

Budget Committee Inquiries #1 2/7/2024

1. The Committee requests a document that lists FTEs per department.

	FT Union	FT non-union	PT union	PT non-union	Seasonal
Town of Eliot					
Fire Dept.	0	0	0	1 PT, 35 (on-call PT)	0
Public Works Dept	5	2	0	0	4
Police Dept.	8	3	0	3	4
Transfer Station	0	0	6	0	0
Town Office	0	10	0	4	0
Recreation Dept.	0	2	0	4	8
TOTAL	13	17	6	11	16

2. To better manage and keep organized the budget paperwork, the Committee requests that each time you make a change to the budget document that you email BC members that a change has been made with the latest document, that that document includes the date of the change and page numbers, and that that document also be printed and put into BC members' boxes at Town Hall for them to pick up. **The purpose of the on-line draft budget worksheet is to avoid "printing" copies when changes are made, I would respectfully suggest that if a BC Member would prefer working from a paper copy, they apply the date to their personal copy when they print it. We will supply a "final" printed copy when the BC and SB complete their deliberation, and the SB takes the final warrant vote. I will number the pages when the changes are made.**

3. Wages are budgeted to be up 10.5% and the Committee would like to understand the rationale for that increase. What makes up the 10.5% proposed increase? **You may recall the Town Meeting voted in July of 2022 \$110,000 and additional funds voted in the June 2022 warrant for the purpose of increasing compensation and training for existing employees. Those additions were not part of the General Fund budgeted numbers. As those funds were allocated to different positions as professional adjustments and salary adjustments in some cases for taking on additional responsibilities. There were also funds needed to add to salaries to attract staffing, mostly those funds were adjusted from budgeted funds which were unused during the vacancy. As described in the budget manual there is additional funding sought for two new police officers in FY 25, also a new part-time position was added to assist the Finance Director late in FY 24. These and other factors contribute to the increase in salaries. While it is substantial, investing in improved retention will prove to be a wise investment as to understaffing, underpaid and under appreciated employees. I believe the Town of Eliot is more competitive, improving its service model and has improved morale. I still see some room for continuing to be competitive and increasing or capacity with existing staff.**

4. The Committee does not see unfunded liability or post-employee benefits in the budget, is that an issue? **The unfunded liability often referred to as "other post-employment benefit" (OPEB) is all calculated and administered by Maine Public Employee Retirement System (MPERS) as we do not offer retirees any health insurance the impact for the post employment benefit does not impact Eliot.**

5. What caused FICA to go up 16% if salaries went up 10.5%? **The increases in compensation were a contributing factor, it is also based on a rate set by the federal government outside our control.**

6. Please explain health insurance costs budgeted for 2025. The following was copied from the budget manual delivered to members in December explaining the rise in costs for Health Insurance; *“This budget includes a sizable increase to employee health insurance of \$130,748, this includes the 4.7% increase we are aware of for January 1, 2024, and another 6% for anticipated increase for January 1, 2025. We also include funding for the two new positions in the PD and a small cushion in the event other eligible employees come on to the plan.”*

7. When you look at Wages, as in Land Use office, do you feel this is the last year of wage increases? No Have Town wages reached an appropriate and competitive level? The Town of Eliot has made strides to be more competitive, this includes but not limited to compensation, creating a more enjoyable working environment, creating growth opportunities, and allowing access to training. Stating the “Town” has reached a “competitive level” would be immediately irrelevant and largely speculative. The greater challenge is making a equitable comparison in many cases. The support, compensation and

8. What caused the 46% increase in Mapping and is this a cost that should be anticipated periodically, for instance, every two to three years? The \$19,000 increase in Land Use “Contracted Services” is the result of adding Maptionnaire (used for Comp Plan and other projects), centralizing CAI GIS mapping and enhancing the features. The mapping is available to the public on our website and used heavily by PW (Stormwater), Assessor, Planning and Code Enforcement. We now have a three-year agreement (on website) with CAI which will stabilize the increases and add the features sooner and without additional charges which is common practice.

9. The Committee would like to remind you to share monthly financial reports with members, documents that include expense summary report (monthly), income summary report (monthly), and current account status (quarterly and in electronic form only.) The monthly summaries are and have been supplied to the Chair of the BC for distribution.

There is additional information which may help answer some of the questions in the FY 25 Budget Manual on the website and mailed to your home in December.

Thank you,
Mike