next one. We need the money for other places while we pay ourselves back for the ambulance. He acknowledges that we could regret because of a higher interest rate in 10-15 years.



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Jan Guadio asks if in reality we are paying the money back to ourselves and wants to know where we will put the money. Walter Reitz replies—the Fire Truck Reserve gets first claim to the money because we took most of our money from them. And, the fire truck is scheduled to be replaced in 2 years.

John Spear suggests that if we want to keep pace we need to put in \$7,500 into the Ambulance Defibrillator Reserve, not \$5k. Amy Drinkwater explains she put in \$5k because they have maintenance on the current one.

Jeff Northgraves motioned to preliminarily adjust the Ambulance Reserve to **\$0**. Sondra Wallace seconded: **Motion Passed 8 – 0.**

Jeff Northgraves moved to preliminarily approve \$5,000 for the Ambulance Defibrillator Reserve. Sondra Wallace seconded: **Motion Passed 8 – 0.**

Fire Department (520): (\$201,420)

Chief Calderwood gives PPT presentation to the committee. (Please find attached to this document). He makes a point of the \$214k he's secured in grant funding between 2007-2020.

Moira Paddock asks for a breakdown of the call types in 2020. The total calls (fire dept.) in 2020 were 183, up from 104 calls in 2019. There were 3 house fires.

Chief Calderwood presented the budget.

Jeff Northgraves asks why Wages are split evenly between 6 months and 12 months. Chief Calderwood explains that the total 18-month budget is \$37,620 and it's arbitrarily split between the 6- and 12-month buckets.

Beverly St. Clair asks why if in 2020 the Vehicle Maintenance/Repairs budget wasn't spent that we have the same amount for 2021. A lengthy discussion was had.

Beverly St. Clair asks about the \$1,500 for Training. Chief Calderwood explains it is based on what was spent in 2020.

Chief Calderwood explains that SCBA Airpacks are needed. He wanted 6, but dropped down to 4. He suggests some come from the Air Pack Reserve (there is currently \$14k in there). Current packs were purchased between 2007-2013, and all have since been tagged for a potential life-safety issue. They need to replace these air packs. Fire fighters are at risk. They have 18 packs, and 15 need to be replaced. He has to have 17, one for every seat in a truck. He applied for grant in 2018 and was denied.



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Chief Calderwood explains that an AFG Exhaust System Station is needed. He has applied for a grant of \$60k. If approved, the Town would only have to cover \$3k. Line 534 is his backup plan if they don't get the grant through FEMA. The Town would make a payment of \$18k for 3 years. *If grant doesn't come through, we can delete this line.*

Jeff Northgraves recommends making line 534, \$15k instead of \$18k.

Chief Calderwood explains that Survival Suits for water rescues are necessary. He's trying to replace what the coast guard provided—they have holes in them.

Moira Paddock asks how many water rescues are done? Chief Calderwood answers a dozen or more times over the period of the last 15 years, and they had one last year at the town landing. He mentions that he has applied for a grant for this item.

Linda Maltais asks how many suits they can get within the budget. Chief Calderwood answers 4, which will put them at 8 suits.

Chief explains 2 in, 2 out in terms of equipment needs, and that they would be in a lot of trouble if they didn't have the proper gear on.

Sondra Wallace moved to preliminarily approve **\$201,420**. Jeff Northgraves seconded: **Motion Passed 8 - 0.**

Jeff Northgraves explains he supports the total because he wants to leave the \$3k in the total for the fire pond, even though we should take it out of Exhaust System grant back-up line (534).

Fire Pond Maintenance Reserve (1199): (\$3,000) Chief Calderwood presented the budget and comments that there is no request to put money into this reserve. This should be a 0. Jeff Northgraves motions to preliminarily reduce the Fire Pond Maintenance Reserve to **\$0**. Robert Baines seconded: **Motion Passed 8 - 0.**

Fire Truck Reserve (1201): (\$52,900) Chief Calderwood presented the budget. Jeff Northgraves moved to preliminarily approve **\$52,900**. Robert Baines seconded: **Motion Passed 8 - 0.**

Fire Equipment Reserve (1202): (\$10,000) Chief Calderwood presented the budget. Jeff Northgraves motions to preliminarily adjust \$10,000 to **\$15,000**. Robert Baines seconded: **Motion Passed 8 - 0.**



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Cascade Air System Reserve (1213): (\$5,000) Chief Calderwood presented the budget. Jeff Northgraves motions to preliminarily not fund the reserve. Robert Baines seconded:
Motion Passed 8 - 0.

Communications Reserve (1214): (\$5,000) Chief Calderwood presented the budget. Jeff Northgraves motions to preliminarily not fund the reserve. Robert Baines seconded:
Motion Passed 8 - 0.

This ended the agenda items.

Beverly St. Clair motioned to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 9:44 PM

Respectfully submitted Kate Greene