

CONWAY VILLAGE FIRE DISTRICT
BUDGET HEARING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2021 7:00 p.m.
CONWAY FIRE DEPT. MEETING ROOM with public Via ZOOM

Commissioners present: Steve Bamsey, Michael Digregorio, Via Zoom Tom Buco.

Others present: Chief Solomon, Superintendent Adam LePrevost, Amy Snow.

Absent:

Public: Via Zoom Doug Burnell, Etienne Vallee.

The Budget Hearing opened at 7:00 p.m. Chairman Bamsey read each article to the public (see attached). The following were discussed:

Article 2- Mr. Bamsey explained the General Municipal Operations budget was up a little because the gazebo needs work. The miscellaneous line was used to replace the brackets and flags for Main Street. Mr. Digregorio stated four additional flags were also purchased, and Consolidated Communications donated the time to put the flags up.

Article 3- Mr. Bamsey explained water expenditures are up due to an increase in salaries to bring employee's rate of pay up. Mr. Bamsey explained Commissioners agreed that the employees are underpaid, and he explained other reasons for the increase are: Health Insurance went up, there is an increase in over time because staff will now be coming in on the weekends to monitor the system, and in anticipation of over time for the Main St. project. Etienne questioned the \$13,000 increase to the water distribution line. Adam explained the increase is due to inventory and a new line was added for hydrant maintenance. Adam stated he is anticipating operations going up. The safety line was added to help pay for cones, new signage, and other safety items (lockout tagout). Adam also explained there are a lot of older meters in the District that need to be replaced. Mr. Bamsey explained we are trying to increase our water meter replacement program. Currently we are not meeting the levels we need to replace the meters. A lot of our meters are aging out and therefore could be less effective.

Article 4- Sewer Expenditures are up partly due to salaries being brought up increasing over time, FICA, and Medicare. The salary structure was discussed. Mr. Bamsey explained CVFD's salary structure does not even begin to compare with what North Conway or Lower Bartlett employees make. He explained it is the Board's position that CVFD has good employees, and we want to retain the employees we have and create incentives for them to advance themselves. Mr. Buco explained the total salaries line is up 4.9% when the budget passes. Amy stated we also have a six-man crew now vs. five. There were some savings on the salaries last year because some of the employees were furloughed due to COVID. The District ran with a bare-bones staff to keep daily operations going and we had one employee retire.

Mr. Bamsey explained the North Conway Water Precinct bill was down a little because of the lockdown due to COVID. The lockdown reduced the flows to North Conway and there was less infiltration due to a dry season.

Etienne questioned the increase in user fees. Mr. Bamsey, with the help of Amy, said we are increasing the user fees to help pay for the operating budget and the warrant articles and we need to be at a certain percentage for bad debt.

Article 5- The *Quint Lease* Purchase line needs to be fixed to reflect \$112,009.00 in the 2020 Budget. The Building Maintenance line is down. Chief Solomon explained paving in front of the Fire Station is in the Capital Plans Building Maintenance but, the paving cannot be done until the Main Street project is done because the project will change the road's profile. He is also hoping that we can get some help from the Town to reduce the cost to CVFD significantly.

Etienne questioned the 2021 anticipated revenue line for Non-Precinct Fire going down. Chief Solomon explained the formula changed reducing the revenue CVFD could anticipate. A State law was passed that changes how utilities are taxed lowering property values, reducing what the Town pays for fire protection.

Article 6- No Comments.

Article 7- Amy commented that the Betterment fee went down for 2021.

Article 8 - Mr. Bamsey explained that Chief Solomon had created a capital improvement fund to replace the fire station vehicles. He also stated they hope to get some revenue from the old ambulance when it sells.

Article 9 – No comments.

Article 10 – Chief Solomon explained this is the account that fire trucks are purchased from. With the lease-purchase of the quint, we deducted the \$112,000 that went into the Operating Budget from this warrant. It will reduce this warrant to \$18,000 for the duration of the lease agreement for the quint for 2021-2022. In 2023 the warrant article for the Capital Reserve Fund will go up again.

Article 11- Adam explained that we are working on being more self-sufficient, so we do not have borrow money to do projects. Some of these funds will be used for the Main St. Project.

Article 12 – No Comments.

Article 13 – Amy explained \$9,000 comes from connection fees due to new construction that has gone on in the District and she also explained the sewer budget was underspent last year due to COVID.

Article 14 – Mr. Bamsey stated the paving for the fire station would come out of this account and eventually roofing and any needs the administration building might have in the future. Chief Solomon explained when it comes time to do the paving; the Town crew will rip up the old pavement and gravel and compact it. CVFD will only have to pay for the paving. Mr. Digregorio responded that the pavement was budgeted without the Towns help because you never know what will happen. Mr. Buco stated this account is only for the Fire Station and the Administration Buildings.

Article 15 – No Comments.

Article 16 – Adam explained what anodes are in the water tank and how they function. Mr. Bamsey explained the current anodes are down to 15% and how they are changed out with divers.

Article 17- Adam explained that when we had our sanitary survey, it was recommended that the District purchase a chlorine continuous analyzer to ensure the correct dose of chlorine will be put into the water. This will ensure the right amount is being used to keep the public safe and save the District money on chemical expenses.

Article 18 – Adam explained that the corrosion control study looks at lead and copper and the District passed the test with flying colors. However, customers have complained in the past about their hot water heaters failing. The corrosion control study would help the District optimize our corrosion control program and make sure we are not expending more chemicals than we should. This would help with the life span of customer’s hot water heaters and prolong the anodes life in the water tank on Bald Hill.

Article 19 – This article will assist with the meter replacement program. Adam explained the meter testing bench has five slots for five meters, and it is used in coordination with AWWA (American Water Works Association) standards. The PUC (Public Utilities Commission) adopts these standards. Adam explained the test bench is a specialized piece of equipment that will test a meter’s accuracy by testing volume. CVFD will also be able to rebuild meters which will save the District money. AWWA standards state testing meters every ten years. There was discussion around the District doing monthly reads to look for meters that may not be working correctly and leaks.

Article 20 – Amy gave a brief history of this account and explained this account would be more useful to the water system by not restricting it to just construction-related costs. By re-purposing the account, we can use the money more effectively to address the water system infrastructure needs.

Article 21 – No comments.

Chief Solomon stated that the Annual Meeting will be held in the Fire Station garage. The public will have to attend the Annual Meeting in person. There will be no ZOOM option.

There being no other business to discuss, Mr. Bamsey closed the Budget Hearing at 8:03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacy Bolduc,
Receptionist