

Sharlene Myers

From: mewelch@maine.rr.com
Sent: Tuesday, May 12, 2020 12:12 PM
To: Sharlene Myers
Cc: 'jwelch@sad15.org'
Subject: 2021 Budget Priorities

Good Afternoon,

We are writing to express our concern about the proposed cutting of the PT Librarian position in the 2021 town budget. While we appreciate the need to save money, there seem to be other areas of the budget that could possibly be reduced/reallocated. Professional Education throughout all departments and Paving are two areas that come to mind, and hopefully with the changes in the economy and need for online learning, we will see cost reductions in these areas anyway.

Carla has been a huge part of our children's lives and of our local community, which is so important to maintain these days, both socially and educationally. When we mentioned the chance that she may lose her job, our son was shocked and upset, exclaiming that she has ALWAYS been his librarian. The level of service at the library without her part-time help, relying on the main Librarian and volunteer staff, will certainly suffer.

We support the hard job that the Budget Committee is doing to be fiscally responsible, but we strongly request that you find other ways to save money. Carla and the success of the library are far too important to our small town.

Thank you,

Marlon and Jenna Welch
248 Intervale Rd.
New Gloucester

To: New Gloucester Budget Committee

From: Julie Fralich

Re: Proposed 2021 budget for Town of New Gloucester

Date: May 12, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed budget prepared by the Budget Committee. I very much appreciate the hard work that has gone into preparing a budget in these difficult times and the difficult decisions that have been made.

We are facing an unprecedented crisis that is affecting our daily lives, our health, our relationship to others, our view of the world. And a town budget may seem only a small part of these much larger life altering events.

But in many ways, the budget is a symbol of the things we value; a statement of our hope and vision for the town; a way that we express what is important in the short versus the long term. At a time when our future is so uncertain and we barely can imagine a new way of life, I think the outpouring of response that you are hearing to maintain some of our essential (and really minimal) community services, reflects the need for people to feel they can stay connected to the town; and maintain the social supports and fabric that define a town.

I appreciate that the town and the budget committee have tried to be fair with the cuts that have been made and indicated that "every department has had to take a hit". In looking at the recommendations that the committee has made, I would urge the committee to reconsider the prioritization and allocation of their budget cuts across personnel and non-personnel services; and the weight given to certain services and non-services over others.

My recommendations are made with the following goals in mind: 1) to spread some of the cuts more evenly across personnel and non-personnel areas; 2) to maintain the gains that have been made in the last few years to support the town planning, recreation, community outreach and library services and 3) to budget funds in a way that serves the most number of people at the lowest cost. The reduction or elimination of critical staff positions is a loss that may take years to recover.

The following are my recommendations. These include reallocating and restoring some of the personnel cuts in the budget and funding these positions through a 20% reduction in the paving budget and other possible savings throughout the budget (e.g. savings from final town manager salary, trainings, uniforms etc.) Also, please note that I have made these estimates based on my best estimate of actual salaries in the various positions. I realize that these will undoubtedly need to be confirmed by staff. But I hope that the intent and purpose of these recommendations be considered with an understanding that the actual calculations will need to be verified.

1. **Include a recreation director for 20 hours a week.** It is clear in the past few months, that the recreation department has in fact performed a significant role in community outreach, engagement and communication. The recreation department has organized food drives, coordinated volunteer calls, engaged in outreach and a maintained a facebook presence for the town. This role is more critical now than ever. It is also clear that we may not be able to engage in all the same kinds of recreational activities that we have in the past. The Committee has

maintained a budget for continuation of 4 or 5 small recreational programs serving a relatively small number of people (for a cost of \$21,000) and yet we do not know whether any of these can be held in the current environment. Wouldn't it be more efficient to use those funds to support a position that can serve more people in the community. The programs that are included in the budget (gymnastics, soccer, flag football etc.) may or may not be able to offered. If they are, let the recreation director coordinate those programs; perhaps offer them with volunteers or with donations from participants. I would urge the committee to reinstate the recreation director position for 20 hours a week. It has become clear from the work on the Economic Development Committee that recreation is very much linked to the town's identity, to economic development and growth, to its vision for maintaining our environmental and natural resources. One can imagine a reconfigured role of a recreation department that includes grant writing, creative outdoor programming (of a type and scope different from what we have today), and maintenance and enhancement of outdoor space for social distancing recreation. To cut this position, we would lose the momentum and a sense of community involvement that many are craving at this time. **COST: \$7,900 (Reallocate the \$17,000 net amount in the proposed budget toward half time salary of Recreation Director. The addition of \$7,900 to the budget plus the 17,000 in the budget would fund the recreation director position).**

2. **Include the assistant library position at 20 hours per week.** Again, the library is a vital community resource that fills an important role in the life of the town. As with other areas, it is likely that the role and services of the library will (and have changed) with the need to maintain social distancing. It is unrealistic to maintain a library with only one staff position. The assistant library position performs important community programming and engagement, particularly for young families and children in the area. Others have written more eloquently than I about the library as a social connector for young and old; people who are retired; those who may be unemployed. Libraries across the state are filling the gaps with online programming, regional cooperation, and reduced and reconfigured hours. The library we have known in the past may change, but our library will not be able to respond to these times without adequate staff to meet the challenges of the times. **COST: Assistant librarian at 20 hours a week: \$23,500**
3. **Include the town planner position for 32 hours a week.** The town planner plays a critical role in the future of the town. We are about to complete a comprehensive plan for the first time in years. The plan includes many recommendations that cannot be implemented without support from staff. A half time town planner will only be able to perform the bare minimum of functions and the town will lose capacity and staff to begin to implement a longer-term strategic vision for the town. The town planner position can also help to write grants and coordinate with the efforts of other towns and COG to take advantage of regional opportunities. **COST: Increase in salary from 20 hours as proposed in budget to 32 hours; additional cost \$18,250.**
4. **Include prorata benefits for all positions at 50% or more.** I would urge the committee to dig deep and also consider funding benefits for all town positions at 50% or more of an FTE. Particularly, as people face the uncertainty of their health and welfare, it is important to support access to health and other benefits for those who are employed; and even more so for positions

that are funded at less than 100%. **Cost estimate: Estimate of 30% on salaries of recreation director, assistant librarian and town planner. Final estimate TBD by Town.**

5. **Reduce the budget for paving town roads by 20%.** I know that the need to have a paving plan and continue to maintain the infrastructure of our roads is a priority for many. The budget committee made significant cuts in all the critical town services; but none in the paving budget. This budget line item is more than it was last year (\$265,000 in 2020 versus \$290,750 proposed for 2021). It is hard to compare road paving and critical town services but that is what the Budget Committee is asked to do. In my view, it is more important to maintain the integrity of essential personnel services rather than to pave a portion of a road. That road will be there next year. The people and critical staff positions likely will not. I would rather look back on this year and be proud that we were able to maintain critical community services and staff, even if minimally, rather than wonder whether we really needed to pave a mile of Cobbs Bridge Road. Where in the budget has this line item "taken the same hit" that the personnel lines have. All the other budget/line items on the cutting block have had cuts of 20% to 50%. This line item had an increase over last year. **SAVINGS: \$58,150; 20% of \$290,750)**
6. **Reduce miscellaneous costs:** Throughout the budget, there are line items where it seems there could be additional savings. These include items like final salary of new town manager, budgets for town committees, conference attendance that includes lodging and travel; uniforms for highway works, professional education and training; supplies. I also would recommend a review estimated cost savings from this year (in Recreation Department, town hall, etc.) and revise budget estimates as appropriate. **SAVINGS: Recommend placeholder estimate of potential savings from some belt tightening of small amounts on many line items: \$10,000.**
7. **Review other revenue assumptions.** It is always difficult to make revenue estimates but I would ask that the Committee request and make public a detailed description and underlying assumptions of large item revenue projections, including school budget, Cumberland County expenses, excise tax, other revenue line items, etc. And make informed decisions regarding these revenue estimates.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed town budget.

Julie Fralich

Estimate of impact on budget of above recommendations

	Recommendation	Impact	Notes
1	Restore Recreation Direction to 20 hours a week and revise plan for programming; redirect funds designated for special programs toward recreational director salary	7,900	.5 salary (24,900) minus \$21,000 that is already in budget for special programs (e.g. flag football etc.)
2	Add .5 assistant librarian position.	23,500	
3	Increase town planner to 32 hours a week	18,258	Current salary (60,860) times 80%; minus amount in budget (30,430)
4	Benefits (need to determine)	25,000	Estimate based on 30% of prorata salaries that are less than Full Time.
5	Reduce paving budget by 20%	(58,150)	Paving budget is \$290,750
6	Misc. reductions	(10,000)	(Budgets for committees, supplies, uniforms, training)
	Total	6,508	

Sharlene Myers

From: Beverly in Maine <bjtcme@securespeed.us>
Sent: Tuesday, May 12, 2020 3:20 PM
To: Sharlene Myers
Subject: FY21 Budget Comments

Hi Sharlene,

Here are my comments for the Budget Committee (and the Selectmen).

Sorry I did not get them to you sooner.

Would you please forward this email to the Budget Committee and Paul First, Steve Libby, Linda Chase and Karen Gilles...and George, Joe, and Tammy too?

Thank you.

Hope you and your family are safe and well,

Beverly

To: The New Gloucester Budget Committee: Peter Bragdon (Chairman), Jean Libby (Vice-Chairman), Joe Bean, Jennifer Bragdon, Jean Couturier, Jeff Hamilton, Penny Hilton
Cc: Paul First (Interim Town Manager), Linda Chase (Selectman Liaison), Karen Gilles (Selectman Liaison), Sharlene Myers (Town Office), Steve Libby (Budget Advisor)
And: To the other Selectmen as follows: George Colby, Joseph Davis, and Tammy Donovan
Subject: FY 2021 Budget and the Warrant for Town Meeting

Proposed cuts of jobs and hours:

- New Gloucester has an effective and valuable Team of municipal employees. Cutting any of that Team to save money is short sighted. It is no accident that successful businesses make other cuts as necessary to keep their employees in hard economic times. Businesses know it costs more in the long run to rebuild a team of good people than to keep one...real costs in dollars and quality. I ask the Budget Committee to please reconsider the proposed cuts affecting a public works employee, the parks & recreation director, the assistant librarian, the town planner, and the code enforcement officer.
- Just an additional thought: I do not agree with trading these jobs and the support of the individuals that fill them for paving roads at this time. Although either choice bears a current and a future cost, choosing jobs over paving would certainly disrupt fewer lives and cause less stress on the citizens of New Gloucester ... at a time when goodness knows we all need less disruption and stress!!

Choices...the voice of the citizens:

- The Selectmen and the Budget Committee are between "a rock and a hard place", but each needs to listen to the other for potential solutions...and both need to **listen to the citizens** of New Gloucester. I ask the Selectmen to please include the Budget Committee's recommendations, if different from the Selectmen's, for each budget article on the

warrant for Town Meeting. By offering this choice, you will give the citizens, the people who pay taxes, a chance to have a true voice in the budget and the future of our Town.

Specific Recommendations:

- Please eliminate all raises to Town staff. Freezing current wages and salary cuts are common in economic times like these, "we are all in this together".
- I encourage the Selectmen to "step up" ...lead by example... and eliminate your stipend for FY2021, please reduce that line item to zero.

Beverly Cadigan
85 Gloucester Hill Road
April 12, 2020