**Town of Lake Santeetlah Public Hearing (Budget)**

**May 28, 2022**

Mayor Connie Gross called the meeting to order at 10:00AM. Councilmembers Tina Emerson, Ralph Mitchell, Jim Hager and Diana Simon were present for the meeting. Town Administrator Kim Matheson and Town Clerk Emily Hooper were also present.

Tina Emerson made a motion to open the Public Hearing. Mitchell seconded. Jim Hager referenced an email sent by town staff on May 24th at 3:52. The email stated that an updated draft of the budget would be posted to the website and that did not happen. Only half of the budget was on the website. The link that was sent by mass email did not include the water budget. The majority of the people have not had time to review the budget. Hager made a motion to continue the hearing until all information has been posted on the website for review. Diana seconded. Gross, Emerson and Mitchell opposed. The motion failed. Gross explained that State Statute only requires the budget to be available at Town Hall and not posted or sent out. Simon pointed out that the draft budget sent out only had updated financial information through March 31st and questioned why there couldn’t have been further updates completed . Emerson explained there would be changes made. This is a draft.

**Public Comment:**

**Jim Pittinger:** Pittinger spoke about the donation to the Nantahala Library (line 70). The Town is drawing down in reserves and Pittinger suggests that Graham County take care of the library and Lake Santeetlah use funds in other necessary areas. If the TPOA or individuals would like to support the library they can do so.

**Anne Hager:** Hager referred to line 5, transfer from resources, $22,000 last year and no amount for this year. Hager asked how the paving on Snowbird and Black Bear was going to take place. Line item 16, Zoning Certificate $3500 last year reduced to 0. The Ordinance is a living document and funds should be in those line items until it is removed. Line 24 Council meeting supplies increased to $1500, please explain. Line item 30 Software upgrade, Edmund software is in various line items and it is difficult to determine the full cost of the software upgrade. Hager asked for a total from the finance officer. Line item 39 retirement, do we have the funds to increase in this area from 2% to 10%? Line item 44 Zoning Administrator, The Ordinance is in place and removing these funds are being presumptuous. Line item 55 Planning Board Expenses cut to 0. This should not be done with a current Ordinance in place. Education is shown for staff and council but not the zoning board or zoning Board of adjustment. Funds for kudzu removal should remain in the budget. $2000 is not a large amount to get rid of the kudzu. The water budget is not available for review which is difficult for property owners to see full spectrum without having all documents available. Hager stated, “Get this cleaned up and balance this budget.”

**Diana Simon:** Simon referred to Kudzu funds being removed. Simon had previously mentioned dropping the funds to $200 for chemicals needed to spray kudzu. Simon suggests that if the Town plans to donate to the library it should donated to Friends of the Library rather than contracting with Nantahala Regional Library. Updated financials should be attached to this budget. Line item 39 (Pension plan) 10% is too much at this point. Simon supports the staff but uncertain the Town can afford this increase. Workmans Comp is left blank, Zoning Administrator is 0 and needs funding. Planning Board needs funded. Updated quote on insurance needed. The fire department donation has been increased. Please explain. The roof for Town Hall has $10,000 but the quotes received were close to $13,000. Line item 92, we don’t need a leaf machine. We should continue to contract leaf removal. Simon does not feel that we should be doing our own tax collection. Simon totaled the figures in the budget for Edmund to be $29,500. This is not clear what modules or additions this may include. Simon does not approve of this budget.

**Tina Emerson:** Emerson reviewed the water budget and the changes that were made since the workshop.

 **Anne Hager:** Hager stated it is difficult to have only a quick review but better to have the time to review and study the budget prior to the meeting.

**Jim Hager:** Hager asked if only $3,713 was being transferred to reserves this year. This is not workable with the needs of the water system.

**Tina Emerson:** The $20,000 brought over from the settlement is placed in Capital Outlay. This would allow a cushion for water breaks. If anyone has ideas of where funds could be decreased please share ideas, Emerson asked.

**Diana Simon:** The security fence is required by homeland security.

**Jim Hager:** Hager is anxious to see the adjustments made to the budget after the hearing on Thursday.

**Tina Emerson:** Emerson noted that she had asked the planning board to provide a recommendation on how to move forward at the public hearing.

Emerson reminded that this is a draft budget. There will be updates and changes.

**Anne Hager:** Hager stated the Planning Board had made recommendations on April 28th. That continues to stand as the Planning Board recommendation.

**Dean Davidson:** Davidson is opposed to the Zoning that is currently in place. Gross reminded Mr. Davidson that this hearing was to consider and discuss the budget.

Mayor Gross asked for a motion to close the hearing. Mitchell made a motion to close the hearing. Emerson seconded. Hager opposed. The motion passed four to one. The meeting was adjourned at 10:55AM.

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Connie Gross, Mayor Emily Hooper, Town Clerk