



NORTHFIELD BUDGET COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of January 4, 2024

Present: Morris Boudreau, Amy O'Hara, Carl Bartlett, Ken Tripple, Scott Haskins, Karen Sheldon, Sel. Mark Hubbell

Also Present: Town Administrator Stephanie Giovannucci

Chairman O'Hara called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

Haskins/Bartlett moved to accept the minutes of 12/21/2023 meeting. Motion passes.

Mrs. Giovannucci informed the Board that the Tilton Senior Center will be at the next meeting due to illness.

Pines Community Center representatives Rose-Mary Welch, Jennifer Haskins and Samantha Magoon explained the use of the center. Mrs. Haskins stated that they no longer have an executive director, her last days was yesterday, which is why they are presenting as Board members. Mrs. Haskins explained the programs they offer and events they have held for the communities.

Mrs. Sheldon asked how they get most of their funding. Mrs. Haskins stated from each town, programs, grants and fundraising.

Sel. Hubbell stated that they should consider increasing their before and after school rates to help offset some of the requests from each town. Ms. Magoon stated that they have done this in the past in other programs and lost participation due to the increase.

Mr. Boudreau confirmed that they received a large grant for the sprinklers. Mrs. Haskins stated yes and they are waiting for some of the work to be done as some work is requiring them to be closed for three weeks, but that would place a large hardship on the center.

Mrs. Haskins stated that they have had flooding in the basement because pipes have burst, kitchen damage and suppression system. They've also dealt with sewer line repairs because they were crushed from people driving over the lines.

Mr. Haskins asked why the increase from \$72,250 to \$75,000. Mrs. Welch stated that there was an issue with the Property & Liability due to high claims which resulted in higher premiums. Mrs. Haskins added that they are trying to increase staffing and increase training and qualifications for staffing.

Mrs. Magoon stated that they tried to increase their price in sports and ended up losing them to other local area groups same with vacation camp. She added that families can't seem to afford it and at least 40% of the kids are on the grant program.

Mr. Haskins looked for clarification that they needed more money to fill the positions and to keep the staff they have. Mrs. Haskins confirmed, and added that they have applied for a grant to retain the staff they have, but have not heard if they have been awarded as of today.

Hall Memorial Library representative Brittany Shanahan Library Director explained that she's been the director a little over a year now, but has worked for the library for 15 years. She added that the library offers a large variety of programs for all ages. Mrs. Shanahan explained that the library is currently trying to set up a Library Fund where it will be a 501C3 so that they can apply for grants and help offset some of the costs.

Mr. Haskins asked why they are requesting \$18k more than last year. Mrs. Shanahan explained the increase is mainly for staffing, they have moved the Children's Librarian to full time as he is doing a lot of outreaches to the schools, they are looking for an assistant director as the one they had moved along to another library with a lot more pay. She added that they have 3 full time and 6 part time, which includes subs.

Mr. Haskins asked about volunteering. Mrs. Shanahan explained that they are limited on how they allow volunteering, as it cannot be assisting with stuff that a paid employee already does, so they have to get creative. Mr. Haskins asked why wages were higher in 2018 and 2019. Mrs. Shanahan explained that the former Library Director made more money as she was there for 9 years and had a masters degree. Mr. Haskins asked if Mrs. Shanahan has a masters. She confirmed that she does not, but has been taking a lot of certification courses. Mr. Hubbell stated that having Mrs. Shanahan there because of her longevity is a reason he supports the library. Mr. Hubbell asked for clarification as to 2357 people served in Northfield is that library cards. Mrs. Shanahan confirmed yes, its card holders, which amounts to about 40% of the residents in Northfield, and they have about 40% of their residents in Tilton as well. Mr. Hubbell stated that he heard there were some less desirable visitors at the library. Mrs. Shanahan confirmed that there has only been about 1 or 2 and they just check out a computer and keep to themselves. She added that this past weekend we had 16-20 people just for story time. Mr. Haskins asked if the new school has a library. Mrs. Shanahan stated that she is unsure, but their students who have visited them now have library cards.

CASA representative Tara Bergeron stated that this program is for abused and neglected children. Mrs. Bergeron added that currently there are 16 kids from 15 families in Northfield in their current system. She added that this program only represents the kids, not the parents or other adults and that they keep in touch with the kids for months sometimes years after a court decision has been made. She added that currently there is only one resident from the Northfield that assists these kids and that obtaining some extra funding will help train other community members to be advocates. Mrs. Bergeron added that all staff is volunteers and fully trained. Mr. Boudreau asked what happens if there is no volunteer for the child? Mrs. Bergeron stated that the State of NH requires an advocate, so the State will call CASA first and if there is no one, then the state paid employee will be an advocate, but will only be there for court once. Mrs. Bergeron added that other funding they receive is through grants, which they use to give the volunteers gas cards. Mr. Hubbell stated that their current balance is \$6 million which is more than \$2 million over the town budget. Mrs. Bergeron explained that they keep an operating budget of 5 years incase they loose funding, they can continue for at least 5 years to work on other funding resources or setting up other programs. Mr. Hubbell asked about program managers. Mrs. Bergeron stated that the managers oversee the volunteers, they also go to court incase there's no volunteer available. Mr. Haskins asked what they will do if there's no funding from the Town. Mrs. Bergeron stated that they will do what they can for fundraising, marketing and advertising. Mr. Haskins followed up with if the kids jump from 16-25 are they going to ask for more funding. Mrs. Bergeron replied that they are trying to not ask for more from that towns, and they have been trying to ask for funding from the counties, but Merrimack County does not fund CASA. She added that in 2022 they had 92 kids referred to them and in 2023 they are at 93 kids. Mrs. O'Hara asked what fundraising has been done. Mrs. Bergeron stated they have a one big fundraiser and then many small ones throughout the year.

Other Business:

Mr. Hubbell stated that he's been running numbers and does not support the town funding non-profit organization with tax money. Mr. Haskins stated that if the Pines was eliminated then it goes back to the town and now if the town and it would be up to one town to upkeep the building.

Mrs. Giovannucci asked the board to make their decisions on outside agencies so that she can inform them. Board discussed Youth Assistance, Sel. Durgin stated that as he understands it last year it the law was changed that the Police Dept has to refer the kids to YAP, if it's not available then they may have to utilize whatever program the County has, but kids may not have transportation as YAP is easy to get to after school.

Haskins/Hubbell moved to not fund Youth Assistance. **Motion Fails 2-5**

Boudreau/Triple moved to fund as recommended by the Selectboard at \$45,552. **Motion Passed 4-3**

Bartlett/Triple moved to fund Franklin VNA at 5,000. **Motion Failed 3-4**

Sheldon/Boudreau moved to fund Franklin VNA at 2500. **Motion Passed unanimously**

Bartlett moved to fund Community Action at \$11,000, **there being no second motion fails.**

Triple/Sheldon moved to fund Community Action at \$3,500. **Motion Passed 6-1**

Haskins/Boudreau moved to fund Twin Rivers at \$1,100. **Motion Passed 4-3**

Sheldon/Haskins moved to not fund Lakes Region VNA. **Motion Passed 6-1**

Bartlett/Triple moved to fund the Hall Memorial Library at \$154,148. **Motion Passed unanimously**

Mr. Hubbell asked if the Parks Commission plans on doing their own old home day in the future. Mr. Haskins and Mrs. Giovannucci stated that not at this time, instead we are doing seasonal events.

Boudreau/Bartlett moved to fund the Old Home Day at \$3,000. **Motion Passed unanimously**

Triple/Bartlett moved to fund the TN Recreation Center at \$75,000. **Motion Passed unanimously**

Bartlett/Triple moved to fund NEDC at \$5,000. **Motion fails 2-3, 1-obstains**

Boudreau/Triple moved to fund NEDC at \$4,000. **Motion passed, 1-obstains**

Bartlett/Triple moved to fund Park Cemetery at \$6,000. **Motion Passed unanimously**

Sheldon/Haskins moved to not fund CASA. **Motion Passed unanimously**

Next meeting will be January 18, 2024.

There being no other business, meeting was adjourned at 7:17pm

Minutes approved January 18, 2024