



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

Budget Committee Meeting
April 10, 2024

Attendees:

Budget Committee

Walter Reitz, Chair
Sondra Wallace, Secretary
Bob Baines
Katie-Lyn Greene-Rackliff
Linda Maltais
Pennie Alley

Select Board

Jeff Northgraves, Chair
John Spear
Sue Snow

Ambulance Service

Amy Drinkwater (Director)
Ryan Colson

Fire Department

David Elwell (Fire Chief)
Gerald Harjula (Deputy Fire Chief)

Town Office

Terri Baines, Town Administrator
Hannah Moholland

Select Board Meeting opened at 4:00 PM.

Budget Committee Meeting opened at 4:01 PM.

BUDGET REVIEW

Ambulance Service (580) (\$380,989)

Ambulance Service Director A. Drinkwater presented the budget.

Discussion: Stabilization grants (SG) (See also Ambulance Reserve): The Ambulance Service has been awarded a Maine EMS Stabilization Grant (SG) of \$41,784, of which a max of \$25K



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can go to the Ambulance Reserve. If they apply in July they will receive a second SG, which will be at least as large, and again a max of \$25K can go to the Reserve.

The balance of the grants (\$16,784 from the first) will go toward wages, education, equipment, with a total of \$20K from both SGs used for wage increases. Grant funds will also be used to stabilize/increase night shift hourly pay.

On the revenue side, the Ambulance Service has budgeted \$110K. So far in FY 2023-24 they have billed \$86,400 and have collected about \$6K.

K.Greene-Rackliff moved to preliminarily approve \$380,989; L.Maltais seconded. **Motion passed 6-0.**

Ambulance Reserve (line 1164) (\$61,784)

Discussion: (See also Ambulance Service): The final payment for the new ambulance reduces the reserve to \$123. We'll need a new one again in 8 years, when the current cost of \$395K will have increased. Director Drinkwater and the SB have proposed \$61,784 for the Reserve, with \$21,784 coming from the first SB grant.

The Budget Committee recommended instead \$90K for the Reserve: \$50K from the SB grants, and \$40K from appropriations and/or surplus. K.Greene-Rackliff so moved, L.Maltais seconded; **Motion passed 6-0.**

The Select Board then amended its proposal to match the Budget Committee recommendation.

Ambulance Equipment Reserve (line 1165) (\$5,000)

L.Maltais moved to preliminarily approve \$5,000; K.Greene-Rackliff seconded. **Motion passed 6-0.**

Fire Department (570) (\$167,850)

Fire Chief D. Elwell presented the budget.

Discussion: Under Wages, for the second year, fires and maintenance costs are separated, making it easier to track the costs for each. Fires (the category includes all calls, whether for fires, trees down, roads blocked, whatever) is way up this CY: 114 for CY 2023, up from 99 for CY 2022. Already in CY 2024 they've had 64 calls. That is why wages for fires is increased substantially.



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Contract services: Pump tests, etc.: Until the new fire truck comes (they had hoped to have it already, but the delivery date keeps moving later) they have to keep up with required testing and maintenance on the old truck.

Equipment: Tools: This funding is to equip the new fire truck, when it arrives.

Insurance: J.Spear cautioned Fire Dept. to be sure insurance on fire trucks is at full replacement value.

Private vehicles responding to calls: J.Spear also noted that another town had learned, to its regret, that its insurance did not cover private vehicles used on a Fire/Ambulance call. The only exception was for equipment, such as a light bar, that the town had paid to install. Ambulance Chief A.Drinkwater said the vehicle owner can purchase a rider, as she has done. It was agreed that the Town will look into the option of reimbursing vehicle owners for such riders.

S. Wallace moved to preliminarily approve \$167,850; K.Greene-Rackliff seconded. **Motion passed 6-0.**

Fire Pond Maintenance Reserve (line 1160) (\$5,000)

R. Baines moved to preliminarily approve \$5,000; P.Alley seconded. **Motion passed 6-0.**

Fire Truck Reserve (line 1162) (\$60,000)

Discussion: There is currently \$424,917 in the Reserve; the FD proposed no addition, while the SB proposes adding \$60K. The price for the 2 new trucks on order is \$850K; the Reserve will pay for about half, and the Town will borrow the rest. Adding \$60K will allow a larger payment and smaller debt. (Next year's budget will include debt service for this loan.) A fire truck lasts about 30 years; the Fire Dept. buys a new truck every 10 years, so we have that long to build a reserve to pay for it.

S.Wallace moved to preliminarily approve \$60,000; L.Maltais seconded. **Motion passed 6-0.**

Fire Equipment Reserve (line 1163) (\$10,000)

R.Baines moved to preliminarily approve \$10,000; P.Alley seconded. **Motion passed 6-0.**

Fire Truck Repair Reserve (line 1171) (\$3,240)

R.Baines moved to preliminarily approve \$3,240; L.Maltais seconded. **Motion passed 6-0.**



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Further discussion on fire/smoke alarms for Municipal Building

(See discussion under Buildings & Grounds in 4/9/24 meeting minutes.) Fire Chief D.Elwell was able to clarify that individual battery-powered alarms will not suffice: the Fire Marshal will require a hard-wired, interconnected system throughout the building. However, we expect we can obtain bids for fully adequate systems lower than the \$19K offered by Seacoast.

Without objection, Chair W.Reitz adjourned the Budget Committee meeting at 5:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Sondra Wallace

These minutes were approved by the Budget Committee on 4/11/2024.