

ENFIELD BUDGET COMMITTEE
January 9, 2010 Meeting Minutes
DPW Building – 8:30am

Budget Committee Members: Fred Cummings (Selectman), Judy Finsterbush, Shirley Green, Gayle Hulva, Roberta Morse, Doug Pettibone, Gail Malz, Lori Saladino

Excused: Paul Mirski, David Stewart

Administration: Steve Schneider (Town Manager), Wendy Huntley (Recorder)

Others: John Kluge

Administrative:

Pettibone called the meeting to order at 8:35 am

Pettibone moved to approve minutes from 12/17/09, Malz seconded. Cummings abstains. Vote unanimous.

Schneider reviewed revised Town Manager's proposed 2010 budget.

General discussion of changes made to original proposal covering employee salaries. There are no merit or COLA raises included in the 2010 proposed budget. Any changes in salary lines would be due to longevity pay.

Schneider reviewed his memorandum to the Budget Committee, dated 1/4/10, detailing the suggested changes to the 2010 budget, including:

Technology (01-4131-###) Reduced by \$2,500. by reducing the requests in the Town Office and DPW technology hardware/software lines.

Personnel Administration (01-4155-###) change made in employee health plans to a higher deductible plan and reduction in covered personnel. A Police Department employee is off on military duty for a year and the government is covering his salary and benefits. A new line has been created to cover the increase in Employee Deductibles

(01-4155-290). But even if every member's deductible was met, there is an overall savings of \$78,507 for the changes. The total cost is still \$65,000

over the 2009 budget amount.

Cemeteries (01-4195-###) Removal of special project request (a building for Countryside Cemetery) and new equipment (mower). It was suggested that during these 'rainy days' that the cemetery trusts be tapped for the special projects. Reduction of \$24,000.

Police Department (01-4210 -110) reduction in salary of \$47,995 due to active military service. An employee has been deployed for 1 year.

Hulva asked if the overtime for other officers would increase with the one officer being gone for a year?

Schneider answered no as the department will be utilizing part-time and more on call hours for officers.

Ambulance (01-4215-###) In recent meetings, the committee had discussed using 2009 funds to purchase some items wanted in 2010 and we were able to do that. We have ordered the Zoll 12-lead up-grade for the defibrillator with 2009 funds. There is also a minor decrease in the -110 line. So for requested equipment and salary in 2010 the total requested amount has been reduced by \$9,000

Fire Department (01-4220 -740) New Equipment. Again, able to purchase some of the 2010 new equipment requested with 2009 budget. Reduced by \$17,500.

Highways and Streets (01-4312-613) Pavement Maintenance. Reduced by \$140,000 making the appropriation now comparable to the 2009 budget. The balance requested could possibly be put to the voters as a warrant article.

Cummings commented that he believes pavement maintenance to be a town operating cost and should not be put into a warrant article. Believes it will set a dangerous precedence.

Cummings also personally does not see the need to fund the regional associations. He feel it is creates a problem to say no raises to employees but fund the Regional Associations.

Hulva commented that she is not in favor in cutting the pavement maintenance.

Sanitation (01-4321-140) Overtime has a slight increase of \$2,000. Staffing at the Transfer Station is an issue during the summer months when the schedule changes to Thursday thru Sunday hours.

Cummings commented that he thought since the hours would be shifting no additional overtime would be required.

Schneider answered that during the summer hours there will be vacation requests and to cover the vacation time for the transfer station staff, others will need to cover and thus be utilizing overtime. One licensed staff member must be working at all times.

Solid Waste Collection (01-4323-740) New equipment. Reduced by \$5,400.

Parks and Recreation (01-4520-110) Personnel. Reduced by \$5,047 to reflect 2009 levels.

Library (01-4550-670) Books. \$5,000 reduction in new book purchases. Marjorie Carr, Librarian, isn't thrilled with reducing her line by 5,000 but understands.

Economical Development (01-4651-820) Enfield Village Association (EVA) Reduction of \$5,000 to reflect 2009 level.

Schneider added that the proposed reduction of \$336,549 would still require using some of the undesignated funds. The undesignated fund balance will still be at a level equal to or better than the level it was at end-2008 (6-6.5% retainage of total local, state and school appropriations).

General discussion of using the undesignated funds and how it may reflect in the 2010 Town Tax rate.

Green inquired if the money set-aside in 2010 for tax abatements will be enough?

Schneider responded that it is hard to tell if there is enough in overlay, but it has been raised to \$100,000.

Discussion of Regional Associations (RAs)

Cummings commented that he doesn't agree with funding RAs currently. But if we don't fund there will be multiple warrant articles from the public to fund

individual RAs. He doesn't agree with funding RAs while not giving the employees raises when it is the employees who are out there during storms and overnight patrolling. Cummings would be willing to support RAs at 50% of their requests and give the employees 2% raise.

Saladino asked if Cummings whether he thought that the RAs would still come to Town Meeting with warrant articles for full funding.

Malz commented, let the RAs come in to town meeting and let the residents decide on the funding.

Cummings doesn't have a problem with giving money to EVA but giving money to EVA and not to employees for raises he is not in favor for.

Malz stated her belief that there is no correlation between RAs and employees.

Cummings commented that he is trying to get everything done with a compromise. Fund the RAs and give the employees raises too.

Pettibone summarized Mirski's email to the committee from Jan. 7. Mirski believes that in this economy employees should understand about not getting raises. Mirski is a supporter of EVA because it enhances the revenues for the town. Mirski is against funding the RAs.

Saladino commented that every business is having to cut either salaries or positions or both. The town will not be the only "business" doing it.

Kluge commented that EVA is trying to evolve into an Economical Association for the Town of Enfield in its entirety not just for Main St. Working with businesses. EVA is trying to attain grants and if there is no support from the community it reflects badly when applying. It is a tough economy but do we want to negate the things that help in the long run? Would love to give the employees raises, but there is no money for that now.

Hulva added that having a job itself is a benefit in this economy.

Cummings questioned what message does it send to employees when we give money to EVA who sold a house and has those revenues? If we're in such an economical turmoil that we can't give employees a 2% Raise costing 26,000 then how can we give money away to EVA?

Finsterbush offered that EVA does more than just beautify Main St. EVA produces revenue for the town.

Saladino added that not giving raises to employees doesn't mean we don't appreciate them. The money spent elsewhere is also to promote job security.

Green commented that it's a perception problem if employees think their raises are being taken away and giving money to EVA.

Kluge offered that maybe a 1% symbolic raise would be beneficial.

Finsterbush commented regarding charitable organizations. They are the ones you volunteer to give of your money to. The committee has a fiduciary responsibility to spend the Town's money and we shouldn't be making charitable contributions with taxpayers' money.

Discussion of charitable organizations and noncharitable organizations.

Break 9:55-10:12

Potential Warrant Articles

Pettibone stated that the purpose of these potential warrant articles is to bring awareness of infrastructure needs to the town and clearly indicate that 2010 will be the second year in a row without critical maintenance and capital funding. If not funded this year, expect something significant, tax-wise, in 2011

#1) to fund road maintenance: \$140,000. We would need from Ken Daniels, DPW Director actual roads to be repaired for justification to present at town meeting.

#2) to fund DPW equipment: There are different ways to approach this. One warrant article for the whole \$375,000 for 4 requested pieces of equipment/ vehicles or do separate ones for a combination of vehicles. If we do nothing this year, it will have a bigger effect on future tax rates. When we don't replace things, each year the expense keeps piling up. The question is do we want to entertain this kind of approach and if so, what kind of specifics are we looking for? I think the goal is to have these articles to pass.

Malz commented that this is good approach with the economy the way it is. Would like to add one more article for putting money into the Capital

Reserves. It is important to recognize that we haven't put anything into capital reserves in the past two years.

Pettibone stated if we did a third warrant article, it could emphasize the needs but was concerned that too many articles would confuse the meeting. The financial state of the town is overall in decent shape with low debt and an OK level in the undesignated fund in case of an emergency.

Malz added that having capital reserves makes it is easier to swallow spending money when the cost is offset with capital reserves.

Green stated that she feels it would be better to keep the trucks separate in warrant article #2.

Kluge feels that a \$375,000 price tag on a warrant article would immediately be shot down.

Cummings would support the backhoe and the F550 but can't support the 350 and the plow truck at this time. Cummings supports doing one DPW equipment article for \$190,000.

Pettibone agrees. An informal poll on having these warrant articles was unanimous to fund \$140,000 for road maintenance and \$190,000 for a backhoe and F550 1-ton truck. These warrant articles will be finalized at the next meeting

Schneider intends to come to Thursday's meeting (1/14/10) with a draft for the warrant articles.

Pettibone commented that the Town could possibly use \$50,000 from undesignated funds to offset an increased level of pavement maintenance. Not funding the RAs would allow for this spending from the undesignated funds in a budget-neutral way.

Cummings would agree to increase pavement maintenance by using the funds requested for RAs. He would like to take the pavement warrant off, as that is a town maintenance issue.

Schneider informed the committee that next week he would let the RAs know that they probably won't get any funding from the regular budget. It would be fair to give them time to prepare warrant articles to request funding from the residents.

Green thinks having a warrant article for pavement maintenance shows the residents where we are in dealing with funding needs.

Hulva asked what was happening about billing for ambulance services?

Schneider answered that it is not going to happen this year.

Cummings added that there is not enough time to get that all ready for town meeting. Maybe ready in 2011.

Cummings questioned whether there is money included for reassessment in 2010?

Schneider answered no.

Kluge added that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) had suggested that would be a real possibility to do a reassessment in 2011 or 2010, but less likely for 2010.

Schneider commented that by town meeting, we should know the number of abatements the BOS will need to do.

Hulva agrees that it may be better to let the dust settle before going thru the assessment process again.

Public Comment: none

ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at 10:45.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Huntley
Recorder