

**Enfield Budget Committee (EBC) MINUTES (Approved)- Thursday, January 7, 2016 DPW Building  
6:30PM**

**Members present:** Sam Eaton (chairman), Shirley Green (vice chair), Janet Shepard, Mike Diehn, Annabelle Bamforth, Mark Eisener, Steve Schneider (town manager) David Stewart, Holly West, Fred Cummings (ex-officio), James Buffington

**Excused:** none

**Others present:** Dan Kiley, Kurt Gotthardt, James Bonner

**Administrative:** Sam called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

Discussion of minutes:

The committee discussed a portion of the Dec. 17 meeting regarding Lee Carrier's description of capital reserve funds being held by the SEC. Steve clarified that the funds are being held and were not seized. Annabelle made the correction and the minutes were approved.

**New Business:**

Steve handed out updated actuals for the revenue totals of 2015 and made updates to 2016. Steve noted that the 2015 numbers were very good. Steve brought up the fact that some communities charge a \$5.00 local fee for motor vehicle registrations. Steve said there are about 6,500 registrations in town, and a \$5 fee would bring in at least \$32,000. He added that this would be a town meeting decision if pursued. Steve clarified that this has not been proposed, but it's an idea that could be an alternative to raising the tax rate. It would need to be a warrant article. Dave suggested that the committee focus on being frugal with the general budget.

Rooms and meals came in at \$221,834, under the estimated \$235,000. Fred suggested lowering the estimate on this line since the town has not commonly hit previously estimated numbers.

Holly discussed the idea of open bids for surplus property. She also noted that other towns who have advertised property for sale on Craigslist did so successfully. Steve said that open bids had been done in the past with not much of a change in results.

Steve said he would adjust some numbers in the revenue sheet for 2016 in places where the town consistently received lower than estimated funds.

Steve went on to discuss the updated budget which contains more actual numbers. He stated that the election line has increased because of the upcoming 2016 election.

Regarding electricity costs, Holly pointed out that the energy committee is looking into a potential opportunity to provide the town electricity at a lower rate. It is dependent on updates to net metering and is being explored further.

Sam asked why the revaluation line wasn't lowered. Steve responded that he expects the actual number on that line to go up.

Fred asked why the Delta Dental line was double the budget number in the actual line. Steve said he will investigate this number.

While there is still room to make more deductions in areas such as heat and gas, there is still the issue of replacing some doors, interior and exterior, among some town buildings. Members of the committee asked about the high price for all these doors. Fred said he had looked into the issue and found that the bids for the doors are all in the ballpark range. David asked what was wrong with the doors. Sam answered that some are in bad shape and have considerable rusting.

Steve said the town went out to bid for liability and workman's compensation insurance. There are 6 months left with the old provider; the new bid is less expensive but does not kick in immediately.

Police Department: Steve told the committee that 3 officers left the department recently. Steve further explained that there's an option to keep the personnel line where it is, or to adjust the line to reflect what will actually be spent on officers. There is a possibility of incrementally replacing the officers by hiring one in February, one in March, and one in April rather than the 3 all at once.

Fred explained that one officer left for a pay raise in Canaan, another left for higher pay in Hanover, and said that he thinks Enfield needs to offer more competitive pay. Fred suggested keeping the line as is, saying that if the personnel line was to be lowered and then increased to pay for higher salaries, there is a possibility that residents may become alarmed about a jump in the line.

Steve said that he is currently comparing our town's pay rate to neighboring towns.

Sam asked about officer turnover rate. It appears generally pretty low. Fred acknowledged that this current situation is unusual, but maintained that police pay is an issue. Sam asked how long the town has been actively recruiting new officers. Steve said that while there has not been an official announcement, several candidates have already come forward to apply.

Ambulance: There were 171 total calls for service in 2015. At \$285 charged per call, the total call cost of 2015 was \$48,735 as seen on the mutual aid line.

Highway: While the department is not experiencing the same staffing issue as the police department, Steve said that some personnel are retiring, which may lead to some savings. Mike asked how many highway employees the town has. Steve did not have an immediate answer. James asked why the part-time line was up by about \$10,000. Steve said that number can go down. Shirley noticed that the overtime line was lower; Steve said that was largely due to no snowfall in November or December. Steve noted there needs to be engineering money set aside for the Lovejoy Brook Road culvert project. That project is being split 80/20, with federal money paying for 80% and Enfield paying for 20% of the cost. The town is responsible for the engineering.

The line for signs and markings is largely the cost of markings. Steve said that some roads need striping more often than others.

David brought attention to the pavement maintenance line. David said he's been told that Enfield is getting behind on maintaining many roads. Sam said since the town could get to the point where we might not always need that 5 cents for CIP, we could perhaps fund the fixing of our worst roads with a bond using those 5 cents. Steve clarified that pavement maintenance is not the same as road reconstruction.

Street lighting: Holly talked about the possibility of turning off some street lights, perhaps the lights in non-critical areas. Steve responded that this has been proposed to the select board at least twice. Fred said if anything, most people have requested either moving or adding lights.

Holly brought up Liberty's pilot program in Lebanon which replaces regular town lights with LED lights. Steve said Lebanon is currently determining whether these LEDs illuminate as well as a traditional light does. Steve added that LEDs exposed to the elements often don't last as long as LEDs that are inside of homes.

Sanitation: The committee discussed the increase in costs of sanitation and what the town's options might be in the future to reduce costs. Enfield is in a 5-year contract with Casella scheduled to end in 2017. Holly discussed the idea of adding a more inclusive compost area for residents to help cut costs. Sam asked for a complete breakdown that would offer an explanation for the rising costs, particularly in the contract line. Sam estimated that this sanitation program has cost about \$500,000 more than originally estimated. Sam went on to point out that the committee was told in 2014 that the contract would be \$160,000 but the actual turned out to be \$276,122. Sam said the committee was told in 2015 the contract would be \$225,000 but turned out to be \$286,000. Steve offered to show the committee the Casella contract.

Holly said that it's not too early to begin exploring other options now despite the fact that Enfield still has a contract to fulfill.

Human services direct: James asked about the rent line. Steve said that line is very unpredictable. Sometimes a family who is a few months behind on rent will need a considerable amount of money, and sometimes there will be only small requests. Sam praised Diane for her hard work in helping people get back on their feet. Sam added that Diane is very thorough in her work with residents, going beyond securing financial assistance for those who need it; she works one-on-one with them as well to help guide them to make positive life changes.

Recreation: There has been an increase in revenues from recreational programs; Steve said the regional recreation line is completely offset on the revenue sheet.

Library: Sam asked about the personnel line. Steve said it is submitted by the trustees. Steve added that with new personnel he is exercising more caution in directing changes.

Steve reminded members that the CIP projects have no impact on the tax rate. Mark asked if the bids for the launch upgrade had been split up into two parts.

Steve said that the boat launch, which can be part of a bundle package with the bridge, would be a financed by a 15 year loan at 3% interest. The annual debt service on that line will be about \$16,000-18,000.

**Public comment:** Dan Kiley said he thinks the committee is doing a good job examining each line of the budget.

**Other Business:** none.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.