

CONWAY VILLAGE FIRE DISTRICT
BUDGET HEARING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2022, 7:00 P.M.
CONWAY FIRE STATION

Commissioners present: Steve Bamsey, Michael Digregorio, Tom Buco
Staff present: Chief Solomon, Superintendent Bruno Vallieres, Municipal
Bookkeeper/District Clerk Amy Snow

There were 7 registered voters present as well as Daymond Steer from the Conway
Daily Sun

The meeting started with the Commissioners and staff introducing themselves.
Commissioner Bamsey read through the warrant articles starting with Article 2,
Article one being the elections of Officials.

Article 2 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of fifty-two thousand nine hundred eighty-six dollars (\$52,986) for general municipal operations; this amount to be offset by five thousand dollars (\$5,000) from Fund Balance. This is a tax funded article. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately.
[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

Ms. Snow pointed out the \$1,204 of revenue that is not mentioned in the article, this will be added to the DRA website in September when the revised revenues are calculated. Mr. Bamsey pointed out the increase in the Legal/Professional line that may have to be expended.

Article 3 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of four hundred twenty-one thousand thirty dollars (\$421,030) for the operation of the Water Department. This amount to be funded by water revenues with no amount from taxation.
[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

Amy pointed out that even though the budget is higher than last year, the water usage rate did go down.

Etienne Vallee asked about the meter replacement line – this is higher because we want to try and replace more, and prices did increase.

Daymond Steer asked if the sewer lining has helped the district save money, Bruno responded that it is saving 20,000 gallons per day.

Etienne asked about the Backflow testing. Bruno explained that our backflow testing person moved on, so we have to contract this out so now there is an expense associated with this.

Article 4 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum seven hundred thirty thousand four hundred thirteen dollars (\$730,413) for the operation of the Sewer Department. This amount to funded by sewer revenues with no amount from taxation.

[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

Mr. Bamsey stated this article has changed to read “To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of eight hundred fifty-five thousand four hundred thirteen dollars (\$855,413) for the operation of the Sewer Department. This amount to funded by seven hundred thirty thousand four hundred thirteen dollars (\$730,413) from sewer revenues and one hundred twenty-five thousand dollars (\$125,000) from sewer revenues previously collected with no amount from taxation.” We just received today, the budget from North Conway Water Precinct which spurred this change.

Janine Bean asked why there was a \$125,000 increase, Mr. Bamsey explained the Inter-municipal Agreement. NCWP needs a new Sludge Truck and HVAC unit – these are one-time costs and we just learned about this today. We may not have to pay for this, but we do have to budget for it. Randy Davison thought he heard that Town of Conway was looking for more sludge, but the Board and Bruno were pretty certain that the town cannot take more, they actually can’t take all they are getting now. Discussion ensued regarding the IMA. It was pointed out that the NCWP sewer bill is based on CVFD being 30% of NCWP’s total flow, if it is lower, then our cost is lower. Discussion ensued around sludge.

The increase of the budget and decrease of article 16 with an increase in use of previously collected revenue will change the net gain to zero.

Article 5 To see if the district will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one million two hundred ninety-eight thousand five hundred thirty-eight dollars (\$1,298,538) for the operation of the Fire, Rescue, and Ambulance Department with eight hundred fifty-four thousand nine hundred twenty-one dollars (\$854,921) to come from the Fire, Rescue, and Ambulance Special Revenue fund and four hundred fifty-seven thousand six hundred seventeen dollars (\$457,617) to be funded by taxation.

[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

Randy Davison discussed the fact that the town is not required to provide ambulance and the town subsidizes the district through the Ambulance Contract. He believes it is not cost effective for the district and it is a losing proposition. Mr. Digregorio explained that it is not a subsidy but a contract; but the Chief said he calls it a subsidy. He went on to laud the service Conway Village provides. The upside of keeping it is control of service and good years off-set taxes. Discussion ensued regarding the negotiations with the town for the ambulance contract and the duplication of service in the Town of Conway.

Janine Bean stated that it is time to do something because the way we are doing is unsustainable. Randy agrees fire and ambulance should be town wide. The chief agrees there is no statute stating the town is responsible for ambulance like it is for fire service. Mr. Digregorio can't imagine a town without ambulance service. There is a clause in the contract to open it up.

Etienne asked about medical supplies, equipment, and office supplies increase. Some is due to inflation and office expenses is because the server needs to be replaced, reporting software is going from \$875/year to \$5,000/year, however there may free software available through the state. Etienne asked why the Grafton agreement is half – it is based on the number of calls from the previous year and there was only one call in Livermore in 2021.

Article 6 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of three hundred seventy-one thousand two hundred seventy-two dollars (\$371,272) to pay the Water Department Debt Service for the year; this amount to be offset by fifty-one thousand one hundred eighty-six dollars (\$51,186) from State of New Hampshire SIGI grants and three hundred twenty thousand eighty-six dollars (\$320,086) to be funded by water revenues with no amount from taxation.

[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

Randy asked how many people live in the district. It is hard to say; we have about 900 accounts, but trailer parks are one account and work force housing is one account. Population is easy to find for the town, but it is not broken out by district.

Article 7 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of six hundred thirty-one thousand two hundred seventy-one dollars (\$631,271) to pay the Sewer Department Debt Service for the year; this amount to be offset by two hundred eighty-four thousand seven hundred seventy-six dollars (\$284,776) from the State of New Hampshire SAG, and twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) from the Sewer Debt Expendable Trust Fund. Three hundred twenty-six thousand four hundred ninety-five dollars (\$326,495) to be funded by sewer betterment fees with no amount from taxation. Balance of Expendable Trust Fund as of December 31, 2021, four hundred seventeen thousand one hundred seventy-three dollars and forty cents (\$417,173.40).

[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

Etienne wanted to know when the debt will be paid off – 2037. The debt will stay within the district even if the town takes over water and sewer.

Discussion ensued regarding the lack of maintenance in the past and Mr. Buco said that this is a statewide issue.

Article 8 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000) to be added to the Ambulance Capital Reserve Trust Fund previously established. This amount to be funded by taxation. Balance of Capital Reserve Trust Fund as of December 31, 2021, two thousand five hundred fifty-eight dollars and sixty-seven cents (\$2,558.67).

[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

The chief stated that ten years ago ambulances were \$125,000 now they start at \$275,000. Mr. Bamsey said ambulance is like insurance and Randy believes it should be a town wide expense. Linda Burns expressed how thankful she was for an ambulance service.

Article 9 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) to be added to the Water/Sewer Equipment Capital Reserve Trust Fund previously established; twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) to be funded by water revenues previously collected and twenty thousand

dollars (\$20,000) to be funded by sewer revenues previously collected with no amount from taxation. Balance of Capital Reserve Trust Fund as of December 31, 2021, fifty-eight thousand seven hundred fifty-three dollars and fourteen cents (58,753.14).

[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

Article 10 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) to be added to the Fire/Rescue Equipment Capital Reserve Trust Fund previously established. This amount to be funded by taxation. Balance of Capital Reserve Trust Fund as of December 31, 2021, fifty-four thousand six hundred eighty-five dollars and ninety-eight cents (\$54,685.98).

[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

Article 11 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twelve thousand seven hundred thirty-one dollars (\$12,731) to be added to the Water System Improvement Capital Reserve Trust Fund previously established; twelve thousand seven hundred thirty-one dollars (\$12,731) to be funded by connection fees collected in 2020 and 2021 with no amount from taxation. Balance of Capital Reserve Trust Fund as of December 31, 2021, one hundred one thousand eight hundred seventeen dollars and ninety-one cents (\$101,817.91).

[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

This is to fund the capital reserve funds, this schedule will be in the Annual Report.

Article 12 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-two thousand seven hundred seven dollars (\$22,707) to be added to the STAR (Short Term Asset Replacement) Expendable Trust Fund previously established for short lived asset replacement related to the Force Main project as per the Letter of Conditions with Rural Development. One thousand forty dollars (\$1,040) to come from a double withdrawal from the Trust Fund, twenty-one thousand six hundred sixty-seven dollars (\$21,667) to come from sewer revenues with no amount from taxation. Balance of Expendable Trust Fund as of December 31, 2021, one hundred eighty-seven thousand six hundred fifty-eight dollars and ninety-six cents (\$187,658.96).

[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

Amy explained that two withdrawals were taken for the same bill mistakenly.

Article 13 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of eighteen thousand five hundred dollars (\$18,500) to be added to the Sewer Projects and Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund previously established. Nine thousand two hundred fifty dollars (\$9,250) to be funded by connection fees collected in 2020 and 2021, nine thousand two hundred fifty dollars (\$9,250) to be funded by sewer revenues previously collected, with no amount from taxation. Balance of Expendable Trust Fund as of December 31, 2021, thirty thousand nine hundred ninety-six dollars and eighty-seven cents (\$30,996.87).

[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

Article 14 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) to be added to the Building Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund previously established; ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) to come from fund balance with fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) to be funded by taxation. Balance of Capital Reserve Trust Fund as of December 31, 2021, sixty-eight thousand one hundred ninety-three dollars and nineteen cents. (\$68,193.19).

[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

Doug Burnell asked how this number is derived, Mr. Bamsey explained the capital improvement/maintenance plan. Mr. Buco explained that this fund is solely for the Fire Station and Administrative Building.

Article 15 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000) to make repairs to the gazebo in Pequawket Park. This amount to be funded by five thousand dollars (\$5,000) from Fund Balance, five thousand dollars (\$5,000) from the Pequawket Park Capital Reserve Trust Fund and two thousand dollars (\$2,000) to be funded by taxation. Balance of Capital Reserve Trust Fund as of December 31, 2021, seven thousand four hundred thirty-eight dollars and fifty cents (\$7,438.50).

[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

The roof needs replacing and there are some other structural repairs needed as well. The commissioners are not sure what to do about the gazebo and put this article in so the voters can decide to fix it, tear it down, or whatever. Discussion ensued about park and gazebo usage and construction of the gazebo.

Article 16 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) for sewer system upgrades; five thousand dollars (\$5,000) to be funded by sewer revenues and thirty-five thousand dollars (\$35,000) to be funded by sewer revenues previously collected with no amount from taxation.

[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

In response to the NCWP budget, this article has been changed to \$20,000 with \$15,000 coming from previously collected revenues.

Article 17 To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) for water system upgrades. This amount to be funded by water revenues previously collected with no amount from taxation.

[Recommended by the Board of Commissioners 0-0-0] (Majority vote required)

Randy wants to know where this money is that has been previously collected and how much we have.

Article 18 To act upon any other business that may legally come before this meeting.

The discussion turned to dissolving the district. The commissioners try to provide the best services with the thinnest budget possible each year and it is getting harder and harder each year with a small tax and customer base in the district as well as insurance companies not paying what it cost to provide ambulance service. East Conway is ready to close shop and East Conway, Redstone, and Center Conway are looking to combine. The commissioners approached the Board of Selectman in 2021 to see if they were interested in taking over the Fire Department and they were interested in talking about it. Recently the town came to us and pitched dissolving the district. We cannot expand beyond our district boundaries, but the town can expand water and sewer. There is a lot to work out regarding our assets. There will be public hearings after the Annual Meeting, the first being sometime in

April. We are short staffed, low pay comparatively and things are getting very expensive.

It is important to the Board of Commissioner that the level of service we have continues if we dissolve. Mr. Digregorio cannot endorse dissolving if the town can't maintain the service we are used to.

RSA 52:21 states it takes a 2/3 vote of those present in the positive to dissolve and the town will have to take on the services, there is no vote at the town level.

As far as Fire service – it is not equal. Non-precinct pays about \$1.00/\$1,000 where the district pays over \$2.00/\$1,000 – having the town run fire, this would equal out for the covered areas. Conway Fire already trains with Redstone, East Conway etc. no matter how this pans out, them joining the town or not, it will work out.

The commissioners are dedicated to making sure the district residents are protected through this process.

Discussion ensued around how the district does not benefit from the Rooms and Meals tax revenue.

The Budget Hearing was closed at 8:20 p.m.