



Town of Newcastle

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FROM: Michelle Cameron, Treasurer
TO: Newcastle Select Board and Finance Committee
CC: Kevin Sutherland, Town Manager
DATE: March 20, 2024
RE: FY25 3/13/24 Budget Meeting Updates

Questions/Comments from the March 13th discussion related to the draft suggested amounts, what was requested by Department Heads for Public Works and Public Safety and what was presented by the Manager on [March 11th](#) to the Select Board. A memo explaining the differences in numbers can be found in [Section 1 Pages 3-9](#). Below are the questions and comments with Town Manager and Treasurer answers are italicized.

Public Safety:

1. Can the town sell the 1974 fire truck now?
The 1974 Ford F-750 Pumper is owned by the Town of Newcastle. The pumper is no longer in service. With a bit of time to remove equipment it could be posted for sale or auction and the proceeds could be used to help offset the purchase of a new truck.
2. Increase the firefighter pay from \$19 to \$21 per hour.
See the dollar amount reflected in 105-01-10 "FD Hourly Call Pay" on Section 3 page 6 and further in the memo dated March 13th that explains changes to PW and PS (note B). The town manager supports the increase and had calculated that into his best estimation for the number of calls in FY25. What is currently recommended matches what the Fire Chief has estimated, but there could be some wiggle room to absorb the pay increase with a budget of \$16,000 if call volume is at average or below average.

Public Works:

1. Proposed engineering/survey work for Glidden Street. Is this being paid out of Technical Assistance and/or the Capital Roads Program?
Currently proposing a bit of both and finalizing the Capital Roads budget with the Road Commissioner. Will have an update at the March 20th meeting for your consideration.
2. Should the town build a new sand/salt shed? Where should it be located? What would it cost, and should the budget be increased?
The Town had been utilizing the 'temporary' location for a salt shed since 2018 which is located on an old town landfill site off of Mills Road. While the location serves the town fairly well given no immediate route to North Newcastle or the Sheepscot Village area, the first step would be to identify a more appropriate/convenient location. The town only owns a few parcels which likely do not meet the criteria, so it would probably involve the purchase of land for this purpose. Additionally, because of the severe wind storms this January, a new tarp roof has been purchased and the old one will be replaced this spring. After elections in June, the next Select Board could consider further research of this as a priority in time for a recommendation for funding in the FY26 budget.
3. What about connecting West & East Old County Road?
This would likely allow the town to utilize a parcel it owns on East Old County Road for Public Works use (ie - salt shed). The challenge is, without substantial federal or state funding support, this is likely cost prohibitive. After elections in June, the next Select Board could consider further research of this as a priority in FY25.

4. What is the big discrepancy between the Road Commissioner's Request and the Manager's Recommended for Tree Work?

This is in reference to the workshop memo dated 3/13 (Section 1, Page 7) line item 107-42-10. Hagar Enterprises purchased equipment for roadside brush clearing/trimming and is proposing adding this as a service for Newcastle. Its benefit would be in helping to extend the life of some of our roads where shrubs, bushes, and small trees close to the road could be mulched in place and returned to the ground. It was not included in the manager's recommended budget for this year.

5. Have staff check to see if the insurance payment came in for the crosswalk sign.
- We received a check for \$8,687.50 on 4/20/23 for the crosswalk sign. It was placed in an incorrect revenue line and several staffing changes have occurred since then. At the March 25 Select Board meeting we'll ask for the authorization to carry forward the revenue from Fiscal Year 2023 to Fiscal Year 2024 as a credit and order the sign's replacement to be installed.***

Potential Amendments to date (all included in list of potential motions for the Select Board to consider on March 25th):

- Proposed Amendment: Increase Select Board Pay line (E101-01-01) by \$2,500.
- Proposed Amendment: Increase Professional Development Fees budget line (E103-25-80) by \$1,200.
- Proposed Amendment: Increase the S.C.B.A. budget line (E105-05-20) by \$2,000.

Other considerations:

- Change Contingency E101-99-99 "Up from \$15k" \$35k use of Fund Balance.

In FY24 there was originally \$15,000 in the contingency. The presentation on March 11th has all \$50,000 of the contingency account as one-time (ie - use of fund balance). The FY25 recommended budget inadvertently reduces ongoing contingency by \$15,000. At this point, it would be a request or motion to amend the budget, if so desired.