

BUDGET COMMITTEE

JANUARY 20, 2009

MEMORIAL BUILDING

7:00 P.M.

The following are to be considered draft minutes only until approved by the Board at their next meeting.

Present: B. Manning, Ken Jacques, Dave Tucker, Darrin Patten, Bill Sullivan, Rick Kidder, Jon Poston, John Trachy and Selectman member John Chiarella.

Also present: Selectmen Neal Huntoon and Don Hill, Dick Kipperman, and Tamara Butcher.

B. called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Ken Jacques moved to approve the January 6, 2009 minutes as written, seconded by Bill and unanimously approved.

Fire Department:

Dallas Patten and Erik Rollins met with the Board to answer questions regarding the washer. Erick reported the washer is a 220 plug-in. Both washers have a 3 year warranty on all moving parts, and 5 on the frame, bearings, and basket. Since the warranties are the same, the Department is recommending the purchase of the smaller, \$6,000 washer. The Selectmen have recommended a level funded operating budget for the fire department. B. asked whether the department would be able to buy what they needed for equipment? Dallas felt they could purchase a washer within their budget. Jon Poston asked if septic would be an issue? Dallas stated they have verbal assurance that the septic is not an issue. Other departments without municipal sewer use these types of machines. Ken and B. thanked Dallas and Erik for the research.

Unreserved Fund Balance:

The Board discussed the unreserved fund balance. \$115,548 was used to offset the town tax rate for 2008. There is now \$212,357 remaining in the fund balance. This amount is in the 5% retention range recommended by the Department of Revenue. Any increase to the fund balance determined at the time of the audit, would most likely be used to offset taxes another year. There is not enough money in the fund balance to offset any anticipated costs for 2009.

Highway Department:

Neal reported the Selectmen have made the decision to appropriate money in the highway budget to replace the black truck. The intent of this expense is to replace the line item that was contract plowing. The white International would not be replaced for another 2-4 years. They hope to be able to find a used truck that might possibly be newer than the white truck. This will give them time to look at used equipment.

Grounds and Buildings:

John Chiarella reported there are a number of projects that need to be done. The Selectmen will be continuing to organize the list and will prioritize projects to fit within the \$30,000 grounds and buildings appropriation.

Engineering fees:

The Board discussed the difference between engineering fees in the executive budget and the planning/zoning budgets. Typically engineering fees from planning and zoning are reimbursed. The Selectmen explained that due to unusual circumstances, a portion of the engineering fees were not reimbursed this year. Engineering fees in the executive budget are being appropriated for additional engineering for the highway complex to fix drainage issues, expand storage space for the highway department, and for relocation of the sand and salt shed. The projects will be prioritized, and some put off for another year if funds are not available to complete projects.

John Trachy questioned whether the Selectmen had considered implementing a revolving fund for fees paid by planning and zoning applicants. The Selectmen will look into this further.

Employee Wages:

Ken asked the Selectmen to report on their rationale behind not doing across the board costs of living adjustments to all employees. John Chiarella reported that the Selectmen had discussions with Brad and Tim, and the office personnel. They have cut funding in the operating budget to give employees of the highway department, and Officer Beaulieu merit increases. Other wages were adjusted a couple of years ago. They are not advocating any across the board cost of living adjustments this year, but will look at this again next year. The Board discussed this issue at length. John Trachy reported the CPI for the period 12/07 through 12/08 was 1.7%. Board members were divided in the discussion as to whether all employees should be given some increase. B. recommended this be discussed at the next meeting.

Police Department:

Cruiser: The Selectmen reported they are recommending replacing the Explorer this year with a three-year lease and then buy the vehicle for \$1.00 at the end of the lease. They would then plan on keeping the replacement vehicle for an additional 2-3 years. Tim has been reviewing specifications and has proposed a Ford Taurus, all-wheel drive.

Special Duty Wages: The costs and reimbursement of special duty wages were discussed. The Selectmen will look into these for the next meeting.

Street Lighting:

John Trachy questioned whether there might be an opportunity to replace existing street lighting with more energy efficient lighting to keep costs down? This will be looked into.

Recreation Department:

John Chiarella reported it has been a struggle to make summer camp a self-supporting activity. The Selectmen have been unable to find anyone willing to run the program. He has spoken to Leslie at the Eastman Recreation Department. It is possible there may be some openings in their program. He also discussed the possibility of openings in New London.

School District:

The Selectmen gave report on their meeting with Jerry Frew. The School Board's Budget and the Municipal Budget Committees Budget were discussed. The Selectmen have asked Mr. Frew about the possibility of entering into a long-term lease agreement (currently done yearly) to show mutual support of the kindergarten program in Springfield. Mr. Frew stated he would need to review this with the school board. The Selectmen will most likely put an article on the warrant to allow them the opportunity to pursue this further.

The Board quickly reviewed the draft warrant articles. To date, there are only two articles, the police cruiser and total operating budget, that require budget committee action. The exact amount of appropriations for those articles is not known at this time. The Board will review those articles as their next meeting.

B. announced that the next meeting would be the Board's Public Hearing, and is scheduled for Tuesday, February 3 at 7:00 p.m.

The Board voted to adjourn at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Janet Roberts,
Administrative Assistant