

ENFIELD BUDGET COMMITTEE (EBC) MINUTES (Unapproved)

Saturday, December 6, 2014

DPW BUILDING 8:30AM

Members Present: Annabelle Bamforth, Fred Cummings (Ex-Officio), Sam Eaton (Vice Chair), Shirley Green, Dan Kiley, Doug Pettibone (Chair), Lori Saladino, Janet Shepard, Dave Stewart

Absent: Mike Lorrey

Others Present: Steve Schneider (Town Manager), Tim Taylor (Fire Ward), Richard Martin (F.A.S.T. Squad Chief), Jim Taylor (Director, DPW).

The meeting opened at 8:37 AM.

Administrative:

A motion to approve the draft November 19, 2014 minutes was made by Janet Shepard and seconded by Shirley Green. The minutes were approved as written with one abstention.

New Business: Departmental Spending Plans Reviews

Public Safety

4220: Fire Department (2014 Budgeted, \$99,180; 2015 Request, \$128,715, up 29.8%). Fred Cummings, a fire ward, temporarily excused himself from the budget committee in order to present the Fire spending request. He indicated that the proposed budget increase was due to several items. An increase of \$8000 was requested for firefighter salaries. Firefighters do not get paid to be On Call, but only when they actually respond to a call. Firefighter salaries were also discussed at last year's budget review when it was stated that their salaries had not changed since the 1990s. Cummings reiterated that firefighter salaries had been stagnant for a long time and were still playing catch-up. Sam Eaton commented that last year the committee recommended that there be a stepwise increase in salary over time, not a big 30% jump at one time. A 4% increase (including 2% merit) was awarded in 2014 which would be in keeping with a stepwise increase if another salary increase was approved for 2015. Cummings noted that firefighters now get paid about \$11.25/hr compared to \$23/hr for Norwich VT firefighters. **Action Item:** Doug Pettibone asked for a breakdown of the current hourly wages paid to different levels of firefighters and Cummings said he would provide a matrix of this information to the committee. Cummings also noted that the Firefighters Association members volunteer for a number of town activities (e.g., toy drive) and fundraisers that are used to buy needed equipment for the department without using taxpayer funds.

In 2014, significantly more money was spent on training (~\$9900 to date vs. \$2700 total in 2013) which had not been emphasized in recent years. In 2014, 4-5 firefighters achieved Level 1 certification (lowest level certification) and 3 achieved the higher Level 2. Out of 25 regular firefighters, about 18-20 are now Level 1 and 8 are Level 2. A higher request for training is also being made for 2015 (\$7500 v \$2500 in 2013).

Other areas where slight increases totaling \$12000 were requested were for clothing (e.g., turnout suits), vehicle repair, gasoline and fire inspection. **Action Item:** Steve Schneider will look into the requested increase in the line item for fire inspection (4220-112) by \$5000. It was noted that the gasoline request may be lowered because lower gas prices are expected to carry over to 2015.

Pettibone referred to discussions at last year's budget review regarding the need for the fire wards to improve their transparency and accountability to the taxpayers of Enfield in accordance with NH sunshine laws. Cummings responded that fire ward meetings are now warned to the public in advance and meeting minutes are now posted to town's website. Pettibone commended the fire wards for these much needed changes, as well as the enhanced

firefighter training which has been considered in need of improvement for some time.

4215 Ambulance/F.A.S.T Squad (2014 Budgeted, \$100,100; 2014 Request, \$107,250, up 7.1%%). Chief Richard Martin presented the 2014 draft spending plan.

The requested funds for 2015 to pay the volunteer staff for their time on ambulance runs is the same as for 2014 at \$17,000. The committee was reminded that these payments include time spent by each squad member every year for classes needed to be recertified by the state. These classes amount to 24 hours spent each year on various aspects of training. An Advanced EMT conducts most of this training in-house. Currently, all town buildings house an AED, that now allows the designation of Enfield as a 'Heart Safe Community'. All F.A.S.T squad members now carry AEDs in their private vehicles. These AEDs were purchased by the ambulance association (Enfield F.A.S.T Inc.)

The initiation of paid 'on-call' time in 2012 was continued in 2014 and has been a great success overall. All of the weekly on-call timeslots are routinely filled by squad members. Minor issues remain filling on-call slots over the weekend. Paid on-call has resulted in an overall reduction in the number of calls responded to by Lebanon during the 6:00PM to 6:00AM time period that Enfield normally covers. Over the 24 hour period, the number of Enfield calls requiring responses by Lebanon has also been reduced.

The cost for the Mutual Aid by Lebanon is contracted on a per-call basis (~\$280/call) and covers that town's costs to pay their members. Patients are hard billed for the remainder of the cost of the transport (averages about \$500). This mutual aid is currently budgeted at \$43,000 for 2015 up from \$38,500 in 2014, accounting for most of the requested spending increase next year. This mutual aid is actually paid in arrears for the previous year and this number may come down when final numbers for 2014 calls are known.

Public Works (DPW). Jim Taylor (Director, DPW) reviewed 2014 DPW activities and presented the 2015 draft spending plan.

4194 Gen'l Government Buildings (2014 Budgeted, \$181,200; 2015 Request, \$183,800, up 1.4%). Spending is on track for this cost center in 2014. In 2014, Enfield Center Hall was painted and a decision has been made to use a plaster-based sound-insulation material for the project to improve the acoustics in the Community Building. A contractor is now being sought for this project which will be completed in 2015. The Community Building continues to get a lot of use by public groups. Some user fees are applied to some non-town groups to defray costs of maintenance which is requested at \$20,000 for next year. Painting of interior walls is needed. Lori Saladino suggested that the town apply more fees in order to reduce more of these costs. The cost for electricity for the town's buildings will rise by in 2015 and is now budgeted for an \$8000 increase because of the 47% rate increase instituted by Liberty Utilities in November. **Action Item:** Jim Taylor will look into alternate lower cost electricity suppliers for possible cost savings. The cost for propane is budgeted to double to \$18,000 because the Community Building is now heated by propane with the new HVAC system installed in 2014. The overall budget for heating oil should drop because of the falling price of oil and the more reliance on gas. A modest savings was achieved by using Chippers as the contractor to help maintain Veterans Park. The cost of contracted janitorial services will rise by \$4000 to \$34,000 because of an escalator clause in the last year of the 3-year contract.

4311 Highway Administration (2014 Budgeted, \$568,596; 2015 Request, \$585,203, up 2.9%). Spending to date in this cost center is on budget. For 2015, there are no requests for increased staffing. An increase of about \$10,000, however, is requested for full time employee salaries, part of which is to support an up to a 2% merit increase. The requested funds for 2015 salaries for part-time staff is significant at about \$30,000. Pettibone pointed out that for the past few years this number has been consistently over-budgeted. This spending request should come down significantly when a better estimate for part-time hours is available at the end of the year. He commented further that routine over-budgeting of certain items should not happen because it makes it easier to overspend if the overage is already in the budget. An increase in overtime pay by \$5000 to \$45,000 is requested for 2015. This number will also be reevaluated at the end of the year.

4312 Highways and Streets (2014 Budgeted, \$573,000; 2015 Request, \$582,700, up 1.7%). Spending for this cost center to date is generally on track to be on budget. Funding for road paving, salt and sand purchases and other maintenance supplies are generally level funded for 2015. Diesel (\$65,000), gasoline (\$7000) and equipment maintenance (\$75,000) costs are expected to be stable vs 2014. Diesel and gasoline costs may come down as a result of continued lower crude oil prices. A significant increase in aggregate and fill materials spending is requested again for 2015 (\$70K vs \$40K for 2013) because, like in 2014, we are still playing catch-up in maintaining road shoulders etc.

4316 Street Lighting (2014 Budgeted, \$18,000; 2015 Request, \$25,000, up 39%). This large increase is anticipated to result from the 47% increase in electricity rates by Liberty Utilities in November. Taylor will look into alternate, lower cost suppliers of electricity.

4321 Sanitation Administration (2014 Budgeted, \$88,886; 2015 Request, \$91,438, up 2.9%). Spending is on track for 2014. This cost center is essentially level funded. The slight requested increase is for overtime pay at the transfer station. Evening hours, however, may be reduced at the transfer station because of low use by the residents at these times.

4323 Solid Waste Collection (2014 Budgeted, \$189,800; 2015 Request, \$247,300, up 30%). 2015 spending request is up substantially by almost \$60,000. This increase is almost entirely due to the contracted curbside pick-up of trash and recycling. Taylor noted that the budgeted amount of this line item for 2014 should have been considerably higher, about \$225,000, as for 2015, reflecting the enhanced curbside pickup of the new program, but had been inadvertently left at the 2013 level for the old program. So the increase for 2015 really took place for the first time in 2014 vs 2013. It is anticipated that the fuel surcharge charged by the contractor-hauler will be substantially reduced by about \$18,000.

4324 Solid Waste Disposal (2014 Budgeted, \$133,000; 2015 Request, \$173,000, up 30%). An additional \$20,000 (now \$120,000) is requested for tipping fees at the landfill. Pettibone asked why this is the case when the new curbside zero sort recycling program was supposed to reduce tipping fees for trash. **Action Item:** Schneider will look into this apparent discrepancy. There also need for clarification of the cost for recycling processing, now projected at \$50,000 for 2015. A request for a new compactor for zero-sort recycling at the transfer station is being reviewed by the C.I.P. committee for 2015. This compactor will reduce the number of truck hauling trips to Rutland and therefore the cost of this line item.

Miscellaneous: Schneider updated the committee on employee health insurance plans. Bids were received from several providers of health insurance and the town has decided to stay with HealthTrust. The cost of insurance premiums will likely drop by at least 0.5% depending on the final choices in plans are made by the employees which is very good news. Recently, it had been projected that the premiums could increase by as much as 10-15%. The prescription drug plan will change from a \$1, \$5, \$10 plan to a \$10, \$20, \$45 co-pay/deductible plan.

Old Business: None

Public Comment: None

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 AM. The next meeting is on Thursday, December 11, 2014 (6:00 PM at the DPW building). The funding requests for EVA, the Regional Associations, cemeteries and other miscellaneous spending centers will be reviewed.