

Town of Plymouth  
Selectboard Minutes  
Monday, February 20, 2023  
Town of Plymouth Municipal Building

Board chairman, Jay Kullman called the meeting to order at 6:10 P.M.

Selectboard members in attendance were Jay Kullman, Rick Kaminski, and Keith Cappellini

Audience members in attendance were Bob Lambert, Joe Rebideau, Corsi Norriella, Steve Heilner, Karen Evans, Margo Marrone, Terry & Willow Bascom, Kurt Turner, Dave Olster, Bruce Pauley, Fran Kissel, Beverly & Cedric Johnson, Steve Radonis, and Don Martin.

Attending the meeting via Zoom were Dr. Elliot Rubin and Ben Ford. Dr. Rubin is the Plymouth representative on the board of the Windsor Central Unified Union School District and Ben Ford is the Vice Chair and Clerk of that organization.

Mr. Ford described the school budget process from beginning to completion in a clearly stated format that helped those in attendance have a better understanding of the education portion of their tax bills.

The Town of Plymouth has 51 students enrolled in the district. Mr. Ford stated there are 7 member towns in our school district, but over 20 towns send students to the schools within our district. Those students who are not in our district pay a tuition to attend one of our seven schools. This helps reduce the tax rate for education spending, as does a gasoline tax, an internet tax, and grant money.

In a breakdown of school budget expense, employee wages and benefits are the largest expense, followed by services, maintenance, and school programs. Budget priorities for the coming year are a new roof at the Killington Elementary School, replacing a barely functioning heating system at the Woodstock Middle School, and financing architect design fees and associated costs for the proposed new middle / high school in Woodstock.

Financing over a period of 5 years the \$4.5 million expense of these budget priorities, which may be subject to a reduction in total cost through application of available state and federal grants-in-aid, will help buffer the expense each town will realize in the coming years.

All Vermont towns will be required to reassess real estate values, based on the CLA, or Common Level of Appraisal. Plymouth has seen a 13% increase on real estate values overall. However, a state surplus of 60 million might be given back to taxpayers throughout the state to help lower the education tax rate. Also, a predicted increase in student enrollment will help drive down the education cost.

Next on the agenda, Fire Chief Kurt Turner discussed how the Fire Department committee has worked for the last 3 years to find a suitable replacement for our 33 year old fire engine. They have applied for a grant, which was denied, and searched for a used vehicle that would meet the specifications needed to replace our aging vehicle. Used Fire trucks are very hard to find and do not come with a warranty. Their department does have several fund raising sources that generate approximately \$20,000 per year. Also, the Town of Plymouth gives the department \$30,000 per year. While both of these income sources are appreciated, it is not nearly enough to help in financing a truck purchase. The Fire Department does have \$100,000 to contribute to the purchase of a truck. Kurt explained that mutual aid from other towns is vital, however, those towns can only provide Plymouth with fire coverage in an actual emergency. All surrounding towns need more volunteers.

He said if the town votes to purchase a new vehicle, the town will own and insure the truck, which will be under a warranty.

Steve Heilner spoke in support of the fire departments efforts to provide a vital service to the town and acknowledged the difficulties our fire department faces with sub-standard equipment. A four-wheel drive truck is necessary, as some of our roads are very steep, and driveways off those roads even steeper. A four-wheel drive truck costs about 10% more, but that is an expense that is necessary in order for our fire department to provide adequate service. The town needs equipment that can get to a fire quickly and volunteers who are trained to respond. He feels buying a used fire truck is not practical.

Karen Evans and Steve Radonis spoke to the effect on homeowner's insurance policies if adequate fire protection is not available.

With no further comments, Jay suggested the meeting be closed. Rick Kaminski made a motion to adjourn, Keith Cappellini seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted, as draft, until approved,

  
Elaine Pauley