

ENFIELD BUDGET COMMITTEE
December 16, 2010
DPW Building – 6:00 PM

Members present: Fred Cummings, Sam Eaton, Shirley Green, Gayle Hulva, Gail Malz, Paul Mirski, Doug Pettibone (Chair), Lori Saladino, David Stewart

Excused: Judy Finsterbusch

Administration: Steve Schneider (Town Manager)

Others: Diane Heed, Richard Martin, Bart Thurber

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 PM.

ADMINISTRATIVE:

Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes: The minutes of 12/04/10 were approved as amended.

NEW BUSINESS:

Schneider reported that property taxes are coming in at 94-96% and Motor Vehicle revenue is higher than anticipated. The Town may be able to budget for \$725,000 in Motor Vehicle revenue for 2011.

A) In-depth Spending Plan Discussion (con't)

Ambulance 4215

Richard Martin, EMS Chief, presented the Ambulance budget. Schneider handed out updated Ambulance budget sheets.

Uniforms and Safety Gear was overspent in 2010 to accommodate 4 new hires. They all required new clothing, jackets, boots, and uniforms. The new people will be trained at the basic level. There is one paramedic and intermediate level EMT already on staff.

A new furnace is needed in the squad building and 4 pagers were purchased in 2010 to prepare for the 2012 narrow banding switchover. The Town also received a grant from Mascoma Savings Bank for CO2 equipment.

Mutual Aid Ambulance Svcs are up nearly \$10,000. This reflects an increase in Lebanon's rate to provide primary coverage in Enfield during the day. The amount is based on the number of calls. Lebanon will charge \$240 for a basic call in 2011. This rate is based on Lebanon's highest paid person being called in to provide coverage. Enfield averages one call per day. Enfield has a 2-year contract with Lebanon.

Chief Martin said all but one of his staff is in favor of Enfield implementing soft billing. He suggested that would increase Town revenue by \$100,000 annually. If allowed, the Town would need to establish where those funds would go. Auditors allow for a 10% transfer from one account to another to accommodate for payroll/benefits. CUMMINGS said it will be an uphill battle to obtain permission to begin soft billing. It was suggested that it would cost \$50,000 to hire an EMT (basic level) and provide benefits. CUMMINGS said he would not support soft billing if the funds are not used to improve the services currently provided. Chief Martin said service would improve in terms of faster response time. The ambulance would be dispatched from Enfield, not West Lebanon.

The Budget Committee reached consensus in support of the Town conducting soft billing. They encouraged Chief Martin to discuss it with the Selectmen. Schneider asked the Committee members to attend the Selectmen's meeting when soft billing is discussed to talk about the impact to the community.

B) Community Service Grant Program (RAs)

EATON provided copies of his November 23rd email that outlined the Subcommittee's proposed RA funding amounts and explanations. The Subcommittee reviewed 10 funding requests. Most RAs requested the same amounts as in 2009 with the exception of the Upper Valley Community Office (Tri-County Cap), who requested a large increase, and LISTEN, who did not request funding from Enfield in 2010.

Bart Thurber, Subcommittee member, researched stats on RA funding in the Town Reports and found that Enfield paid an average of 1.04% of the General Fund budget the last 8 years. The Town paid 1.14% last year.

HULVA confirmed that all of the agencies except for the American Red Cross complied with the requirements of the new funding review process. The Subcommittee agreed to an 11% reduction to all requests to meet the 1% General Fund budget goal. HULVA said the Subcommittee members are prepared to speak at Town Meeting against petitioned articles due to the new

review process and the 8 years of records that support the proposed funding amounts.

EATON said EVA is also requesting a lot more funding. He said the Subcommittee feels their funding request should be reduced by 11% as well.

It was moved by MIRSKI, seconded by Green, to approve the entities recommended and proportionally adjust the funding requests to match the 1% General Fund budget level. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Advanced Transit:

Mr. Thurber handed out copies of his September 23rd email to Schneider recommending that AT funding be financed from the General Fund budget rather than through the community grant program, as is done in other local municipalities. He said the RA funding Subcommittee is of the opinion that AT should be considered independent of the other community based service grant programs, as they do not meet the criteria the Subcommittee is reviewing. AT provides regional transportation, not social welfare or health services. Mr. Thurber said all of the RAs but AT have qualifying criteria for use of their services based on age, disability, or income level.

It was suggested that if the AT is serving a particular clientele, they should be able to allocate funds from other RA accounts. MALZ said AT is still providing a service to Enfield residents. There is no way to know who is utilizing AT out of necessity.

Mr. Thurber noted that AT ridership doubled after they went to a no-fee based system. Diane Heed commented on the cost to take a taxi from Enfield to Lebanon and said the Town would have to pick up that tab for those in need if AT services were discontinued.

It was moved by MIRSKI, seconded by STEWART, to keep AT as part of the RA compliment because otherwise it would cost more if it were not provided. The committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

C) Current Status Draft Budget – adjustments

PETTIBONE advised of a December 9th email to the Budget Committee members regarding additional funding requests. He provided copies of an EBC Worksheet 16Dec2010 he drafted that outlines General Fund budget requests and additional 'discretionary' requests. The Committee must reduce the budget by \$140,000 and raise additional funds for the 'discretionary' requests to meet the 5.95 tax rate goal. PETTIBONE said the Town could

utilize \$100,000 from the Undesignated Fund balance, which would reduce that fund to 5.3% retainage.

MIRSKI spoke in favor of utilizing the \$100,000 from undesignated funds.

The following were suggested as proposed cuts:

- Employee raises – it was suggested to provide more vacation/sick/holiday leave or bulk up benefits in other ways in lieu of salary increases
 - put off paving projects or reduce paving expenditure in half
 - change garbage pick up to every other week
- across-the-board cuts where departments are requesting more than they have spent over the last few years
 - cut tax mapping
 - cut police cruiser or PD Vehicle Repairs/Maintenance
 - go to less than 24 hour coverage for police services
 - decrease town-paid portion for health insurance
- give everyone \$10,000 salary increase & eliminate health care coverage
 - investigate alternatives to participating in the State retirement system
- improve longer-term capital planning to include lease-type purchases for new equipment

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

OTHER BUSINESS: None

ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at 8:14 PM.