

**TOWN OF RYE - SELECT BOARD
MEETING
Wednesday, November 9, 2022 – 2:00 p.m.
Rye Town Hall**

Present: *Chair Phil Winslow; Vice-Chair Tom King; and Selectman Bill Epperson*

Others Present on behalf of the Town: *Town Administrator Matt Scruton and Finance Director/Asst. Town Administrator Becky Bergeron*

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Winslow called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m. It was noted for public record that the Select Board recited the pledge of allegiance at their tax rate setting meeting held just previous to this meeting.

II. BUDGET WORK SESSION

<u>Department</u>	<u>Account</u>	<u>Requested</u>	<u>Accepted</u>
PWD Personnel	4312-23	\$1,007,151	Tabled

Public Works Director Jason Rucker

Highlights: Director Rucker noted that the budget was tabled at the all day budget work session because the Select Board wanted to discuss the request to add a couple of new positions to the department. He presented projections for the cost of wages for the positions. Director Rucker explained that right now the department has three fulltime highway employees. There is also a buildings and grounds employee, a mechanic, and a foreman. Sometime the mechanic needs help during the day, so this pulls away from the highway personnel, as oftentimes they will be helping to get repairs done. This pulls away from other jobs the highway person would be doing. It's the same situation for the Transfer Station, as they are constantly covering shifts. There's also the challenge of covering open shifts because of sick leave and vacations. Adding an additional position to the highway personnel would allow for more production and efficiency, and better safety to highway maintenance. Director Rucker also explained that the current highway personnel will work through lunch and breaks when working on a bigger project. They work overtime when necessary. They have also agreed to not use their leave during the winter months because of winter operations. The personnel are using their leave in the summers, so this causes a shortness in staffing during that time. With the level of service that is demanded on the Public Works Department, which continues to grow, it's very difficult to become productive and achieve a level of service that should be supported with the crew the department has right now.

Chair Winslow noted that adding another person is the costliest thing done by the Town, as the position would cost between \$70,000 to \$100,000. What the Town gets back for that investment is important. The ask is for two positions. He can't in good faith support two people.

Director Rucker noted that one position is a parttime employee who would be administrative help. The other position is a fulltime employee for the crew. He thinks the Town would most benefit from the fulltime employee.

There was discussion about hiring for a permanent parttime position instead of fulltime, as the costs for that position would be approximately \$35,000 to \$40,000 for the year. Finance Director Becky Bergeron noted that the Town will not get the investment, engagement, and longevity from a parttime employee that is needed for public works. By the time this person is trained, they are going to go somewhere where there is fulltime work. The Public Works Department is never going to get any traction. The Town is not getting anything by deferring this asset. Human capital is a huge asset to the Town.

Vice-Chair King pointed out that multiple departments are asking for a fulltime employee. Even if the Select Board wants to give the Public Works Department a new position, it would have to determine how that can be balanced against the other departments.

There was some discussion about hiring a permanent parttime employee who may be able to transition to fulltime in the future. After some time, the department would be able to show what they were able to get done for work because of having the additional position. Finance Director Bergeron spoke about the challenges of finding someone to take a position on the off chance that it may turn into a fulltime employment.

Director Rucker noted that the fulltime employee would already be a CDL licensed professional. That is the caliber of employee that the Department would be looking for in a fulltime employee. The people who will apply for the parttime position will be unskilled. He also noted that the days of hiring someone to work at the DPW and train them to drive a truck to get their CDL are over, unless it's the right individual. Currently, the DPW does not have the staff to train people to gain their CDL, as it would be taking someone away from their work to do training.

Director Rucker reminded the Select Board that he is also requesting a permanent parttime administrative assistant, who would work for him at the Town Hall on administrative duties. This person would be slated to work 24 hours per week. They would be answering phones, receiving the public, paying bills, and handling data entry tasks. By having this person, it would free up his time to spend more time researching grant opportunities, oversee ongoing engineering projects, and manage MS-4 compliance.

The Select Board agreed to look at all positions being requested, consider what the affects will be, and where it will help the most. It was reiterated that there are a number of departments requesting additional positions. The Select Board will need time to consider the requests.

Department	Account	Requested	Accepted
Recreation	4520-50	\$383,563	Tabled
Recreation Rev	Fund 9	\$289,946	Tabled

**Recreation Director Dyana Martin
& Corey Belden**

Highlights: Mr. Belden explained that at the previous budget work session, the recreation department was looking to add a fulltime position. There used to be three fulltime people within the Recreation Department. There are now only two fulltime people and they are looking to get that third position back. The position being requested would be an assistant director and programming director. This would add a lot of stability to the Recreation Department. There have been a lot of challenges through Covid with staffing and losing a recreation director. It's felt that if this position was filled prior, the department would've been able to get through the transition of a new director easier with an assistant director already on staff. There have also been hiring issues with finding staff to run the after-school program. Finding parttime staff is very difficult to hire and people tend to come and go in that position. This position is a needed position. The Town and customers would benefit by having more stability in programming.

Recreation Director Martin pointed out that they will be able to add to the programming. The department would be able to do more for the seniors in town; such as, trips, more luncheons, and more outings. The person in this new position would also help to find more people to teach classes. The other ideas include concerts in the park and entertainment. This person could help with organizing those events. Director Martin commented that there are a lot of possibilities for recreation, especially with the facilities that Rye has.

Director Martin explained that she had split up the wages for this position between the general fund (75%) and the revolving fund (25%). This split seemed fair the way the revolving fund works. Since the previous meeting, she and Mr. Belden did some work on the numbers and feel it could be a 50/50 split between the two funds. The salary is approximately \$65,000 and next year the wages would be for nine months.

Mr. Belden noted that the benefits and FICA would come from the general fund. The revolving fund would cover about \$35,000 and the rest would come from the general fund.

Director Martin explained that right now, people are looking for more money for positions. This is the reason for the salary. She also thought that if she changed the name of the position and gave more authority in the department, it may be more enticing to get someone into the position.

Mr. Belden explained that they looked at the revenue the department brings in from programming. This wage in the revolving fund will have to be covered, so costs will need to increase for programming. The intent is to keep the costs as minimal as possible.

Selectman Epperson pointed out that as the programs increase, the revenue increases. The impact on the existing revolving fund shouldn't be severe.

Mr. Belden noted that they think it can be done with a minor impact. If the whole wage was in the revolving fund it would be more significant. However, the \$35,000 can be handled pretty well

with minor increases to the programs. He also noted that the department will also be able to offer more programming with more staff and this will help increase revenue.

Chair Winslow asked how many fulltime staff members worked for the Recreation Department pre-pandemic, back in 2018.

Director Martin replied three. She believes the position was eliminated due to Covid because people could not attend programs.

Finance Director Bergeron explained that prior to Covid, the Recreation Department had a director, program supervisor and an administrative position. There was no programming during Covid, so there was no need to have a program supervisor. That position was furloughed with the understanding that when programming came back, it would be reinstituted once it could sustain itself because it was 100% paid through the revolving fund. What is being proposed now is different.

Director Martin explained that the position can't be sustained on just the programming at this time.

Vice-Chair King clarified that the position was originally 100% funded through the revolving fund; however, that is no longer viable. He further clarified that the department could fund 35% if the rest of the wages were picked up by the general fund.

Director Martin confirmed. She reiterated that she's trying to bring the third person in so things can start building back up. The position would also have the authority to do other things besides programming. The intent for bringing back this position is to make the Recreation Department more functional, and more efficient with greater offerings for the community.

There was some discussion about the revolving fund picking up a greater share of the wages over time, as the program revenues increase. There was also some discussion about the requested permanent parttime custodian position for 10 hours per week with a possibility of sharing the custodian with other departments. The Select Board will take both requests under consideration and get back to the Recreation Director with their decision.

<u>Department</u>	<u>Account</u>	<u>Requested</u>	<u>Accepted</u>
Conservation Com	4611-53	\$138,575	\$138,575
Suzanne McFarland, Sally King & Jaci Grote			

Highlights: Jaci Grote reviewed the increase to the proposed Conservation Commission Budget for 2023. The legal services line item is being increased by \$10,000. There is a \$6,000 increase in salt marsh restoration and an \$8,000 land management. The land management line item covers hardscape expenses, Goss Farm barn maintenance, plantings, and surveys. The property maintenance line item covers mowing, tilling at Goss Farm, and tree cutting. There was some discussion about upcoming property maintenance projects for winterization at Goss Farm. There was also discussion about the benefits of salt marsh restoration. The restoration includes the removal of invasives and phragmites, which is important for keeping the marsh healthy and alive. Once a salt marsh is treated and the invasive species have been removed, it's less expensive to

maintain the salt marsh. It's important to keep the salt marshes healthy, as they are part of the biosystem within the hierarchy of marine life. Salt marshes also help clean the water. An acre of healthy salt marsh takes up a million gallons of water, which is important during storm events.

Motion by Tom King to accept the Conservation Commission Budget in the amount of \$138,575. Seconded by Bill Epperson. Vote: 3-0

<u>Department</u>	<u>Account</u>	<u>Requested</u>	<u>Accepted</u>
Conservation Bldg.	4194-53	\$12,950	\$12,950

Suzanne McFarland, Sally King & Jaci Grote

Highlights: The Conservation Buildings Budget was suggested by the Finance Director to cover expenses for the maintenance of the Goss Farm, along with equipment and the electricity used at the farm. There was some discussion about some of the maintenance needs of the barn at this time. It was noted that there is an expendable trust fund to cover repairs for the barn which are a capital expenditure. At this time, there is approximately \$55,000 in the fund.

Motion by Bill Epperson to accept the Conservation Building Budget in the amount of \$12,950. Seconded by Tom King. Vote: 3-0

III. OTHER BUSINESS

The Select Board discussed with the Town Administrator and Finance Director the pros and cons of contracting with a firm for the custodial duties for the town's buildings versus hiring an individual town custodian.

It was agreed to meet on Tuesday, November 15th, 2:30 p.m., to continue the review of the staffing requests. The Select Board will review the recently completed wage survey before their regular meeting on Monday, November 14th.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Phil Winslow to adjourn at 4:16 p.m. Seconded by Bill Epperson. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F. Ledger