The meeting of the Selectboard was called to order at 5 p.m. by Chair Christie. Also present were: Bill Geraghty, Selectboard Member, Julia Griffin, Town Manager, Joanna Whitcomb, Selectboard Member, Vice Chair Athos Rassias and Nancy Carter, Selectboard Member.
Absent: None

1. Public Comment
None

Chair Christie explained the budget process. The Select Board had previously suggested the guidelines for the budget were to be limited to a 2.5% - 3% increase to the tax rate and the budget that has been proposed is a 3% increase.

Ms. Griffin gave an overview of the budget to be presented. The proposed budget is a 3% increase to the tax rate, but if the board needs that to go down, there are some areas staff can identify to decrease the proposal. The current tax rate is $4.34/ $1000 and this budget brings it to $4.47/ $1000.

There are a number of major projects in various stages and this budget sets the Town up for the budget year as well as the following year. Specifically, water reclamation fund, sidewalks, Howe Library and additional parking facilities.

Some bonds will be expiring in the next few years and the $100,000 Dresden school payment will be done in two years. This will open up some expenditure capacity.

2. 1st Budget Hearing:
Chair Christie advised how the budget process would proceed during these meetings and that they would be utilizing the detailed budget book. Department Heads would be presenting on their portion of the budget and one member of the Select Board will take the lead for each portion.

e. Assessing
Director of Assessing Norm Bernaiche presented this section for the board. His goal is to regain the public trust in the Assessing office by being accessible, transparent and listening to tax payers. He did not put this budget together, (this is his first day working for Hanover) but it is very similar to last year’s. In order to analyze the assessing department, he will look at whether a full measure and list is truly needed, or if going back to the previous software will be sufficient. He will have to look at the data to determine if it is accurate/usable moving forward.

Mr. Bernaiche would prefer to utilize funds to hire some consultants rather than extra staffing. The funds in the proposed budget would cover that. Funds needed to restart a contract with Vision Government Solutions would come from the current budget from unused salary from Dave’s departure.
$250,000 in undesignated funds are being set aside for abatements. The full measure and list is not included in this budget. The lowest bid they received was for $195,000. The board may want to discuss that item as part of Wednesday’s meeting.

Betsy McClain discussed a transfer from Capital Reserve which was created ten or more years ago for the purpose of supporting the five-year revaluation process. Ms. Griffin expounded that there’s some unused money that’s been saved over the years in that account which would cover half of the cost of the proposed consultant fees.

Kari Asmus, Finance Committee wondered why no money is going into the Capital Reserve Fund when previously $10,000 goes in each year. Ms. Griffin said since so much in the assessing department was in flux, they didn’t feel the need to add to that fund this year. Ms. McClain said they added $45,000 to the proposed budget and added $26,000 which potentially gives them enough to reinstate that transfer to Capital Reserve next year.

a. Police
Chief Charles Dennis, Elizabeth Rathburn, HPD Administrative Assistant and E. Doug Hackett, HPD Communications Coordinator presented the Hanover Police Department’s proposed budget. The drivers of the budget are salaries and benefits. Some increases due to equipment are for replacement active shooter ballistic vests, body camera charging dock and the first full year of maintenance and support of the body cameras.
There is a proposed withdrawal from the CRF of $140,000 to renovate the dispatch center which was last renovated in 2002. This room is used 24/7. They’ve budgeted $35,000 to replace all five mobile consoles in the vehicles. They received a grant to offset the total cost of those replacements by over $8000.
Hanover PD is going green with four new cruisers. Last year a five-bay garage was constructed to house the cruisers. A porch roof was constructed on the back of the building to protect equipment. They had an old record keeping system which was difficult to access. This year 1000 cases were scanned for easier access to view and print these documents.
PD members participated in the 2019 Special Olympics NH torch run and will have members participating in their Winni Dip fundraiser this weekend. He also outlined various trainings they are taking and hosting.
His concern is the training budget. The first draft they saw cut that budget from $10,000 to $5,000 but further discussion highlighted the cut was not so harsh and the gap can be covered by other means.

b. Parking
Chief Dennis, Sargent Ballard and Elizabeth Rathburn, HPD Administrative Assistant addressed the Board.
The drivers are salaries, benefits, operating costs for the garage and projects to enhance parking in downtown Hanover. Increases are due to redesigning and upgrading lot 1: removing the single-space meters to use kiosks to pay by multiple apps. The project will cost $120,000 and includes sidewalks, lighting and paving. The spaces will be a little wider.
Another increase is for increasing the frequency of the downtown shuttle to 15-minute intervals all day to encourage folks to shuttle in from remote parking lots.
Recapping the year, they stepped up their ticketing for meter violations which is labor intensive. Renovations to the parking garage got underway. He has no concerns about the proposed budget.

Some discussion occurred regarding how many parking kiosks there should be.

Public Comment
Jim Rubens, downtown business owner commented that for years customers have had a negative experience when dealing with parking. In the short term, could we market the parking apps to make it clear it is modern and an easier process? Over years, people have stopped coming downtown due to the strict parking enforcement. He encouraged the Town to spend some money to advertise throughout the Upper Valley the free parking availability after 5pm and on Sundays. Also, the college events take up downtown parking. Could the Town work with the college to split costs to build another parking garage?

c. Howe Library
Rubi Simon, Library Director at Howe library noted the items they are proud of including how many people they served over the year and staff restructuring which lead to higher staff morale, staff trainings, collaborative teams and better distribution of workload. Maker Space Initiative and collaboration with the high school is flourishing. She expounded on the successes of the program over the past year.
Next year they are not worried about too much. They will be monitoring their traffic flow for highest points of flow during the day. That data will be utilized to discuss altering the hours of operation and staffing needs.
The drivers of the budget are COLA step increases, security camera annual maintenance costs and computer replacement costs.

Selectboard Member Whitcomb wondered if the heating replacement work will affect the operation of the library. Ms. Griffin noted it’s not a disruptive construction project. It will be funded by the building capital reserve fund of the Town.

d. MIS
Corey Stevens, IT Director spoke regarding MIS, also known as IT.
Three lines in the budget have changed since last year’s budget.
1: Telephone line is a correction to what they are actually spending.
2: Software line- there’s a couple of pieces of new software being requested.
3: Consulting services- used when outside help is requested. There is extra money in that line this year as a placeholder for unanticipated projects rather than having to wait for the end of the year to see if any funds are remaining.

f. Human Resources
Dave Stewart, HR Director and Kitty Thresher, Human Resources Coordinator presented to the board. He mentioned that after almost 32 years, Kitty will be retiring from the Town of Hanover and thanked her for her service.
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The budget is almost exactly the same as last year. They did delineate a $100 fee for the secure fax service. 
The most significant expenditure is for salary and benefits. They are about to roll out the second phase of their payroll system upgrade. In a few weeks they will roll out their electronic onboarding system for new employees. It has taken a while to upload all of the forms to the online system. He explained some of the programs they put on this year.

g. Planning & Zoning
Rob Houseman, Director of Planning, Zoning and Codes noted the drivers of the budget are salaries and benefits and building and construction activities in the Town. The Mink Brook Trail is his favorite project of the year. Permit software upgrade should be updated very soon and they are moving toward a paperless process. There’s about $300,000,000 worth of construction underway that they are monitoring.

One challenge is to find a recording secretary. They changed the description to a part time position to be done by computer and video rather than attend the minutes. They are losing the Town Planner so that vacancy will need to be filled.

Chair Christie asked for an update on the Master Plan consulting. Mr. Houseman said they plan to advertise once they get through the zoning amendments for the Town Warrant. The $100,000 that was budgeted has not been spent yet, but it’s under contract and will be spent before the end of the year.

Chair Christie asked for more information about the rental housing inspector. Mr. Houseman stated it is a position that was previously in the fire department budget which has moved to this department because they deal with compliance.

Selectboard Member Whitcomb wondered where the sustainability position is located. It is mentioned in the report but is not in the organizational chart for the department. Ms. McClain noted it is funded through the Planning Dept and Ms. Griffin said it should be on that org chart. That one and Deputy Fire Chief will be added.

Selectboard Member Whitcomb commented that more boards should have minute takers who are hired- not the board members themselves. They are volunteers and it’s hard enough getting committee members and taking minutes too can be a turn-off.

Ms. Griffin said it is difficult to find minute takers. They currently only have them for the boards that are required by state statute to have detailed minutes recorded. (Select Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board)

Public Comment
Bill Fischel, Conservation Commission and Finance Committee member asked how the Town budgets for litigation.
Ms. Griffin said that comes from the unallocated section of the budget and is paid through the Town Manager office.
i. Administrative Services

Betsy McClain, Director of Administrative Services and Town Clerk noted the departmental accomplishments include transitioning to a new cloud-based financial administration software. A lot of training and culture changes need to take place, but there are many opportunities it will afford the Town down the road. The long-time Tax Collector retired and a new Tax Collector has been hired. The drivers of the budget are changes in the personnel costs, maintenance to the video surveillance system and one additional computer.

The challenges are wanting to fully utilize the new software system to its potential. It will get there, but it will take time. Managing the balance between staffing the office all day for folks who come in, but also getting online services up and running since that’s the way of the future.

Ms. McClain explained that the video surveillance system is the result of the state conducting a safety audit after several tax collector and clerks offices in NH have been the victim of threats and acts of violence.

j. Unallocated

Betsy McClain noted the accomplishments are the guaranteed maximum rate with regard to health insurance and investment income is being maximized.

She noted that though the budget is an increase to the tax rate by 3%, the added income is only proposed to be 1.4% more in taxes. That is due to the revaluation. She explained this process thoroughly to the board members.

This budget includes $250,000 for overlay for abatements. Already this year $370,000 has been spent for abatements.

Unallocated activity expenditures: This amount is lower because of the almost no increase to benefits and she looked at recent historical data to budget for future employee costs rather than budget for the largest possible option. The debt service and general fund continue to go down towards zero.

Future concerns are for economic downturn and how the reval and property taxes in general effect the Town budgeting

k. Town Manager

Betsy McClain stated there aren’t challenges, but succession plans are always in mind.

She discussed Comcast and the revenue is $120,000-$125,000 some of which goes to CATV and some back to Comcast to build out neighborhoods. Funding for CATV has gone down so this budget gives them an increase. Computer and salary increases are the other items.

h. Social Services

Betsy McClain addressed the Board regarding Social Services for the Town of Hanover. There are three new requests this year. Chair Christie wondered if the requests meet the standards.

Ms. McClain said due to the amount of time, energy and money Hanover has been spending to help the housing crisis, TPHT and Cover do meet those standards.

Ms. Griffin said Special Needs Support Center provides services the Town would not be involved in providing.

This item was put on the list for decision on Wednesday night.
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I. Selectboard
see k. Town Manager

3. Administrative Reports
Ms. Griffin spoke about Public Health preparedness around Coronavirus- there is a confirmed case at DHMC.
She discussed the preparedness of the Town staff, how they will start updating the website with information and that they’ve been in touch with Dartmouth to ask if they may need town residents to house any international students in the spring semester.

4. Selectboard Reports
Selectboard Member Joanna Whitcomb
Selectboard Member Whitcomb reported the Bike/Ped committee will meet at 4:30 on Thursday at the Howe.

Selectboard member Nancy Carter
Selectboard member Carter noted the Planning Board will be meeting tomorrow as usual- in the basement conference room due to the Selectboard meeting upstairs. They will be discussing the six proposed zoning amendments and short term rentals.

Selectboard Member Bill Geraghty
Selectboard Member Geraghty had nothing to report

Vice Chair Athos Rassias
Vice Chair Rassias had nothing to report.

Chair Peter Christie
Chair Christie had nothing to report.

5. Other Business
None

6. Adjournment
The board did not need to attend a non-public session.
Vice Chair Rassias MOVED to adjourn at 7:30pm. Selectboard Member Whitcomb SECONDED the Motion. The board voted all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jessica Marchant

SUMMARY

6. Adjournment
The board did not need to attend a non-public session.
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Vice Chair Rassias MOVED to adjourn at 7:30pm. Selectboard Member Whitcomb SECONDED the Motion. The board voted all in favor.