

**TOWN OF CLARENDON BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**FY25 BUDGET WORKSHOP**  
**Minutes**

**November 27th, 2023**

**Attendees:**  
**Selectboard**

Mike Klopchin, Chair  
Robert Congdon  
Cash Ruane  
Art Menard

Heidi Congdon, Treasurer  
Katie Nop, Secretary  
Gloria Menard, Town Clerk  
William Chmielewski  
Alf Strom-Olsen  
Jimmy Austin  
Bob Bixby

*Later joined:*  
Jan McCoy  
Matt Jakubowski  
Shelly Lutz  
Kevin Peck  
Jeannie Stimpfel

**Call to Order**

Chairman Klopchin called the workshop to order at 5:10PM.

**Agenda additions/deletions**

N/A

**FY25 Budget discussion**

Heidi, Treasurer, provided the Board with a current year budget status and a comparative budget report. Alf Strom-Olsen was present and had questions regarding current taxes and delinquent which Heidi clarified for him. Selectman Menard let Alf know that the Board has finalized a Social Services Appropriation Policy that will be effective next year. Alf questioned if the State lets the town know ahead of time about the schedule for bridge repair. The Board looked for clarification on the equipment fund. \$350,000 of the equipment fund was designated for the purchase of a new grader.

The Board then turned to the next page and reviewed salaries quickly. Selectman Menard suggested the same percent raise across the board for all departments. The Board discussed when the next budget meetings would be. It was discussed that Highway would be roughed out at the next budget meeting and salaries at the following. Selectman Congdon requested that the Road Commissioner have an equipment replacement schedule for the next budget workshop.

Chairman Klopchin questioned why Selectman Menard wanted to do the same percentage across the Board for salaries. Selectmen Menard reasoned that it would be a starting point

and anyone that had issues with it, could meet in executive session with the Board at a meeting. Selectman Congdon said as a placeholder he thought 4.5 or 5% would be a good starting point to put into salaries for discussion. Alf Strom-Olsen questioned why 4.5% or 5% raise when the cost-of-living adjustment is around 3%. Selectman Congdon responded because they didn't keep up with inflation last year. Chairman Klopchin said to put 5% in the salaries place holder and there would be more discussion at later workshop.

Selectman Congdon said that they could touch briefly on the Transfer Station improvements that were discussed at the last meeting. Selectman Congdon didn't feel that there needed to be a bunch of money dumped into a building that is only open 3 days a week. He did acknowledge that the building needs to be safe but it did not need to be the "taj mahal."

Selectman Congdon suggested that there should be research done if our current contract will provide shavings for food waste at the Transfer Station.

The next budget work shop will be at 5pm on December 11.

**Public Comments**

N/A

**Recess**

Selectman Congdon motioned to recess until next workshop at 5:59PM, Selectman Ruane seconded, all approved.

**December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Attendees:**

Selectboard

- Mike Klopchin, Chair
- George Ambrose, Clerk
- Robert Congdon
- Cash Ruane

- Heidi Congdon, Treasurer
- Katie Nop, Secretary
- William Chmielewski
- Joe Parker Jr.-Highway Dept. member

- Lucy Parker
- Alf Strom-Olsen
- Sarah Kumm
- Silas Kumm
- Bev Brown
- Dan Pinkowski
- Nichole Peterson
- Mike Pedone

*Later joined:*

- Bob Bixby
- Kevin Peck
- Art Peterson, VT Rep.
- Shelly Lutz
- Bob Underhill
- Jan McCoy
- Theresa Miele

**Call to Order**

Chairman Klopchin called the workshop to order at 5:06PM.

**Agenda additions/deletions**

N/A

**FY25 Budget discussion**

Chairman Klopchin suggested discussing salaries. The consensus of the Board was that there was a placeholder in the budget for salary increases (5%) and it would be worked out on the 27<sup>th</sup> when the full Board would be back. It was understood that Highway was supposed to be worked on tonight.

Heidi, Treasurer, suggested discussing a Hazard Mitigation/River maintenance fund since there was a group of people present for that and then work through the Highway budget. Heidi thought it would be wise to establish a Hazard Mitigation fund. She explained that it would be beneficial since money could be pulled from there to offset expenses for hazard mitigation, disasters that are not federally declared, or expenses derived from unexpected flooding. The flooding that occurred this past summer has driven the discussion whether or not Clarendon should establish a Hazard Mitigation fund.

Selectman Congdon questioned whether \$25,000 would be a good starting balance for that fund. There was discussion on whether a new fund would have to be approved by the voters. Heidi is finding out whether voter approval is necessary or not.

The Board then started on the Highway budget. Salt is currently set at \$95,000. Last year close to \$120k was expended. Cash would like to see \$105k put in the budget for salt. He suggested upping the winter gravel line to \$20,000. There was discussion about meeting in the middle and put \$17,000 in for now. \$70k for regular gravel seems to be sufficient. The Board also decided to level fund sand. Dust control is about \$4,500 a load. The Board put \$15k in for the Calcium Chloride line.

The Board then discussed the resurfacing and reconstruction line item. Cash explained it's about \$230k/mile to reclaim/pave/shoulder a section of road. The tentative plan for paving would be Cold River Road from the intersection of North Shrewsbury Road to the Shrewsbury line. Creek Road also needs to be paved from the new box culvert to Alfrecha Road. There are 25 miles of paved roads (in Clarendon) and a paved road lasts about 10 years. Theoretically then, 2.5 miles should be done per year to keep up. Joe Parker noted that he's been working for the town for 13 years and hasn't seen Creek Road paved during his tenure. Selectman Congdon proposed 185k be put in for resurfacing/reconstruction due to inflation rates.

The Board explained to the public that were present about the prepayment agreement last year with the paving company. The town did a prepayment so that they could put the remaining balance of the current fiscal year's paving money toward the next fiscal year's paving project. It allowed for the town to accomplish a larger project. There's about \$15k left in the paving budget, so with the increase there would be about \$200k total going into the new year for paving.

For the garage maintenance line item, Cash and Joe explained that 3 truck bays are still in need of concrete. 1 bay's worth of concrete cost about \$3,475. Joe Parker suggested \$8,000 for garage maintenance; they would hopefully be able to get 2 more bays complete.

For vehicle maintenance there was discussion on each vehicle's expense list. Selectman Congdon asked if the trucks were still getting oil undercoated. Cash said when he came on board it was understood that the trucks were not to get undercoated while under warranty. The conversation turned to the possibility that either the Western Star or old Mack is due for replacement. As a place holder, \$25k was put in the vehicle maintenance line item.

**Public Comments**

N/A

**Recess**

Selectman Congdon motioned to recess until Wednesday the 27<sup>th</sup> at 5pm, Selectman Ambrose seconded, all approved.

**December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Attendees:**

Selectboard

- Mike Klopchin, Chair
- George Ambrose, Clerk
- Robert Congdon
- Cash Ruane
- Art Menard

- Heidi Congdon, Treasurer
- Katie Nop, Secretary
- Gloria Menard, Town Clerk
- William Chmielewski
- Joe Parker, Jr.- Highway Dept. member
- Later joined:
  - Jimmy Austin
  - Thelecia Molaski
  - Wayne Willhaus
  - Shelly Lutz
  - Bob Bixby

**Call to Order**

Chairman Klopchin called the workshop to order at 5:00PM.

**Agenda additions/deletions**

N/A

**FY25 Budget discussion**

The Board worked on the Highway Department's budget starting with the Equipment Maintenance line items. Road Commissioner Ruane was comfortable leaving fuel, oil, and grease at \$45k. Heidi explained that the next line item (mechanics, supplies, and parts) was for general shop supplies. They decided to decrease that line item and put \$3,000 in. Heidi asked the Board if they wanted to increase the uniform line because of inflation. There are currently 4 uniform stipends budgeted, in case the town hires an additional road crew member. Parker asked if there's potential for a 4<sup>th</sup> road crew member hire. Selectman Ambrose said that he has been supportive of an "extra" for on-call winter help. Selectman Menard suggested raising the uniforms to \$2100 (\$525/individual).

Approved January 8, 2024

The next line item was small highway equipment (chain saws, leaf blower, weed whackers, pressure washers, etc). They decided to decrease that line to \$1500. The next line item was Highway Miscellaneous and the Board questioned what expenses are keyed to that account. Heidi said there are expenses like mail boxes and grass seed in there. They level funded the miscellaneous line at \$5,000.

The Board then discussed the Equipment Fund. Road Commissioner Ruane reported that the last truck they bought was about \$200k, now they're about \$265k. After paying for the new grader there will be roughly \$140k left in the Equipment Fund. Cash suggested adding \$25k to the current budget for a total of \$125k to be transferred into the Equipment Fund. Selectman Congdon expressed that tax payers would be unhappy with that dramatic of increase. Road Commissioner threw out the idea of the town possibly leasing their next truck. There was discussion about if leasing was legal because it binds the tax payers to an agreement beyond one year. Selectman Congdon suggested being very conservative with increases because voters are already upset with the potential education increase. They decided to budget \$105k to be transferred into the Equipment Fund, upon voter approval.

Katie brought up the fact that this summer is shaping up to be a heavy construction season with a lot of grants. The grants require a town match and she wondered if the matches need to be budgeted in contract services. They decided on \$22k for contract services. Culverts and guardrails were increased to \$17k. Signs and pavement lines were left at \$3,000. MRGP will be booked at \$1350. The Board decided to level fund the Bridge Reserve Fund. Selectman Menard suggest putting 10k in the Hazard Mitigation Expense line item and then ask the voters to establish a Hazard Mitigation Fund.

The Board level funded Selectman Salaries, expenses, and website maintenance. Town Hall Maintenance was budgeted at 10K.

Under Solid Waste Removal, the Board discussed how they would have to increase the expenses because of the new contract with Casella. The Board also discussed doing some minor repairs to the Transfer Station office. Selectman Congdon suggested doing spray foam and doors, but he didn't think thousands of dollars needed to be poured into that building. They increased the solid waste removal expenses to \$58k.

There was discussion amongst the Board and Heidi to recess until after the following the Selectboard meeting. Depending on how long the regular meeting ran, they could pick back up with budget afterwards.

#### **Public Comments**

N/A

#### **Recess**

Selectman Ambrose motioned to recess the workshop at 6pm and Selectman Congdon seconded. The motion passed unopposed.

**January 3rd, 2024**

#### **Attendees:**

##### Selectboard

Mike Klopchin, Chair

George Ambrose, Clerk

Robert Congdon

Art Menard

Approved January 8, 2024

Cash Ruane

Heidi Congdon, Treasurer

Katie Nop, Secretary

*Temporarily joined:*

Bob Underhill

### **Call to Order**

Chairman Klopchin called the workshop to order at 5:07PM.

### **Agenda additions/deletions**

N/A

### **FY25 Budget discussion**

The Board decided to not budget for an external audit. Selectman Congdon suggested cutting legal fees back to \$2,500. Legal notices and forms were cut back to \$1,000. Cemetery maintenance was level funded at \$15k.

The Recreation Committee did not submit a formal request. The Chair of the committee said to refer to Selectman Menard. Selectman Menard reported they wanted to level fund. Rec Committee Chair, Matt Jakubowski, has plans of putting frisbee golf in at the Rec Fields. The Board decided to budget \$9k for Rec.

The Community Center did not submit a formal request. Last year they were over budget and that included their utilities, elevator contract, and minor repairs; nothing extraordinary was done to exceed the budget. The Community Center Committee has discussed cutting back on cleaning to cut costs. Last year the Community Center brought in \$6,000 for revenue. The church will not be renting the Community Center beginning in March so some of that revenue will go away.

The Community Center does have a maintenance fund which has about \$34k in it. The Board decided to level fund the Community Center's budget.

Heidi, Treasurer, reported which organizations submitted appropriation requests and those that did not. They are listed in the budget. Clarendon Fire Association increased their request to \$82,000.00.

Heidi provided the Board with a vision benefit packet if the Board was interested in offering that to employees as it's been briefly discussed in the past. The vision insurance packet was through VSP.

The Board then discussed the Listers budget and if any cuts could be made there. Selectman Congdon questioned if the maps need to be budgeted for the upcoming fiscal year. Selectman Menard thought that the maps were a disaster and the \$2,000 should be left in the budget to correct them. It was explained that NEMRC did the maps this last time and Selectman Menard felt they were not easily readable. The Board asked Bob Underhill (Lister) about the status of the mapping. Bob reported the quality of the maps was fine but the service was horrible. He explained that they try to get new maps every 2 years or so, and by spring of 2025 the maps would be 2.5 years. Bob explained that it's whether the Board wants older maps for longer. Selectman Ruane suggested cutting the map budget so it gives Bob time to look into a better map making company.

Approved January 8, 2024

Heidi reported that health insurance rates are based on calendar year and she would be comfortable budgeting \$110k. The Sheriff's Department had a significant increase (budgeted \$75,000).

Heidi suggested bumping up Delinquent Taxes to help with the revenue side. Current delinquent is \$283k. Heidi reminded the Board that the auditors don't recommend budgeting for delinquent taxes. Selectman Congdon said to leave it at \$60k.

At this point in the budget process the town was \$136k over last year which was about 4.5 cents. Heidi reminded the Board that they did not reduce the fund balance last year.

Heidi explained that the road crew is hoping to purchase a trolley light to replace the need for flagging. Heidi figured it would be a good use of the Highway Fund Balance. Flagging would not need to be budgeted into contract services if they did end up purchasing the lights. The Board decided to decrease Contract Services to \$16k. There was \$10k budgeted for Hazard Mitigation expense which could go into a fund if the voters approve. At this point the Board was close to \$130,580.00 over last year.

Chairman Klopchin wanted to go back and discuss employee salaries. Selectmen Menard and Congdon realized they had conflicts. 5% raises were discussed because the Board was trying to make up with the cost-of-living adjustment from last year. Chairman Klopchin proposed a 5% increase across the board and additional pay for Katie.

Selectman Congdon said that further discussion on employee salaries should be done in executive session.

#### **Executive Session**

Selectman Ambrose motioned to move into executive session. Before the Board moved into executive session, Heidi stated the current hourly rates of the office staff and cautioned the Board of their fiscal responsibility to the tax payers. Selectman Congdon seconded the motion to go into executive session at 6:17PM and all approved.

Selectman Ruane motioned to come out of executive session at 7pm and Selectman Congdon seconded. All Board members approved the motion.

Selectman Congdon explained that the current 5% increase stands across the board for all employees with a new line item to be created in the budget. The line item would be \$10,000 with a cap of \$2,000 per full time employee per year for tuition reimbursement for continuing education. The stipulations would be that the employee would be reimbursed upon satisfactorily completing courses from an accredited institution.

Heidi stated that this would have to be worked into the personnel policy and the Board understood. Selectman Congdon further explained that with a personnel policy workshop, there would be pay scales developed for the office staff. The new line item for tuition reimbursement would go under Benefits in the budget.

Katie said that at one of the Regular Board meetings, she was told to bring up the June Teenth Holiday up at a budget meeting. Selectman Menard figured the Board would recognize it when the State of VT recognizes it.

It was also decided that the Board would not be entertaining vision this year. They're going to be \$140,580 over from last year, but decided to reduce the fund balance by \$100,000 and budget an extra \$580 to Delinquent Taxes. This equates to about a 1 cent increase.

Approved January 8, 2024

**Public Comments**

N/A

**Adjournment**

Selectman Menard motioned to adjourn at 7:14PM and Selectman Congdon seconded. The motion passed unopposed.

SIGNED: Mike T. Napoli Mike Klopchin, Chair

SIGNED: George Ambrose George Ambrose, Clerk