TOWN OF KINGSTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
OPEN SESSION MINUTES
TOWN HOUSE-26 EVERGREEN ST. ROOM 200 & VIA ZOOM
January 21, 2025

6:00 p.m. – CALL TO ORDER – ROOM 200

Chairman Eric Crone called to order the meeting of the Board of Selectmen at 6:00 p.m.—selectmen in attendance: Kimberley Emberg, Donald Alcombright, and Melissa Bateman.

Staff Present: Keith Hickey, Town Administrator and Patricia Tucker, Assistant to Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. This meeting is being recorded by The Local Seen. Anyone who intends to make an audio or video recording of this meeting should notify the Chair at this time.
2. Financial Assistance Applications are available on the town's website or by calling the Selectmen's Office.
3. For anyone interested in volunteering, there are several vacancies on various boards and committees. Please check the website for a listing.
4. Please check our website for any additional events or notices www.kingstonma.gov

OPEN FORUM:

There was nobody for open forum.

APPOINTMENTS:

Board of Selectmen Working Group – FY2026 Budget

Mr. Crone mentioned that this meeting is to discuss the current budget situation. Mr. Crone discussed the possible massive cuts before the schools with the regional budget $2 million dollars over and the local schools $1.7 million over the 4% allocated.

Mr. Crone stated that without an override the police budget can potentially lose positions. If new positions are approved, it would require an override.

Ms. Emberg feels that the discussion of an override is premature. Ms. Emberg would like to say to departments this is how much we have and allocate the percentages to the town and what goes to the schools then they have as much time as they need to figure out what that budget looks like. Historically 53% of the budget goes to schools. Ms. Emberg has a feeling an override would fail and reducing the burden for the residents is what she would like to try to do.

Mr. Crone is thinking of having 2 warrant articles, with higher and lower override numbers.

Mr. Alcombright stated if the discussion of an override continues, he would like the numbers as to specific household increases. Mr. Alcombright asked if Water asked for more capacity, if they haven't' why haven't they.

Chief Douglass reviewed his handout that he provided to the Board and stated that he can work with the proposed budget, however there could be a reduction in services.
Consequences of 4% only increase:

Reduced or under funding will result in decreased shift staffing. Given the current and anticipated call volume supported by statistics, this will likely translate to increased response times, expanded use of mutual aid and increased cost in recalling off duty personnel to cover calls.

Additionally, there will be an impact in terms of reduced ambulance billing revenue. Simply put, if we are not making the call we are not collecting revenue. With the additional staff added last year we increased ambulance receipts by $267,181 and were able to effectively manage the increasing call volume.

Expenses are as close to a level as we could get with increases in ambulance billing and water only.

Ms. Emberg discussed ambulance fees and could we consider increasing. Chief Douglass stated he has had discussions regarding this and feels he should keep the rates it under the highest town.

The Board took a 2 minute recess.

Chief Holmes spoke about his PowerPoint Presentation that he shared with the public and the Board which was the Kingston Police Department SMART Growth Plan.

Current staffing levels:

- Total sworn LE = 26
- Dispatch = 8
- Admin = 1 FTE
- Specialized functions within KPD
- ISU, SRO's, Traffic safety, PCO, Elder Services,
- Other services under KPD
- ACO, Animal inspector, Harbor Master, Shellfish warden

Impacts of percentages proposed:

- 4% - layoff of 2 FTE patrol officers.
- 6% - layoff of 1 FTE patrol and 1 Dispatcher.
- 11% - 17 Patrol, 8 Dispatchers. Cost $504,740.
- 21% - 20 Patrol, 1 Deputy Chief, 9 Dispatchers. Cost $1,156,951

Mr. Crone would like to see a level service budget without the reduction of staff.
Mr. Hickey will provide Tuesday with a budget without a reduction of staff and Mr. Hickey would like to know from the Board, decide if they can, how close to an amount do they want to see.

Mr. Crone opened the discussion to the Board for the budget. The Board reviewed the budget and some of the specific points that were brought forward.

Ms. Emberg asked about specific line items, some of which were:

- Accounting – Clerical Union – Mr. Hickey discussed shifting payroll position from collector to accounting
- Board of Health -Clerical Union went up which is the Nurse's salary
- COA Budget – increased significantly, made a note to look again for potential opportunities
- Elimination of Assistant Town Planner and combination of Building Admin. - Mr. Hickey can't justify the 2 positions with the amount of work.
- Law Firms – the budget is based on our current law firm, bids went out, but no action was taken
- Consider waiving stipends
- Tax Title Properties, there is a new tax title custodian, looking for potential Revenue
- Town Clerk – Reduce of Overtime with no impact
- Budget includes potential library cuts and eliminating Monday evening hours at the transfer station.

The Board briefly discussed the structure of the DPW structure and how that would look like. If the position becomes a public works director there would no longer have a superintendent of streets, there would be a foreman, Water and Sewer would continue to have a superintendent and a foreman.

Ms. Emberg asked about the budget before them this evening and does whether it reflect reducing hours at the library and the transfer station and Mr. Hickey stated that it does.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

SELECTMEN COMMENTS:

Motion by Mr. Alcombright, seconded by Ms. Bateman and a 4-0-0 vote,
VOTE: I move to adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Tucker
Assistant to the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen

DOCUMENTS USED AT THE MEETING:

Draft Budget
Fire Budget Request
Police Department Presentation