



SELECT BOARD WORK SESSION

**Minutes of Thursday, January 17, 2024
6:00 PM**

Board Members participating were Select Board Chair Marshall Hook (arrived 6:03), Vice-Chair and Clerk Rafael McDonald and Select Board Member Boyd Jackson, Lynne Bermudez and Cameron Brown. Of the Select Board's staff Town Administrator Kevin Harutunian, and Executive Assistant Samantha Morin were present. Conservation Agent Heidi Gaffney, Town Clerk Beth Willis, COA Director Kathleen Barbarisi, Library Director Dan Tremblay, DPW Superintendent Gary Wildes, Police Chief Neal Hovey and Police Captain Dan Bell were present.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair and Clerk McDonald called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice Chair and Clerk McDonald made the following announcements:

"The meeting is being recorded by the Recording Clerk via ZOOM in the event that the connection is lost at any time during the meeting a device is being used by the recording clerk for the purpose of taking minutes; is there anyone else present who wishes to record the meeting?" There was no response.

"The Select Board meetings can be viewed by going into the Cable Videos icon on the homepage of the Town's website."

FY2025 BUDGET

TA Harutunian introduced the department heads that would speak on their budget for tonight's meeting.

Conservation Agent Heidi Gaffney presented the Conversation budget which reflects the guideline-approved contractual wage increases. The revolving funds bylaw handles all other expenses which is why there are no other line items within the Department.

The budget of Town Clerk Beth Willis fluctuates depending on elections. There are three elections for FY2025. Early voting and mail in voting requirements are reflected in the budget request for increased poll workers and postage.

The Council on Aging budget only shows an increase of wages for a Cost of Living Adjustment. Director Barbarisi is hoping that if the new van is approved through the grant and at Town Meeting, there will not need to be a request for additional funds for maintenance of the existing vehicle.

Superintendent Wildes introduced the five budgets under his purview with the only increases due to contractual obligations and wages. The Highway Department and Parks and Cemetery budgets reflect contractual wage increases and realignment of funds within the budget. Snow & Ice is a statutory line item that Towns can overrun. Historically, Towns do not increase the budget yearly and Topsfield will maintain the FY24 ask. There is an additional ask of \$5,000 for Fuel. Every Town-owned vehicle utilizes this line item for fuel.

Superintendent Wildes' Landfill budget is a mandatory DEP requirement. There was an ask to the State by Superintendent Wildes to reduce testing due to favorable results, which would decrease the budget, but the Town has not received a response. There was conversation on if this budget would need to increase with PFAS regulations that have yet to be released. Although the Flares line item is rarely used, it needs to be kept due to the need of possibly utilizing it with minimal notice given to the Town.

Library Director Tremblay introduced the budget for the library. There is an additional ask for maintenance and supplies. This will be for projects inside the building to avoid capital items in the upcoming years. The maintenance requests coupled with the COLA wage adjustment add up to the required 2.5% statutory increase for the library's operating budget.

Chief Hovey and Captain Bell discussed the police budget. The salary and wages increase reflects contractual charges. There is a decrease in longevity pay due to retirements and staff turnover. The Chief is asking for an additional 16% increase in electricity based on actual costs incurred last year and an increase in rates. TA Harutunian will confirm Topsfield Police is on the Town rate contract and will review, with the Chief, the Department's energy consumption. This ask also included sufficient energy for two EV cars, but if that does not happen the above ask can be decreased by around \$2,000. The manufacturer of the desired vehicles has stopped production indefinitely due to mechanical issues, so the exact model remains in-flux. There is an ask for additional funds for fleet maintenance, as the FY24 line is already depleted. The Northeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council requires dues of around \$5,500 if

Topsfield Police joined. Topsfield is one of three communities in Essex County that is not a member.

There was an ask to review the budget as a whole after individual departments complete their presentations. As of right now, the proposed budget is 2.7% over FY24. The number will come down with better understanding of real costs and projected revenues as the year progresses. Cuts to the budget happen later in February into early March.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:44 PM, Member Bermudez made a motion to adjourn. Vice Chair and Clerk McDonald seconded the motion by a roll call vote as follows:

Chair Hook	Yes
Vice Chair and Clerk McDonald	Yes
Select Board Member Brown	Yes
Select Board Member Bermudez	Yes
Select Board Member Jackson	Yes

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Morin, Executive Assistant & Recording Secretary

DOCUMENTS

1. Agenda
2. FY2025 Omnibus Budget-Dept Level 1
3. Schedule of Departments