

1999 PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING

February 8, 1999

Attendance: Chairman Carol Cote-Smith, Selectmen Timothy Seeger and Denise Dargie, Town Administrator Kelley Collins and townspeople as listed on the attached attendance sheet.

The meeting opened at 7:05 p.m. with each member present having a copy of the 1999 proposed budget (see attached).

It was the consensus of those at the meeting to review the budget by line item.

The first area of the budget reviewed and discussed was the Executive Office. Areas of increases were noted which included administrative salaries, office equipment, tuition reimbursement and dues/workshops. Questions centered on specifications of receiving tuition reimbursement, the qualifications and projected salary of the requested new clerical employee for town hall and the overall percent salary increase which town employees will receive. Residents requested that any new line items, specifically relating to new employees or employee benefits, with the potential for increases, be placed on the Warrant so that the townspeople would have the opportunity to vote on whether they wanted to add those items on an individual basis. Certain townspeople felt this method would save time at Town Meeting. Resulting from this discussion, the budgeted new employee for clerical work in town hall will be removed from the line items and added as a separate warrant article. Because tuition reimbursement is a contractual agreement, the item will remain as is. Questions that came up regarding tuition reimbursement for other non-contractual full-time employees will be addressed when the revised employee handbook is completed. Other questions regarding the work of the Town Administrator were covered with an overview of the various duties that the job entails.

The items covered under Town Clerk and Election were read next. As there was no discussion, the area of Financial Administration was reviewed. The Selectmen noted that increases reflected software training required due to upgrades for year 2000 compliance. Also covered was the \$500 audit increase due to an independent audit that needs to be conducted for the CDBG grant. The line item for accounting salaries will drop as part of the clerical position budgeted for town hall will be removed and added as a warrant article as discussed previously.

The line items under revaluation of property were covered next. The amount for pick-ups was increased to cover a higher anticipated volume this year. Also discussed was the \$4500 budgeted for tax map updates. A resident wondered if this was a duplication of existing maps, but the item was clarified as being for the yearly addition of subdivisions and boundary changes due to sales. It was noted that this has not been done since 1995, hence it covers funds necessary for approximately three years of changes to the maps. The legal expense request was covered next with no discussion.

Employee benefits were reviewed with increases reflecting the addition of a full time employee (new transfer station employee requested) as well as the cost of increasing the short term disability benefit from \$250/week to a maximum of \$500/week for full time employees. Also accounting for the increase was a 9% overall increase in the cost of providing health benefits to employees as well as the cost of increasing dental coverage to include orthodonture coverage to dependents (\$690 per year). A resident asked for an explanation of how the benefits package worked and it was explained that employees pay 15% of health coverage, while the town pays the other 85% plus the full premium for dental, short and long term disability and one-times salary life insurance.

Though not following the order of the budget, the next item to be discussed was the budget request for a new full time transfer station director. The salary and benefits for this position were discussed, along with the skills the town would be looking for in this new employee. The changing market for waste and recyclables was discussed with the Board voicing its belief that a part-time person can no longer handle the volume and background work necessary to make this endeavor more profitable. As all employees of the transfer station have stated that they will retire by the fall, the Board felt that this was a good time to make the changes. Some residents questioned whether the position warranted forty hours per week. The Selectmen noted that should the position not take up all forty hours of the employees' time, they would be enlisted to assist other departments, such as highway. As with the other proposed new position, it was decided that this position would be listed on the warrant.

The Board then presented the Planning and Zoning budget. They noted the addition of the secretary's salary divided three ways and listed in planning, zoning and building inspector payrolls. The Board felt that this more adequately represented where she spent her time. In the upcoming year, the secretary will be asked to log her daily duties to ensure that this distribution is fair. Residents noted their displeasure at having the salary broken up into three different line items; they felt it was confusing. Also discussed was the \$7600 for contracted services. \$7000 was set aside to work on the master plan and the remaining amount was for a contribution to Monadnock Business Ventures.

The Government Building line items were discussed next. The two areas of increase were discussed. Building payroll of \$3500 was reviewed and it was noted that the Selectmen had decided not to contract out for services, rather to hire a part-time employee who could clean and handle basic handyman types of repairs as needed. Money still remains in custodial to cover the cost of supplies and equipment necessary to make this transition. A resident asked why there was such a difference between the Dept. Head and Selectmen request on repairs and maintenance and it was noted that the difference represents a warrant article for repairs to the fire station.

Cemetery upkeep has stayed the same and resulted in no discussion, as did general insurance and the contingency fund.

The next department discussed was the police department. A resident asked how the schedule was devised and the Chief noted that officers are paid for 40 hours per week,

but cover a 48-hour schedule. The shifts are from 5 to 5, and include some call time to cover the difference between paid hours and scheduled hours. It was also noted that the officers have to cover each other's vacations without any extra funds. A resident also questioned if the department specified a radius in which officers had to live, and it was noted that there is no policy and it is left up to the discretion of the chief. Items mentioned as increases were special duty pay, which is completely covered by company requesting the service and the new equipment, which is to add two new portable radios.

The ambulance squad budget was discussed next. The line item decreased because the \$5 per call payroll was added as a warrant article. The pay was added for the first time last year with the understanding that the other towns, which make up the service area, would be contacted to do the same. As this, and research into other funding methods (fee for usage) wasn't completed, the Board felt it best to add it as a separate warrant. The line item does reflect an increase of \$1000, bringing up the annual contribution from \$4000 to \$5000 per year.

The fire department budget was discussed next. It was noted that the minor increases were due to new fire software that the department needed, as well as completing the replacement of the Scott air packs.

The building inspector budget was reviewed. A resident asked if the fees offset the inspector's salary, and it was noted that it is not a complete offset because of the varying fee schedule based on the size and value of the project. Also reviewed with no discussion was the civilian defense budget of one dollar to keep the line open.

The highway budget was the next to be reviewed. Various questions were answered as to what each line item covered. An error was discovered in new equipment and the funds in that line item will be removed. The use of the sand pile at the highway garage by residents was discussed. Next year a separate pile of sand for residents will be created. The road agent reminded residents that the salt was for road crew use only, and that when picking up sand to please let the road trucks enter first as they are attempting to treat the roads as quickly as possible.

The waste disposal budget was reviewed next. As the salaries were previously discussed, the only item for discussion was the landfill monitoring. It was noted that the amount budgeted was based on Bennington's estimate.

The health and welfare budget was discussed next. A resident questioned why the amounts expended seem to be going up with no additional incoming revenue or the use of workfair. The Board noted that the Town's policies are outlined in a manual contained in Town Hall and that currently the town doesn't require individuals requesting assistance to work on town projects due to the liability and supervision issues, as well as the fact that most people requiring assistance of the town meet the exceptions exempting them from the work requirement (i.e. disability, children under 5).

The parks and recreation budget was reviewed next. The increase in the payroll requested represents opening the beach for an additional two weeks as well as budgeting for the recreation coordinator position for a full year. New programs for the summer that are being coordinated were discussed. A resident questioned the duties of the Rec. coordinator and it was noted that it averages out to 25 hours per week and that a description of duties is available. Also discussed was the increase in the overall recreation budget, it was noted that \$4100 had to be added for Antrim in the Evening (per the auditor) and that additional funds were added to septic to pay for a portable toilet to be used after hours at the beach.

The library budget was discussed next. It was noted that 46 hours at \$7.50 per hour was included for special projects. Also, \$3,800 was included to cover furnace repairs and interior/exterior painting.

The patriotic purpose and conservation commission budgets were reviewed next. As there was no discussion, the Board reviewed the debt service requirements. The Sewer and Water Budget was reviewed next and there being no discussion the Board moved to the review of the warrant.

The first warrant article to be reviewed was for \$100,500 to be placed in the Capital Reserve Funds. Next discussed was the creation of a new fund, with \$15,000 to be placed in it to prepare for the cost of having new tax maps done. The importance of this was reviewed by the Board. As there were no questions, the discussion on these warrants was completed.

The following warrant articles were reviewed with no questions from the residents in attendance: #4 the budget of the town for 1,684,598 and #5 \$9,700 for a street sweeper.

The warrant article for \$100,000 for the upgrade, repair and maintenance of items in the Town Hall Building was discussed next. It was noted that the funds from last year weren't utilized because they limited the repairs to the second floor; in the process of getting definite quotes for the upstairs repairs, many life safety issues, which involved work on both levels, were discovered. The committee decided it was better to begin making a list of the safety issues that needed to be addressed and therefore prioritize the work accordingly so that the overall repair of the building could be looked at rather than just completing projects piecemeal which could lead to overlapping repairs and greater cost in the future. It was also noted that many issues relating to life safety could pose a potential financial liability to the Town should the State complete an inspection of the premises. Because of the fines involved if some of these repairs aren't completed, the Board felt that the expenditure of these funds were essential. The funds requested would primarily cover the life safety issues that include: electrical work, fire detector and suppression system, and second floor accessibility for handicapped individuals. Other aesthetic improvements will be made if funds remain. The use of a committee was discussed and the Board noted that a town hall upgrade committee already exists.

The funds for the repair of Gregg Lake Dam were discussed. It was noted that to the best of the Boards knowledge state funds were not available to assist with the cost of these repairs.

The salary increases for the selectmen, treasurer and town clerk/tax collector were discussed next. It was noted that the Selectmen in Antrim make considerably less than surrounding towns and that it has been years since an increase has been considered. The treasurer's salary will bring the amount back to the original amount from three years ago. The duties of the Treasurer were also discussed. The town clerk/tax collector amount represents a 6% increase, 3% for last year and 3% for this year.

The next article discussed was the \$7500 requested for the Millennium Celebration. The funds would aid the committee in researching and organizing celebrations that will begin in December of 1999 through the year 2001. It was noted that the warrant would be rewritten to be a non-lapsing article to cover the entire time of the celebration.

The warrant article for \$4500 for ambulance salaries was noted. Previous discussion regarding the amount was discussed when the ambulance budget was presented.

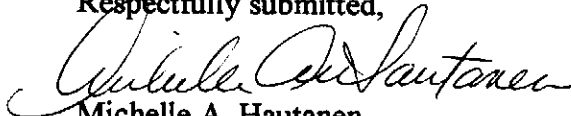
The article for \$16,000 for the fire department repairs will be split on the final warrant. Ten thousand dollars represents the funds for a second means of egress for the upstairs. This amount will be recommended by the Selectmen. The \$6000 will be for finishing the flooring on the second floor, which will be oak flooring. This amount will not be recommended by the Selectmen.

The next warrant article to be discussed was the elimination of the elected position of Health and Welfare Officer and making it an appointed position. It was noted that this was presented by the current Officer who felt that the time required was becoming more cumbersome for an elected official.

The last warrant article was a petition article which will make it a town policy to recognize the dangers of smoking and require the town trustees to divest any funds held in tobacco agencies. The legality of this article has yet to be determined. It was noted that this warrant leaves the door open for any special interest group to petition the town to remove companies whose practices they don't like.

With no further discussion of the budget, the meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle A. Hautanen
Secretary to Selectmen

Attendance

	Signature	Printed Name.
1.)	Ed. Rowehl	ED. ROWEHL
2.)	Linda Bryer	LINDA BRYER
3.)	David Bore	David Bore
4.)	Connie Kirwin	CONNIE KIRWIN
5.)	Benjamin Pratt	Benjamin Pratt
6.)	Joseph Deschamps	JOSEPH DESCHAMPS
7.)	Gregory Swartz	Gregory Swartz
8.)	Robert Uarnum	ROBERT UARNUM
9.)	Robert Uarnum	ROBERT UARNUM
10.)	Ruth Zwiener	Ruth Zwiener
11.)	Lloyd Henderson	Lloyd Henderson
12.)	Brian Brown	BRIAN BROWN
13.)	Pam Caswell	Pam Caswell
14.)	Michael Caswell	MICHAEL CASWELL
15.)	Bruce S. Cusack	Bruce S. Cusack
16.)	Catherine Burke	Catherine Burke
17.)	Tom Parks	Tom Parks
18.)	Sherry Miller	
19.)	Matthew S. Miller	Matthew Miller
20.)	Andy Paul	Andy Paul
21.)	Shelly Gardner	
22.)	Shelly Gardner	Shelly Gardner
23.)	Sam Harding	Sam Harding
24.)	Carter Proctor	
25.)	Marsha Morrow	