**TOWN OF LOVELL**

MINUTES OF PRELIMINARY BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

January 9, 2024

PRESENT: Steve Goldsmith, Linda Legere, Catherine Stone, Eric Gulbrandsen, Kathleen Vachowski,

 Walter Grzyb, Scott Gardiner, Sandy Drew, Lynn Hurd, Sam Ring, Jan Newhouse, F. Jonathan

 Bliss, Jack Jones

Meeting was convened at 7:00 PM

 ITEMS ADDRESSED

1. The first item discussed was the Town Valuation budget item of $160,000. The budget includes raising this money. This Valuation is needs since it has been over 15 years since it has been done. The State recommends this be done every 10 years under certain conditions. Lovell also has an agreement with the firm to perform this valuation.
2. The next item discussed was the implementation of the design for the Narrows boat ramp upgrade. Steve Goldsmith indicated that funding of this project is proposed to be covered by a combination of State Grant funds, Eastman Hill grant funds, dedicating the balance of the Town Hall Fund to this item and dedicating the current Conservation Fund balance to this item. With these funds in place there is no need for a Warrant item to raise funds for this work.
3. The repair of the Fern Drive Bridge was discussed next. Although not critically necessary, this bridge is used for snow mobile routing, Fire Department water collection for Lovell and Sweden and summer access between Route 93 and Route 5. Steve Goldsmith indicated a desire to retain this bridge so that access and uses are not reduced from what it provided before the damage. FEMA has indicated that they will provide Lovell $92,000 to rebuild the bridge to its condition before the damage occurred. We have an Engineering of $182,000 to rebuild the bridge, including mitigation that would widen the channel to eliminate the possibility of this bridge experiencing the failure it saw this year. If we repair the bridge to its condition before the damage, and another similar incident occurs, FEMA may not be willing to fund another rebuild. It is recommended that we do nothing until we receive funding and we receive a decision from FEMA if they would fund the higher cost to repair and mitigate the bridge. No budget item is included for this work.
4. Steve Goldsmith discussed the proposed budget presented for the Fryeburg Rescue with rationale for the requested budget increase. Items driving this cost up are reduced reimbursement for Maine Care and Medicare transported patients, higher training costs and maintaining competitive and state compliance compensation for the essential EMS personnel.
5. Stoneham Rescue was next discussed. Steve Goldsmith indicated that Stoneham Rescue requested the same amounts requested last year. Stoneham Rescue responded to approximately 65% of Lovell calls and Fryeburg Rescue responded to essentially 100% of Lovell calls. He also indicated that all rescue services are having difficulty meeting staffing requirements.
6. The last item was a general discussion of the summary budget breakdown prepared by Steve Goldsmith. Mr. Goldsmith indicated that this summary remains under review but is essentially complete with the following items noted.
7. The preliminary total proposed budget has increased by $262,000 compared to the last years’ budget. Methods of economizing are a continuing effort but costs have increased across the board.
8. A general discussion of all budget line items proceeded with discussion and clarification provided as requested.

The next Budget Committee meeting was scheduled for Tuesday January 23, 2024 at 6:00 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40PM. Minutes recorded by Jack Jones