

**TOWN OF WHITEHALL**  
**10 AM**  
**PUBLIC HEARING ON 2017 PRELIMINARY BUDGET**  
**57 SKENESBOROUGH DRIVE**

**October 27, 2016**

**PRESENT:** George Armstrong – Supervisor  
John Rozell-Councilperson  
Stephanie Safka – Councilperson  
David Hollister-Councilperson

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Town Clerk, Julie Millett; Budget Officer, Joel Carpenter; Highway Superintendent, Louis D. Pratt II.

Public Hearing Notice put in the Whitehall Times on 10/20/16 and also on Town/Village web page and Town Clerk signboard on 10/14/16.

No one from the public attended.

Supervisor asked Joel Carpenter to speak to the Board on the health insurance costs. In 2017 this cost will be under 1% increase. The health reimbursement plan with Jaeger & Flynn the Town pays deductible amounts of \$4,000 family and \$2,000 single plan to highway employees. We took a hit last year, January 1<sup>st</sup>. This year we get a little relief and is less than 1%. The deductible will go up \$4,400 family or \$2,200 for single. Jaeger & Flynn would like to know if the Town wishes to continue with the health insurance. Joel has already calculated the increase in the 2017 budget. In highway, we will have other issues with the health insurance because we have one retiring next year and a person replacing him that will have health insurance.

Joel checked with another plan and it would probably cost us a little more money so he thinks we are still in the best place we can be on the health insurance. He did go to the marketplace and checked on the health insurance and the only offers were from Blue Shield with a high deductible plan for a single person was \$382 with a \$6,400 deductible. Then when you get to the drug card they don't pay for any experimental drugs. Joel thought the choices were horrible. You couldn't go to Burlington or New Hampshire. We are fortunate this year for the Town's insurance, but for 2018 we have no idea. CDPHP for many years had the best plans, but their prices went way up so we had to jump to MVP. MVP is better now, but we don't know

what 2018 will bring. Councilperson Rozell stated that he went through New York State where he had MVP and New York State made him cancel. He wanted to keep paying for the MVP, but they wouldn't let him. Now he is being supported by the taxpayers being on Medicaid. Joel stated that probably more and more doctors will refuse to take patients because they won't get what they want for reimbursement. Doctors out West are charging a patient \$2,000 up front in order for you to see the doctor. He said it must be legal, but is it ethical to do that to someone.

Councilperson Rozell wanted to know if someone retires from the highway crew do they have to put any money into it. Louie stated that they carry the insurance until they are 65 and then they go on a supplemental and the Town pays some of that. John wants to know if they still get that \$4,400 a year after they retire until they turn 65. Joel stated that if they officially retired they would not qualify, but what you have with the one retiring next year is that he wants to use his sick time to pay for his health insurance premiums. He has about \$13,000 in sick time and the union contract states he can use that for health insurance. Joel is assuming he will remain on the payroll and we will pay him for his sick time by paying for his health insurance each month until it is gone. We will be paying him \$13,000 plus paying a new guy. John wanted to know if we could pay him in a lump sum, but the union contract reads that he has a choice on what he wants to do. Supervisor thinks it is an advantage to us to use retiree's sick time to pay for health insurance because we are doing it over a period of time. Doing it this way the Town would not have to pay Social Security or Medicare on that amount.

Supervisor stated this is common with most people that work and have a union. Joel stated that it would not be taxable income to the retiree if he chose to pay for his health insurance with his sick time. David Hollister feels the Town and the retiree are ahead by doing it this way. David asked if he stayed on the books does he still qualify for the \$4,400 deductible. Louie feels that needs to be discussed with the town attorney and budget officer to see how to handle it. Louie thinks that every year you are going to have to put that money in there for him and he pays his percentage on the premium. The person retiring will have about two years before he turns 65. Joel strongly recommends that we have the town attorney involved so we are not facing problems on this in the future. Joel doesn't know if he qualifies for the \$4,400 deductible money because this year he is an employee, but next year do we have to put that in for him again. That is a question for the attorney.

Louie stated that it is part of the insurance so not sure and that is why we need the town attorney involved. We will give her current union contract to read over and give her the insurance policy to look over. Louie thinks it is part of the insurance policy so he is an employee right now and when he becomes retired he is still getting the insurance so he thinks the \$4,400 should still be put in there for him. Employee retiring must give a three- month notice so by February we should be getting a letter from him. The Town should have an agreement between them and the past employee as to what he will be receiving for insurance. Joel sees where this could turn into a problem so we need the attorney. The Board has not signed the new union contract yet, but has approved a 3% raise for men for each year for the next four years.

With no public comments on the budget the Supervisor closed the Public Hearing at 10:20 AM.

Regular meeting will now open at 10:21 AM.

**Motion** to accept the 2017 increase in the insurance coverage and coverage of the new amounts of \$4,400 and \$2,200 deductibles for the town employees we provide insurance for by Councilperson Safka and seconded by Councilperson Hollister.

Councilperson Hollister wanted to make sure we were still under 2% for the budget. Joel stated that he has already figured in these new amounts and yes, it is under the 2%.

**ADOPTED**                   Ayes   4  Armstrong, Rozell, Safka, Hollister  
                                      Nays   0

**Motion** to pass the Preliminary Budget as the 2017 Final Budget made by Councilperson Hollister and seconded by Councilperson Safka.

**ADOPTED**                   Ayes   4  Armstrong, Rozell, Safka, Hollister  
                                      Nays   0

The Board will need to decide if they want to replace Councilperson Prefontaine or leave his position open. Supervisor will talk to the Board of Elections after the elections to see how that works out. If we were to appoint someone for that position it wouldn't be for four years. They would have to run next November to fill out the term.

Louie would like to discuss the quotes on the mower head for the excavator.

Stephenson Equipment \$7,430.00

Rut MFG.                         \$3,950.00

He would like to purchase the Rut one for \$3,950.00

We would have to send our ditching bucket out and that would be another \$250.00.

We could do a resolution to transfer money from the sale of the truck for \$10,800.00 at the next board meeting.

Councilperson Hollister was questioning why one was half price of the other one.

Louie stated that the Rut Manufacturer make their own.

Councilperson Rozell wanted to know if we could wait until next Spring. Louie stated that we will still need it next year and we have the money from the sale of the truck.

**Motion** to approve the purchasing of the 42" Brush Eliminator for \$3,950.00 by Councilperson Hollister and seconded by Councilperson Safka.

**ADOPTED**                   Ayes   4  Armstrong, Rozell, Safka, Hollister  
                                      Nays   0

Councilperson Rozell asked Joel Carpenter to explain the memo that was received from Washington County Real Property Tax Services, Laura Chadwick on the omitted taxes.

Joel explained that the Town has chargebacks when a parcel may be sold or the owner dies, based on exemptions that are currently on the assessment roll. This amount will be an

adjustment on our 2% levy. This amount will reduce the amount that we were able to levy, but we will still remain under the cap.

This amount reflects the amount of exemptions that were lost.

Councilperson Hollister stated it is whenever you have a change in use on a property.

**Motion** to adjourn @ 10:45 AM made by Councilperson Rozell and seconded by Councilperson Safka.

**ADOPTED**                   Ayes 4 Armstrong, Rozell, Safka, Hollister  
                                  Nays 0

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Millett  
Town Clerk