



Town of Griswold

Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
March 18, 2025
6:00 PM

Town Hall Meeting Room
MINUTES



1. Roll Call/Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM

Board of Finance Members Present:

Scott Davis – Chairman
Gail Rooke-Norman – Vice Chairman
Gary Beaulac
Mark DePonte
Rob Hamel
Tom Palasky
Matt Picco

Also Present:

Todd Babbitt, Director of Public Works
James Barne, Chairman, Capital Improvement Committee
Christopher Champlin, Director of Student Services
Erik Christensen, Director of Finance
Jan Demicco, Library Board of Directors
Tina Falck, First Selectman
Richard Grabowski, Selectman
Rebecca Jusseume, Library Director
Glen LaBossiere, Assistant Superintendent
Sean McKenna, Superintendent, Griswold Public Schools
Kelsey McConnell, Town Clerk
Theresa Madonna, Treasurer Slater Library
Lisa Martell, Senior Center Director
Deb Martin, Director of Fiscal & Personnel Services
Mary Beth Malin, Chair, Griswold Board of Education
Leona Sharkey, Tax Collector
Norman Wood, Assessor
Linda Holzschlag, Recording Secretary
2 others

2. Public Forum

No one wished to speak.

3. Approval of Minutes

a. February 18, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes

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TOWN OF GRISWOLD

Motion: G. Beulac made a **motion** which was seconded by G. Rooke-Norman to approve the February 18, 2025, regular meeting minutes as presented. All in favor; **motion carried.**

b. February 24, 2025, Special Meeting Minutes

Motion: G. Beulac made a **motion** which was seconded by G. Rooke-Norman to approve the February 24, 2025, special meeting minutes as presented. All in favor; **motion carried.**

c. March 3, 2025, Special Meeting Minutes

Motion: G. Beulac made a **motion** which was seconded by G. Rooke-Norman to approve the March 3, 2025, special meeting minutes as presented. All in favor; **motion carried.**

4. Old Business

a. Discussion and possible action on FY25/26 budget.

Tax Collector – 1302: Leona Sharkey, Tax Collector stated that the overall budget at this point in time has an increase of 1.01% compared to last year. L. Sharkey reported that the only variable in the budget is ongoing union negotiations. L. Sharkey stated that there was an increase in service contracts and leases of \$2,150 over last year and a decrease in advertising of \$1,000 and meetings and dues of \$100. L. Sharkey stated that everything else stayed the same except salary.

Assessor – 1303: Norman Wood, Assessor stated that there is a small percentage increase in the budget with computer system maintenance, postage and required schooling.

Town Clerk – 1501: Kelsey McConnell, Town Clerk stated that the budget has stayed the same as last year except for overtime there is a decrease without a presidential election and there is an increase in meetings and dues, because she lives further away and would stay the night at conferences. T. Palasky questioned the decrease in the health plan. K. McConnell reported that the Assistant Town Clerk left the family plan. E. Christensen stated that when planning previously before a town clerk was hired, they budgeted conservatively.

Senior Center – 4102: Lisa Martell, Senior Center Director stated that there is an increase with Meals on Wheels due to the minimum wage increase and that she is waiting for negotiations to wrap up. L. Martell reported that there is an overall increase of 2.01%. R. Hamel questioned the increase in the Senior Center's maintenance at \$17,000. L. Martell stated that it was the HVAC System contract.

Contributions – 4103: Jan Demicco, Slater Library Board of Trustees introduced Rebecca Jusseume, Library Director. R. Jusseume stated that she has been a resident for 40 years and has been working at the library for 10 years and has brought her children, foster children and her grandchildren to the library as a testament to how great she feels that it is. R. Jusseume stated how important they feel to keep literacy alive in Griswold, helping with vocabulary, grammar, and cognitive skills throughout your life. R. Jusseume quoted Margaret Fuller in saying, "Today a reader, tomorrow a leader." J. Demicco stated "Friends of Library" raise money through community events – coming soon is an Art Show open house on May 31, 2025, and book and yard sale. Theresa Madonna as Treasurer stated that her job is to make sure there are good policies and procedures in place. T. Madonna reported that they have their financial statements audited every year to make sure there are checks and

balances and the budget is on target. T. Madonna stated that they are asking for a small increase this year. T. Madonna stated that 60% of our income comes from the town of Griswold, 20% from Lisbon, and 20% is raised. T. Madonna reported that some money comes from contributions from Friends, and the Board Development Committee is raising money for operations. Friends support all their special projects, community projects and repairs to the building. T. Madonna stated that to go along with the money received from the Town, their Board has gone out and asked for contributions and has raised \$9,200 so far. They have offered sponsorships to the businesses who have donated. T. Madonna stated that they are asking for a little increase in their budget, mostly for salaries, utilities and insurance. G. Beaulac questioned if the visitation was tracked. T. Madonna reported that it is required by the state to track month to month. T. Madonna stated that the library has invested in more electronic platforms and sees more people getting books online. S. Davis questioned whether the cost of electronic access or hard copy access was similar. T. Madonna stated that electronic access is not cheaper. S. Davis asked if they could prepare information on the number of e-books and hard copy books compared to last year have been checked out.

S. Davis asked if E. Christensen could do a 4-year look back on all the organizations that have requested money in the budgetary process and what those amounts were.

Board of Selectman – 1201: Tina Falck, First Selectman stated that the only 2 increases to the budget are a request for a part-time Grant Writer and a Human Resource position. E. Christensen stated that the liability, auto and property insurance has increased. S. Davis questioned how important it being a difficult budget year, are these two positions to the board and if you could only choose one which one and why. T. Falck stated that they are both important, the staff has been good at looking for grant opportunities. T. Falck stated that a HR Director is a very big need and that maybe it could be split between the school and the town. T. Falck stated that if she had to choose that it would be a HR Director. T. Palasky questioned whether the town has investigated what type of grants we could get for next year. T. Falck reported that Mario Tristany has been looking at grant opportunities and monthly she receives a list from Congressman Courtney's office of grant opportunities. S. Davis asked, on the town side how many people apply for grants and how does it currently work. T. Falck reported that with the STEAP grant that she, Laurie Sorder did the leg work and M. Tristany applied for the grant. T. Falck stated that the larger grants are typically submitted through M. Tristany and go through approval with the BOS. S. Davis asked who currently does HR and how many hours are spent on that. T. Falck reported that currently the Finance Director. T. Falck stated that she spends approximately 10 hours a week and E. Christensen stated that he spends on average 5 to 6 hours a week with more needed when necessary. R. Hamel asked how many grants were applied for and received over the last year. T. Falck reported that quite a few have been applied for over the last year, STEAP, 2 Brownfields, USDA, CIF (a couple of years ago), and The Last Green Valley. R. Grabowski stated that the Housing Authority receives grants also. G. Rooke-Norman questioned if it would be appropriate to ask the government and the BOE to put together a couple of people to see if we could share a HR Director. S. Davis stated that it would be a conversation for another day. E. Christensen reported that we had the idea of hiring a part-time HR person with the hopes of next year a possible combined position. G. Rooke-Norman questioned that it may be a better idea to look at similar small towns to share a HR person because we would have similar issues and problems.

Legal – 1701: E. Christensen reported that the budget is the same except for probate court, which goes up every year.

b. Update and discussion on bonding projects.

E. Christensen stated that they installed the concrete portion of the pump station, and we are still waiting for all the electrical components and should be wrapped up this year. E. Christensen reported that the engineers expect the permit for the water to be issued in April from the DOT. E. Christensen stated that right now it is in a public comment period and once that is done it can then be started.

c. Update from recreation budget subcommittee.

G. Rooke-Norman reported that along with T. Palasky they have put together a rough skeleton of the policy and gave copies to S. Davis and E. Christensen. G. Rooke-Norman stated that E. Christensen got back to them with some recommended language. G. Rooke-Norman stated that once the policy is drafted, it will be sent to Ryan Aubin, and it should be ready for the next meeting. G. Rooke-Norman requested if it could be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

d. Discussion regarding ongoing accounting reconciliation issues with BOE.

S. Davis stated that along with D. Martin and E. Christensen, they had their monthly meeting. S. Davis reported that D. Martin and E. Christensen have started to meet the week before the monthly meeting to discuss and make any corrections.

5. New Business

a. Update from Superintendent of Griswold Public Schools.

Superintendent S. McKenna included in his packet a letter on the financial forecast. S. McKenna stated that it is the BOE Summary page which is part of a 13-page document. S. McKenna reported that this is a worse case scenario which is due to unanticipated students who have entered our district that we did not know they would be entering our district after the beginning of the school year. S. McKenna reported that the high number of students with needs and out placement costs was unusual. S. McKenna stated that they have been on a hard freeze since November and monitoring their expenditures and are committed to mitigating that cost. S. Davis questioned if the projected deficit was the result of special education costs. McKenna stated that yes, 95% is. S. McKenna stated that the BOE cares for all their students regardless of their needs. S. McKenna reported that if any student with a plan or outplacement plan moves here, or is DCF placed, the school is responsible for the educational cost and transportation cost. S. McKenna reported that the other 5% is custodial costs due to the storms and the other areas are from substitute costs related to a long-term absence. S. Davis questioned how we are at that 95% deficit. Christopher Champlin, Director of Student Services, stated that 3 students, 2 with outplacement needs and 1 with medical outplacement needs, moved into Griswold and we are responsible for their educational needs. C. Champlin reported that they are trying to be fiscally responsible for the students that they place out if they still need that level of intervention. C. Champlin stated that the other component to this is that EastConn increased their cost where many students attend because of their financial difficulties.

b. Update on road study from Director of Public Works.

Todd Babbitt, Public Works Director, gave a presentation of a full road study which included road data ratings and funding since 2016. T. Babbitt reported that this includes what they do to the roads, routine maintenance, preventative maintenance, minor rehabilitation and major rehabilitation. T. Babbitt stated that the report shows how much funding is needed to keep the roads in the condition they are in and how much more to improve the ratings. T. Palasky questioned if there is an annual cost for the road study. T. Babbitt stated that there is an annual cost of \$2,500 to upgrade and receive data once he has sent in what they have done for the year.

c. Finance Directors monthly report.

E. Christensen included revenues and expenditure reports as well as the fund balance analysis report. E. Christensen reported that the revenues recorded to date are \$34,917,594.89 or 82.53% of budgeted revenues. E. Christensen stated that there are no major concerns at this time and expect revenues to come in around what was budgeted or possible higher. E. Christensen reported that the expenditures recorded to date are \$33,196,793,68 or 78.46% of budgeted expenditures. E. Christensen reported that they are looking into the tipping fees and will be having a meeting regarding this. E. Christensen included a list of items currently over budget and stated other than the tipping fees, there are no major concerns. E. Christensen reported that the fund balance analysis is projected to be a little over 20% at the end of the fiscal year and we are in good shape.

T. Palasky asked for an explanation of the increase in tipping fees, hurting the expenditures and helping the revenues from the February 18, 2025, minutes. E. Christensen stated that the haulers pick up the residents' trash, bring it to the incinerator then SCRRRA bills the town that they're coming from, they send us a bill at the end of the month, we then send it to the two haulers charging \$4.00 per ton for administration fees.

S. Davis stated that at last month's meeting we talked about where we would be on unadjusted budgets as presented based on the decrease in the grand list, there has been a change from the BOS meeting has voted to restructure the motor vehicle depreciation schedule. S. Davis asked how that impacts us. E. Christensen stated that the budget right now with that estimate included is a 3.12 mil increase. S. Davis questioned S. McKenna if we had final tuition revenues or an adjusted number, and do you anticipate an increase. S. McKenna stated an adjusted number and there are plans to discuss it at the next BOE meeting before coming to the BOF meeting.

5. Any Other Business

No other business.

6. Public Forum

No one wished to speak.

7. Adjournment

Motion: R. Hamel made a **motion** that was seconded by M. Picco to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 P.M. All in favor; **motion carried.**

Respectfully Submitted,



Linda Holzschlag,
Recording Secretary