

**Auburn Budget Committee Meeting
November 30, 2023
Stritch Meeting Room
Approved Minutes
7:00 PM**

Members Present: Chairman Peter Miles, Dan Carpenter, Vice-Chair David Wesche, Kevin Downing, Paula Marzloff, Joanne Linxweiler, School Board Representative Alan Villeneuve, and Selectman Representative Keith Leclair

Others Present: Selectman Tom Carroll, Brenda Beer, Library Director Daniel Szczesny, Library Trustees Marilyn Cavanaugh, Elizabeth Michaud, Finance & Budget Administrator Mimi Friolet, Town Administrator Chris Sterndale, Nancy Hoijer, Recording Secretary and persons unknown to the minute taker

I. Call to Order

Chairman Miles called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II. Introductions

Chairman Miles introduced the members who were present.

III. Approval of Minutes

- November 16, 2023

Mr. Leclair recommended an edit under School Update.

Mrs. Marzloff motioned to approve the November 16, 2023 meeting minutes, as amended. Mr. Leclair seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 8-0-0.

IV. Town Budget Proposals

A. Library

Library Director Daniel Szczesny presented the proposed budget for the Library in the amount of \$241,459 which is a 1.68% increase from last year. He indicated the Selectmen reduced line 275 (utilities) from \$13,200 to \$12,250 (reducing the bottom line to \$240,509).

Mrs. Linxweiler asked whether the Library was looking for a technical assistant or just keeping it open. Mr. Szczesny indicated there may be need for an IT person down the road.

Mr. Szczesny indicated the estimated hours for employees were 109 hours, with the addition of COLA and step increases.

Mr. Villeneuve motioned to approve lines 268-273 of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget as presented. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 8-0-0.

Mrs. Linxweiler motioned to approve line 275 (utilities) of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget in the amount of \$12,250. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 8-0-0.

Mr. Carpenter asked what maintenance projects were done this year. Mr. Szczesny indicated the children's door was repaired at a cost of \$3,300 and there were furnace repairs.

Mrs. Linxweiler motioned to approve line 276 (Maintenance) of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget, as presented. Mr. Villeneuve seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 8-0-0.

Mr. Villeneuve asked what line 277 was comprised of and Mr. Szczesny indicated the data base is \$4,000/yr. and then there are virus subscriptions. Mr. Villeneuve asked if the Library used the same company as the Town. Mr. Leclair indicated there is a per seat charge. Mr. Sterndale noted there are network routers and switches as part of the overall contract.

Mr. Leclair motioned to approve line 277 (Computer Systems) of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget in the amount of \$7,000. Mr. Wesche seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 8-0-0.

Mr. Wesche motioned to approve line 278 1 (Equip & Furnishing) of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget in the amount of \$1. Mrs. Marzloff seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 8-0-0.

Mr. Szczesny indicated that conferences and workshops were not attended this year because they were busy with other things but plan to attend them next year.

Mr. Villeneuve motioned to approve line 279 (Training, Prof. Journals) of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget, as presented. Mrs. Linxweiler seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 8-0-0.

Mr. Szczesny reported a large increase in the number of programs and the interest in programs.

Mr. Villeneuve asked if attendees were charged when materials were purchased and Mr. Szczesny indicated no. Mr. Villeneuve recommended charging a fee for materials because it wasn't fair for the rest of the Town to pay for an individual to take something home. Mr. Szczesny will talk to the Trustees.

Mr. Carpenter motioned to approve line 280 (Programs) of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget in the amount of \$1,500. Mr. Downing seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 8-0-0.

Mr. Szczesny discussed lines 281 and 282 Lending Materials Print and Electronic. He noted digital usage has been increasing and running out. He noted the fee for NH Downloadables has increased.

Mr. Villeneuve motioned to approve lines 281 and 282 of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget, as presented. Mr. Downing seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 8-0-0.

Mr. Szczesny noted supplies were going up due to the 40% increase in number of patrons, with families and children and the cost of cleaning supplies, paper and printing.

Mr. Villeneuve motioned to approve line 283 (Supplies) of the proposed FY 2024 Library budget, as presented. Mrs. Linxweiler seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 8-0-0.

Mr. Szczesny provided the Committee with a handout of information concerning the proposed Library expansion including a project budget, plans, letter from Trustee Nancy Mayland dated November 29, 2023, letter from Library Asst. Mary Hrubiec dated November 29, 2023, letter from James Fusco & Janice Fusco dated November 17, 2023 and an outline of concerns raised by the Select Board.

Mr. Szczesny noted he would like to address some of the concerns raised by the Select Board such as fundraising and need for a joint community center complex with Parks & Recreation.

Mr. Leclair indicated that when everyone opened their tax bill in December they were not expecting it to be worse than they thought, a 10% increase on average. Mr. Leclair noted that next year the school budget is projected to be up \$1.2 million dollars, a 7-8% increase for the school. Mr. Leclair noted that Selectmen Carroll had been involved in the conversations with Parks & Recreation and the general consensus was that the parties needed to try harder to work together. Mr. Carroll noted that the willingness to work together dissolved and in order to get the support of the Selectmen they need to go back to the drawing board.

Mr. Leclair explained the importance of the joint complex, even if it costs more. He noted the Town has a five-year lease for the Severance building. He noted it is important to have a centrally located center; the Severance building is almost in Manchester.

Mr. Leclair stated that the fundraising goal of \$2 million dollars had not begun to be reached and that needs to catch up. \$65,000 was reported in cash or commitments.

Mr. Leclair stated that in addition to next year's immediate tax impact there are further tax considerations with future impacts from the Fire Department, Road Agent/DPW and School.

Mr. Villeneuve raised issues with the bond term, projected to be 20 years. He noted by the time the expansion were paid off it would be put on the taxpayers to start funding repairs. Mr. Villeneuve noted he had experience from when the school did their bond and there are options. The school chose a payment that would not change year to year but the number could begin high and then slope. He asked if a bond advisor had been retained and Mr. Sterndale indicated he was just retained. He recommended the Library be very transparent about the actual cost to the taxpayers, to be as genuine as possible because a \$400,000 home isn't even the median price for a home in Auburn, it is more likely \$500-\$600,000. He reminded that the bond would require a large turnout by the Town as $\frac{3}{4}$ majority are required to pass the article. He recommended reaching out to voters who don't use the Library. Mr. Leclair noted the Selectmen had provided a similar opinion on the length of the bond. Mr. Villeneuve agreed with coming and future tax impacts already on the table, he noted that the Fire Department will likely come in looking to purchase apparatus soon after 2024.

Mr. Villeneuve recommended the Library be dead solid on what they are going to do and why that is what's best for the Town when they come back before the Committee because it only meets so often and the deadline is stacking up.

Mr. Carpenter noted that it is not up to the Library to tell Parks & Recreation what to do, that the Selectmen should instruct the two to work together.

Mr. Szczesny reviewed the proposed increase to add the space for the Library of between \$2-\$4 million. He noted the Library was not set up to do fundraising and reported that the Library began their campaign seven weeks ago and have now raised \$80,000 from small donors. He noted it will be easier to get larger donors on board once the bond is approved.

Mrs. Cavanaugh spoke to the length of the bond and repairs coming and compared 20 years to the 100 years it has already been.

Chair Miles indicated it was not the role of the Budget Committee to do planning or their business to have any expectations; the bottom line is dollars and cents. He thanked the Library for coming in to talk with them and hoped the feedback provided would be helpful to them.

V. School Update

Mr. Miles reported there will be no meeting next week and the date for the budget meeting with the school board is December 14th at 6 PM at the Auburn Village School Library.

Mr. Villeneuve reported Pinkerton had set the rate of the increase next year at 5.5%.

VI. Adjourn

Mr. Wesche moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 PM, seconded by Mrs. Linxweiler. A vote was taken; all were in agreement, the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy J. Hoijer,
Recording Secretary

Note: Any person with a disability who wishes to attend this public meeting and needs to be provided a reasonable accommodation in order to participate, please call the Town Hall (603) 483-5052, or contact the Committee Secretary so that arrangements can be made.