



**OFFICE OF THE
Advisory Board
TOWN HALL
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February 23, 2017

Present: Amie Stevens, Harold Simmons, Christine Muir, Ron Mikol

Absent: Dana Metzler, Pam Crocker

Also present: Tracey Hutton

Christine opened the meeting to discuss the fire department line items. The fire Chief was in attendance.

- Tracey noted that the salaries increases are minimal.
- Small increase for training and supplies
- 2018 will restore the energy line item.
- \$61.5K is the proposed but the town administrator proposed is \$71K, the differential is the 2% COLA and the personnel board recommendations.
- Christine asked if the wages for the firefighters were market rate.
 - The chief noted we pay \$15 an hour per firefighter, some pay \$11. Others pay more.
- Christine noted what percentage of their calls are medical, the Chief noted its about 50/50. The chief stated that the medical calls are about 140 a year and increasing.
- The chief noted that they took 270 calls FY last year. He expects this to continue to increase.
- The Chief noted that the training wages are \$8600 and he expects to use this full amount. There may be opportunity for live fire training on Main St. This is scheduled for April 2 at 6:00.
- Christine asked about training.
 - The Chief noted that typical departments do 4 hours of training per shift (usually a 24-hour shift, not 8-hour).
 - They have to do CPR every year. They also try to do Vehicle extraction, pump training etc.
 - The Chief is teaching a class on clandestine labs, i.e. meth etc.
 - He expects 6 firefighters to retire over the next few years out of 25. He needs to focus on recruiting.
 - Tracey noted that recruitment for call departments is increasingly tough.
 - The recruits have to go to the academy on their own time and do not receive pay.
 - The Chief said they do recruit some people from the Nashua department.
- Christine asked what the goals were for the department for 5 years out.
 - The Chief said we need to look at the wages and hours per diem shifts.
 - 5 years from now we will need more than one person for the standard 12 hour shift. Currently the chief covers this shift.
 - Christine asked about goals for equipment
 - The Chief stated we have to address the inadequacies of the building.
 - The Truck on this year's warrant article is the largest item he sees for the next 16 years.

- The Chief is looking to add 500 hours per year to ensure coverage, which would give them one person, 12 hours a day. Currently they are averaging 1000 hours.
- Christine asked about replacing Engine 2 (warrant article).
 - Purchased in 1986.
 - Pump is a 750 (gallons/minute) pump on this truck. This is not adequate, smallest pump typically is 1250. If engine 2 is the lead truck, you are limited to what you can do to attack the fire.
 - Parts are very expensive, had to get custom parts made.
 - Life expectancy of an engine is 10-15 years, we tend to go 30 years.
 - The pump on the new one would be minimum 1250 (gallons/minute) pump.
 - The Chief stated that he has multiple quotes and the \$360K for a new truck is reasonable. He would expect this truck to last 30 years.
 - Our current trucks do not allow for proper use of foam, it's very manual. The new truck would allow for streamlined foam via push of a button.
 - The foam system would be \$15K.
- Christine asked Tracey what capital planning committee's vote was on the truck purchase.
 - Original vote was 2 to 1 in favor.
 - Tracey confirmed they may take another vote.
 - If capital planning votes against, can other boards have different opinions?
 - Tracey confirmed that this is possible.
 - This truck will mainly be for fighting building fires and will stay in Dunstable.
 - There are many calls that we need multiple trucks, i.e. multiple calls at once, car accidents etc.
 - Christine mentioned that we won't take a vote until closer to town meeting.
 - Harold mentioned that when we bought the truck 30 years ago, he remembers the head of the finance committee at the time and the committee supported the truck because the fire chief stated it was a necessity and they supported his recommendation.
 - Engine 6, the one other truck in town, is starting to need updates and repairs. It is 10 years old.
- Christine moved to the operations tab.
 - Tracey combined some of the line items into one but there are no large items of concern.
 - The Chief stated that he will need \$1700 in professional services but will move other line items around to cover, will not have a negative effect on the bottom line.
- Christine asked if the Chief was comfortable with the proposed budget.
 - The Chief said they will get by but it will be tight.
 - Groton residents paid on average \$220 per home based on Groton's fire budget.
 - Dunstable is much less.
- There is one more warrant article for a fire ATV at \$27,000.
 - This is needed to respond to calls in the woods, hikers lost, hurt etc. Currently most trails can't accommodate vehicles and need the ATV for these types of calls.
 - The unit is a Polaris Ranger.
 - Capital Planning has voted to approve this expenditure.

Christine moved the conversation to the budget overview

- The Voke debt came in at \$37K, not \$47K and the assessment went from \$197K to \$141K.
- The total deficit on the sheet is \$168,917.
- There may be a water article for engineering and increase for police wages from the union.

- Total warrant articles are \$99,336, this will be paid for with free cash. This warrant article number are included in the \$168,917. Without the warrant articles the deficit is \$69,581.
- Ron is concerned that we continue to use free cash to fund the deficit.
 - Christine stated that the town is getting better at this as previous years, last year the number of free cash the town used to balance the budget was closer to \$200,000.
- One of the only places Christine sees that we can reduce the deficit is to decrease what we put in the reserve account from the expected \$50,000. Could we cut this to \$30K or \$40K.
 - Tracey is concerned because the budgets have already been stripped down and the reserve fund usage may increase from historical years.
 - The last two years the Town has spent roughly \$26K from the reserve fund on a yearly basis. The Town put \$25K historically in the fund.
- Tracey confirmed that historically the Town used \$240K in FY 2017 in free cash, \$389K in FY 2016.
- Tracey said there may be room to tweak the \$68K stormwater management article by \$10K. We are currently ahead of where should be per the EPA requirements.
- Ron asked about the highway backhoe warrant article for \$110K. This number is in the excluded debt number.
- Total excluded debt is currently \$540K on the budget, including the water engineering fees of \$145K for \$685K. Tracey has the debt schedule.
 - Tracey stated she met with the water department.
 - Tighe and Bond has done preliminary research and it was stated there is insufficient power at the sites. This would need to be upgraded.
 - Also spoke to adding cell service or a phone line at the Main St site.
 - Tracey stated that \$30K of the \$145K engineering fee is for replacing a 4 inch pipe, this may not be needed. Tighe and Bond have recommended that this is not needed.
 - Christine is worried that if we cut the \$30K from the fee we are being short sighted.
 - Amie asked to confirm who recommended removing this from the engineering fee. Tracey confirmed it was Tighe and Bond.
 - Ron stated that we need to question Tighe & Bond on removing this from the engineering costs.
 - What is the agenda for Tuesday's water meeting?
 - Christine suggested whoever wants to know more about the water from the board should attend their meeting on Tuesday at 6:00.
- Tracey took \$10K out of the stormwater line item.

Minutes

Ron made a motion to accept the minutes from 1/23, Harold seconded, all approved.

Ron made a motion to accept the minutes from 2/6, Harold seconded, all approved

New Business

- Tracey stated that the recycling revenue has decreased over the years.
 - The decrease is due to less tonnage and reduction of clients.
 - The board of health is exploring town wide pickup.

- There was an increase in payroll from 4.5 hours a week to 7.5 hours. This is to compensate for work already being done by the board of health.
- Ron asked about the joint meeting from last Thursday with the School committee
 - More of a strategy session.
 - Superintendent presented the budget.
- Last year, Dunstable residents approved an override of \$475K. Since Groton did not approve the corresponding override, Dunstable was assessed less for GDRSD than was approved at Town Meeting. Some have asked if the amount of the override that was intended for GDRSD will go to them in FY18. The short answer is yes. The longer explanation is that Dunstable typically budgets 60% of new money for GDRSD. In FY18, new money is estimated at \$266K. 60% of this is \$160K. The difference between what the town approved at town meeting and what GDRSD assessed is approximately \$162K. Add the new money (\$160K) plus the “leftover override” money (\$162K) and the amount “due” to GDRSD is an increase of \$321K, which has been put into the proposed FY18 budget.
- **Request to transfer \$170 for the animal inspector to cover expenses incurred in 2016. This will equal the \$400 stipend he is owed. Tracey supports this transfer. Ron motioned that we accept the transfer as provided, Amie seconded, all approved.**

Next meeting is 2/27 with police and capital planning. Also meeting on 3/6 to discuss budget. March 20th will hopefully meet to draft the warrant articles.

Harold motioned to adjourn, Amie seconded, all approved.