



Town of Ridgefield
Board of Selectmen Budget Meeting Minutes
UNAPPROVED
January 31, 2023 at 7:00pm

Please note – these minutes are not verbatim.

Present: Rudy Marconi, Sean Connelly, Bob Hebert, Barbara Manners, Maureen Kozlark

1. Budget Overview – Kevin Redmond

Director of Finance Kevin Redmond gave a summary of the budget. The town total increase is 6.63%. The keys points in Redmond's overview included:

- Pension, utilities, salaries, social security, Medicare, IT, snow removal, library and building maintenance as the big drivers of the increase
- Parks & Rec and the Golf Course offset their increases with revenue increases
- The Grand List is up 2.03%
- Debt service is coming down
- There is 98.7% collection rate – Board of Finance decides that number
- We are seeing continued inflationary pressures

There was a discussion regarding the revaluation assessment that was conducted by the Tax Assessors office and how the process works. One common misconception is that tax increases are a result of the revaluation, however this is not the case. The budget is what drives the taxes.

Sean Connelly asked about additional personnel in the IT department. Andrew Neblett, IT Director, has a number of contracted people who fill in when he needs help.

2. Library Budget

Library Director Brenda McKinley, Library Board of Directors Carrie Wells and Treasurer Paul Mellinger presented the proposed budget for the Library.

McKinley began with an overview of all things happening at the library including new programs and memberships. Children's Programs, Book a Librarian, and the

NYE Ball Drop were just a few that McKinley highlighted.

Mellinger provided an overview of the challenges the library has been facing which included rising utilities & insurance costs and the level of uncertainty with fundraising. Some key points that Mellinger discussed included:

- 70.6% of the total budget is appropriation which is on target with previous years
- Library staff is now steady with the switch from 2 part time employees to 1 full time. There is no increase to headcount.
- The library has 2 sources of income 1. A trust which is set by the IRS and they are legally bound to take and 2. An investment account UBS which is unrestricted. Previously the withdrawal was 4%, this year it is 4.5%. They are looking for additional ways to raise money through fundraising.
- There has been a reduction in fines as people move more toward digital resources rather than physical. The passport services offered at the library have helped to offset the reduction in fines.
- Collections and programming are up 1.5%
- IT Budget has increased due to cyber security and MFA upgrades.
- There are projected increases to health care and building maintenance

McKinley talked about the push from the Library Association to get more funding from the State. Currently its hard to predict when and how much funding they will receive. One State incentive is resource sharing which libraries are now participating in. In addition to receiving State funding for it, resource sharing has been beneficial for both the libraries and their patrons.

The overall Capital request is \$50,000 which is a 3.5% increase. The major items include a new outside air exchange unit, upgraded security system with additional cameras, and a people counter system. In 2024/2025 the library will need a HVAC system upgrade. They have been doing research on specs, quotes, potential training and the installation & transition process.

In 2021 the library received about \$18,000 from a State Grant that was used toward furniture and technology. The money they received from ARPA funding went toward unrestricted operating costs such as collections and programming.

3. Parks & Recreation Budget

Parks & Rec Director Dennis DiPinto, Maintenance Director Bob Schneider and Parks & Rec Commission Phil Kearns presented the proposed budget for Parks &

Rec.

The operating budget is up by 6.14% due mostly to increases in utilities, programs, salaries, maintenance and supplies. Kearns commented that they are on track to meet and exceed their revenue budget which basically covers their expenses. Revenues from programs, martin park, and aquatics all exceed the 2019 numbers. The supply budget has not been increased at the same speed that prices are increasing. Fertilizer, pool supplies, clay and sod have increased in price significantly.

There was a discussion about the shuffling around of staff and how it affects salaries and the budget. On the surface the increase in salaries appears to be substantial, however when it is broken down to highlight the areas with reductions, it is less significant.

The major items in the capital budget included:

- Security cameras for Ballard Park and outside the Rec Center
- Fencing replacement at Ballard and the Dog Park
- Resurfacing of the Tennis Courts at RHS which are also used as pickleball courts
- Replacing an 11-year-old mini loader, a 9-year-old pickup truck, and a 15-year-old cedar attachment
- Engineering for new pickleball courts
- Yanity repairs including AC unit, basketball goal lifts which \$5,000 of will be covered by the RBA.
- Rec Center upgrades including HVAC replacement and flooring Charter Oak rooms 1, 2 & 3.
- Governor Park – phase 2 of 2 for court replacement and lighting which needs to be addressed simultaneously. Bids have come in for the project which needs to be completed before September 1, 2023.

The spin room project has been removed from the capital request and will be done with ADA funds. The room needs to be larger to be accessible to all.

Barbara Manners commented that an annual fee should be charged for the Dog Park which would help fund the maintenance. If there is some kind of registration it would help with monitoring security and protocols. There was a discussion about if and how this would work.

4. General Budget Discussion

There was a brief discussion about the upcoming budget presentations including

Golf, IT and Purchasing.

5. Possible Capital/Operating Budget Vote

No votes were taken.

Bob Hebert moved to adjourn the January 31, 2023 Board of Selectmen Budget Meeting at 9:44pm. Sean Connelly second the motion. Motion carries 5-0.