

North Yarmouth Budget Committee
Minutes of April 20, 2023, Meeting

Meeting called to order at 6:05 p. m. by Chair Andy Walsh. Committee members in attendance were Jay Fulton, Sandra Falsey, Steve Palmer, Darla Hamlin, and Secretary Linc Merrill. Bill Young was absent as he was working. Also present were Town Manager Diane Barnes, Wescustogo Hall & Community Director Jackie Hersey, Assistant Director Jackson Humphrey, Select Board member Paul Hodgetts, Planning Board Chair Paul Whitmarsh, and EDSC member Rich Parenteau.

Barnes presented the Parks Committee budget located in Tab 6. There is \$50,000 in the reserve account that Barnes said can be used for capital projects. The capital budget items will be reviewed next week. The Living Well Committee has a \$1,200 budget.

Upon inquiry from Merrill, Barnes replied that the Waste Reduction Committee is very active and is sponsoring the event at Wescustogo Hall this weekend.

The Committee turned to Tab 5, the Wescustogo Hall & Community Center budget. Director Hersey said they are open 7 days a week almost every week throughout the year. She is requesting a ½ time person be added to the staff to help set up and take down events.

Hersey said the \$10,000 request for special events is less than last year because they have been able to get sponsors to pay for a larger share of those costs. She wants to do more free community events. Pickleball usage is 18 hours a week. She is requesting to add pads for safety on the structural supports in the gym and stairs to be built from the stage to the floor. This is because people jump from the stage to the floor or use a step stool to get from the floor to the stage. This is a \$35,000 item. Account 5900 Capital Projects is for \$69,223 in total.

Adding security cameras outside the building was discussed. There have been no real issues with security except someone throwing their trash in the dumpster when they moved. Hersey said they also need more balls including basketballs for men to use, and a new rack for the basketballs. Hersey said she schedules the use of Sharp's Field and the softball field.

The activities that take place at Wescustogo Hall & Community Center are summer camps, bridal and baby showers, a wedding upcoming in September, and lots of kids' birthday parties. From November to April, pickleball is 18 hours a week on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

Cumberland/North Yarmouth Community Recreation holds programs here. A list of additional activities includes cardio, yoga, green screens, crafting group, book club, five scout troops, kiddie gym, open gym, and recreational basketball five nights a week from December to March. The charge for a wedding is \$125 an hour.

Falsey asked about what kinds of reports are available. Barnes said that quarterly reports are given to the Select Board, and they show the number of users by activity.

Palmer asked about the revenue report and will we see projections for Wescustogo Hall & Community Center. Hersey said she adds events as we have open space in the calendar. Palmer asked about the hours it is open. Hersey said 8 am to 8pm Monday through Thursday. Friday is from 8 am to 8 pm when basketball is being played. Otherwise, it is 8 a. m. to 5 p. m. unless there is an event. Saturday openings

are based on rentals except it is open for pickleball from 9 a. m. to 12:30 p. m. If there are rentals, it is probably open 9 a. m. to 7 p. m. Sundays are open for pickleball is 3 p.m. to 6 p. m. plus rentals. Most of the event rentals are weekends.

Palmer asked how the personnel works. What are the personnel positions, and do they leverage the full use of the facility? Hersey responded that she and Mary were rotating work on Sundays until recently. Jackson also rotated in, but he covers the municipal meetings and broadcasts them perhaps a few times a week. Now, Mary and Jackie are working 6 days a week to provide coverage. It is very difficult for any of them to get two days in a row off from work.

Falsey said she recalled that this was not supposed to be sustainable. Walsh said the revenue was not going to cover the operating costs. Hamlin agreed.

Hersey said that the cost of the insurance the renters must provide plus the rental fee can make it tougher to rent. If she had to increase the rental fee, she thinks usage would decline.

Walsh asked if we could see the cost offset from the Cumberland/North Yarmouth Community Recreation Program to see what our bottom line is. He wants to understand what our revenue picture is.

The discussion returned to the staffing. Hersey said she works Monday to Friday full-time. Mary works Monday through Thursday. Jackson works Tuesday through Saturday. Jackson works overtime as he also covers the municipal broadcasts and this overtime cost \$6,000.

Walsh asked what the part-time person would do. Hersey said that it would help make sure current staff can get two days in a row off. There is a need for two employees at some events to set up and take down. The custodian (Mary) also cleans the Town Office and Public Works. Hamlin said we are spending a lot for the facility.

Hersey said that the Prince Memorial Library will start doing programs here in July. They will have Bingo night, and "Cook the Books" (something about cooking).

Merrill suggested that we should account for the hours that the facility is used but we receive no rent such as Town events, meetings, and things like the Scouts. A value for this use could be assigned and we would have a better idea of the "revenue" or "value" to the Town. Hamlin and Walsh agreed. There was a consensus that the Town should do this. Palmer said it would show the activity for the Town takes place there and we would know the cost. Walsh said we may be overwhelmed by "use" but maybe not "need".

Hersey said that they have switched to doing all in-house graphics for their needs and not sending them out. On account 5216 Software, this is for Adobe licenses to do the graphics. She said that they also do some graphics work for the Town Office.

Account 5224 Office Supplies is \$5,000 higher as costs are being assigned to individual departments. It is not a change in usage. Barnes said the Town Office copier equipment contract includes repairs and ink but the one at Wescustogo Hall does not. Account 5240 was in Public Works last year.

Merrill asked about trips and conferences that the previous Director took. Hersey said that they were not needed as she had adequate resources available through Cumberland/North Yarmouth Recreation and

our Maine Parks and Recreation membership. Maine Parks and Recreation provides things like free discount coupons to Dick's Sporting Goods that can be given out through our Facebook page.

Account 5222 is for Special Events. Palmer asked about the amount. Hersey said it would be spent but it generates revenue from things like the Wescustogo Open golf event.

Solar panels were discussed. Walsh said that there is an 11-year payback on a solar system. Fulton said as the electricity rate goes up, the credit you receive goes up, so it becomes more valuable. Walsh said the budget is up considerably so the mill rate will go up a lot unless tax collections increase a lot. Walsh said he originally was opposed to the half time position at Wescustogo Hall and wanted no office increases. He now thinks a half time person is needed.

Barnes said she was doing all the capital improvements at once to get the gym done.

Walsh said he does not like to bond. He likes to pay for things. He does not want to be buried in debt and thinks we have to borrow because of the \$380,000 capital funding problem we had in the past. Walsh said he wants to support the fire truck. He said he wants to understand the solar at Wescustogo Hall. Fulton said it is OK to ask for more financial information. Barnes said she will get Revision to do a spreadsheet on the solar.

Walsh said we need to cut the budget. Fix it now.

Palmer talked about safety. He said we have talked about safety in the gym, so we need to do it. He suggested we do it in two parts and fix the padding on the laminated beams this year. He said to hold off on the walls and this will show good faith in addressing the needs.

Hamlin asked if we use the stage and said it was not large enough for doing productions. Hersey said the party rentals are the problem. The kids jump off the stage as there is no way to get down. She also said no one rents the stage. Hamlin asked why we don't close the stage off. Hersey said parents sit on it to watch their children practice, but it is not rented for any uses.

Fulton said our community is not a business. He said it is responsible to minimize increases. He said he supported raising taxes because this is a quality community. He said only 3% of our residents live below the poverty line and property taxes could go up \$1,000 to \$2,000. Merrill strongly objected to Fulton's remarks and called them callous. Chair Walsh rapped his gavel several times to bring the exchange to a conclusion. Merrill apologized to the Chair.

Barnes said that the taxes will be driven by the revenue numbers. Some TIF revenue will be going into the General Fund after the February Town Meeting changes to the size of the TIF District. If the Capital Reserve funding error from two years ago (\$380,000) where the money was not raised as appropriated was done at that time, the tax increase would be less this year.

Walsh said we will vote at the end on the budget items.

Hamlin said when she was on the Select Board, they had a spreadsheet where you could change numbers and that would show how the mill rate moved and that helped with the budget decisions. Walsh said next year's budget will be easier to compare to this year as the costs will be in the same budget center (it is changing this year). Barnes said she hoped to have the projected revenue for the Committee next week.

Palmer said we can decide next week. He asked if we will be open 7 days a week at Wescustogo Hall and Community Center.

It was decided that the Budget Committee will meet again May 4th at 6 p. m. for the final budget votes.

Palmer asked again if we need to be open 7 days a week at Wescustogo Hall. Walsh said we need to manage the budget. Walsh said state agencies can go sideways and asked why the Prince Memorial Library request shows a 5% difference in one place than in another. Barnes pointed out that is the 5% administrative load Cumberland adds to it.

Merrill remarked that he does not support buying library services in the current manner. He proposed that the Town purchase nonresident library cards at the library of the resident's choice if they desire to have a card. He gave costs for other town libraries and said North Yarmouth could purchase nonresident cards for everyone in Town cheaper than Cumberland charges us. Walsh said he had been on the joint services committee between the two towns ten years ago and Cumberland will cut North Yarmouth off from using the Recreation program if we do not fund the Prince Memorial Library. Merrill said he knew that.

Fulton asked if it was appropriate for him to ask for Prince Memorial Library card holder data. Merrill suggested that there were many North Yarmouth card holders who were given cards as school students but do not use the library as adults. The number of active card users is different than the number of card holders, probably by a great deal.

Walsh asked if the members support the \$69,000 in capital expenditures for Wescustogo Hall. Falsey asked if we could take the padding out and just wrap the poles. Fulton said splitting the cost in half made sense to him. Palmer asked if we could postpone the sound panels (which are for the gym). He said we live with the sound now.

Walsh asked for other thoughts. Hamlin said we should do half this year and gyms are supposed to be noisy. Walsh said padding the supports is a legitimate expense. It is a risk of injury if we don't do it. Merrill said he supports padding the supports.

Palmer said the stairs are an issue. They need to have stairs to retrieve the ball during pickleball. Hamlin said the security cameras can wait. Falsey said we should get a second quote for the stairs.

Walsh reminded the members that they would be able to view Engine 51 on Sunday at the Public Works garage at 1 p.m. He mentioned the Fire Chief wants a fulltime firefighter. Fulton said we need to justify a new truck.

Palmer said he did not support regionalization of the Fire Department. It is a complex issue, and he does not want the Town to get into it. Walsh said you can't get the Fire Departments to agree on how they would consolidate.

Fulton said we will regionalize hose purchases. He asked if the Select Board could put an ad hoc committee together to explore regionalization. Walsh said mutual aid is regionalizing EMS services. He did not see it as a major change in costs. Egos and towns make it not easy to do. Fulton asked again if people can explore it. Hamlin said it has been talked about for 10 years. She said the towns will never agree. Walsh said it won't be good for an ad hoc committee to do it. The Fire Chief should do it.

Walsh said he would like to get our Capital Reserve account up and not have to bond \$1,000,000 (fire truck). He said he won't be happy if we have to do that.

Hamlin moved and Falsey seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The vote was unanimous. The Committee adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Chair Walsh opened the Public Meeting.

Planning Board Chair Paul Whitmarsh thanked Walsh for his 35,000-foot view of the budget. Whitmarsh said he was concerned for all the same reasons such as a fulltime firefighter, a half time person at Wescustogo Hall & Community Center and the cost to operate it. He also said that if the stage was not being used as a stage and we put stairs to it, would we be required to put a rail across the front of the stage to meet building codes. Barnes said she would have the Code Enforcement Officer look into it. Palmer said it is a stage and not a sitting area.

The Public Hearing was closed at 8:21 p.m.

Palmer moved and Hamlin seconded that we adjourn. The vote was unanimous.

Lincoln J. Merrill, Jr., Secretary

Approved: May 4, 2023