

January 3, 2012
2012 Budget Meeting

Present: Chairman C. Guiry, DMD, A. Richards, P. McGinnity and A. A. Milkovits

F.A.C.: R. Larochelle, L. Lavoie, B. Schulman

Also present: Road Agent Greenwood, Police Chief Hutchins, Fire Chief Baker, Librarian Wolpert, Recreation Committee member Brown and 10 residents

Meeting opened at 7:00 PM. Chairman Guiry announced that the meeting would be open for some public comment. He also explained that this is just a proposed budget that is a work in progress and is not fixed at this time. The budget was reviewed line by line; each department head answered questions and offered explanations as required during the review. During the review residents were allowed to ask questions.

Budget lines reviewed:

1. Revenue change: Town has received \$2,167 from FEMA for Tropical Storm Irene.
2. Fire Department: Fire Chief David Baker discussed the FD warrant articles – radio site relocation may be reduced to \$16,000 if the tower is not relocated and only a new antenna is purchased. Chief Baker is researching this issue and will have a firm figure before the final budget hearing. Chief Baker is also seeking bids for the Fire Station addition and will present a firm figure at a later date. The Chief also discussed the increase in the EMD line and the Fire Chief and Fire Department Stipends lines. Currently Chief Baker is acting as the EMD and the duties will fall under the Fire Department. The Town does have an Emergency Plan in place and hopefully will have an EMD to coordinate all departments. There is a lot of paperwork and other work for the Fire Chief (the Chief spends an average of 2 days a week on the Fire Department duties.) and EMD to accomplish, these new figures represent a more fair compensation for the work involved. The Fire Department is all volunteer; fire fighters need to go to extensive training and attend a minimum of 12 drills a year. The Town needs to show its appreciation for this volunteerism by offering a better stipend. Chief Baker has hired a new secretary who will work more regular hours; hence the increase to the line.
3. Recreation Committee: Member Wally Brown requested an increase to the Recreation Activities line to \$600 from the present \$200. He stated that now there are more members on the Committee with plans to sponsor Old Home Day every year. Selectmen advised Mr. Brown to meet with the Committee and submit a written request for the increase.
4. Library Budget: Librarian Wolpert discussed the increases to the Library budget for salaries and books. Chairman emphasized that only the Board of Selectmen would determine the salary increases. Mrs. Wolpert also explained about the new offering at the Library – downloadable books.
5. Town Clerk/Tax Collector Budget: Selectmen questioned increases to Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector's wages. Since there is a decrease in revenue from Motor Vehicles, the corresponding registration work has decreased so there is a decrease in workload. There needs to be details on the work of the Deputy.

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6. Highway Department: there will be a change in the amount in the warrant article requesting funds from fund balance to be deposited in the Highway Equipment Capital Reserve. The Highway Department has sold a lot of scrap metal and the total amount will be adjusted by the next meeting. Road Agent Greenwood discussed some of the increases and changes. He reduced the plowing line as he would like to use more part time help with the town plow trucks than hire contract snow plow trucks. Also the increase in the part time help line is for hiring more part time people to augment the Department during snow and other heavy maintenance times. Mr. Greenwood wants the roads clear 24/7. The Road Agent was asked how the fuel line was figured. He explained that he averaged the fuel at \$4 per gallon.
7. Police Department: Police Chief Barry G. Hutchins discussed the proposed 10% increase for the second patrolman. The town has the lowest pay for patrolman and the Chief would like the rate to be competitive. The emphasis was that this was an adjustment to the position not a raise. A resident suggested that hiring more part time officers could totally eliminate the overtime line. The Chief explained that he has worked most of the overtime for shifts coverage and also on different cases for investigation, etc. The Chief also discussed replacing firearms. He had replaced one firearm in 2011 but will be replacing one or two others in 2012. Questions on the increase to the Prosecutor line: Martha Jacques has not had an increase in 3 years and is available 24/7 for doing search warrants and other necessary Police work. Chairman Guiry requested justification from the Prosecutor for the increase.

Two of the residents requested the Selectmen to trim the budget as much as possible as they have seen their taxes greatly increase. The Selectmen explained that the budget has not been totally set. Another resident commented on the increases in health insurance. He was reminded that these increases had been addressed at the last town meeting and all full time personnel with 100 % town paid health insurance were grandfathered. New hires after March 14, 2011 would be required to pay 20 % of their health insurance.

No final decisions were made on the budget. The next meeting was set for Tuesday, January 17th at 7 PM at the Mann House.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.