

# Select Board Sidelines

## February 24, 2021

### Submitted by Bill Lombardi

**Budgets** - It is that time when the Select Board with the Budget Committee and the Town Manager start to discuss budgets. In the year of Covid uncertainty the first word that comes to mind is “challenge”. I think that we need to start as if it is business as usual, although we know it is not. There is uncertainty as to what the State revenues will be. An original State estimate was a serious reduction in revenue, recent updates suggest a recovery in revenues. It remains unclear what the next Federal stimulus package will look like and what will trickle down to the Town level. Will there be a Federal Infrastructure package sometime in 2021? Will this benefit us locally? Speaking of Infrastructure, we expect to have another Road Workshop in March. We look forward to direct input from you.

The road maintenance budget will need to be added back into the new budget as it was taken out of the last budget and covered under the Road Bond.

Our assessor, Jim Murphy, tells us that our residents are buying vehicles which means that Excise Tax revenues are high. He also tells us that we will need to allocate for the expense of an updated property assessment. It has been five years or so since the last assessment. This project needs to be undertaken periodically as a way to be fair to all taxpayers.

Last year the Fire Rescue budget received a substantial increase. The objective was to reduce response time and have fewer calls go to outside services (to have as many calls handled by local EMS folks quicker) by increasing the services through expanded per-diem. The following is a summary of information generated by our Assistant Fire / EMS Chief Jesse Thompson:

With the 24/7 per-diem our response times have decreased in 2019. The average time from being notified to time en-route to call was 4 minutes in 2019 and in 2020 it was 1 ½ minutes. In 2019 the average time from when the rescue went en-route to arrival on scene was 9 minutes, while in 2020 it was 7 minutes. In 2019 we missed (picked up by an outside service) a total of 27 calls, while in 2020 it was 13.

In the 19-20 budget we had 34 Advance Life Support intercept calls and so far for this year we have had 18. (This means that our Town EMS people were able to handle more of the ALS calls – defined as resuscitation maneuvers that extend beyond basic CPR.)

Thank you for an excellent job Jesse! EMS service was quicker and more effective with last year's budget increase.

At the last Select Board meeting, the next budget was approved for Rescue with a minimum increase in salaries in order to retain our valuable employees in this time of need.