

Farmington Budget Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 8, 2003

Attendance: Chairman Walter Mills, Gail Ellis, Arthur Capello, Tom Huse, Sylvia Howard, Kristin Bolstridge, Bernie Nason, Todd Lefebvre and Selectman's Rep Gerry McCarthy.

Town Administrator: Ernest Creveling

Chief of Police: Scott Roberge

Head Librarian: Debbie Christie

The meeting convened and was called to order at 7:05 pm by Chairman Mills.

Pg 15, Library (4550)

Discussion and explanation of proposed \$143,206 budget by Library Representative, Debbie Christie. She stated that the library is asking for a \$6,131 increase in funds (4.63%). Support staffs pay increase due to adding 3 hours, making 2 positions of 15 hours. Materials budget has caused the most increase in proposed budget as freight, postage and supplies have increased. Building repairs planned, including painting, as the interior hasn't been painted in 17years. There is also other damage in regards to the interior of building that will be repaired, as well as changing drainage patterns due to water buildup. Also, a major expansion next year is planned. The Library is looking to develop downstairs as children's room, which would require additional staffing. Discussion ensued regarding projected costs for next year. She stated that the major cost would be additional staffing, salary staff impact being an estimated \$30,000. Utilities might go up slightly as well. Kristine asked about additional furniture costs. Debbie responded by stating that as far as she knows any furniture will be funded by the trust fund set-aside already for that purpose. Discussion then ensued in regards to proposed support staff salary. Debbie states that salary increases reflect what other libraries in the state are offering in such positions. Tom also asked about the building repair cost including better protection of research materials. Debbie responded by stating that it is something that is being looked into including implementing computer databases.

Pg 10, Animal Control (4414)

Police Department Chief Scott Roberge representing. No opposition or discussion regarding animal control as there were no proposed changes. Todd stated that he was very happy with animal control and the work being done.

Pg 11, Police (4210)

Kristine asked how many officers are covered in line 106, Personnel, regarding wages and salaries. Scott responded by stating that there are currently 12 officers. His goal is to have an officer back in the school by late February early March, making 1 officer in the school and 11 officers in town. Gerry stated that the selectman have been discussing with the police department regarding bonuses and shift differentials. The bonus would consist of a \$2,500 stipend after 2 years of service. During a shift between 4pm-10pm, officers will get an additional \$1.00 per hour shift differential as well as \$1.50 per hour for 10pm-6am. Scott felt that the police department will be able to better retain officers with the bonus plan and after the year it will be reevaluated for its results. He also stated that the department is losing an officer every 88 days and retention is a very high priority since he hasn't been properly up to staff in the past two years because of the high turnover rate. Kevin Willey stated that it has been brought to his attention that Chief of Police, Scott Roberge is only getting a cost of living salary increase of 1.5 % compared to a minimum of 3% for the rest of the department. He stated that while he may have a biased opinion because Scott is his superior, he felt that Scott deserves more of an increase. Mary Barron asked why Scott is not getting the increase of the rest of the department. Gerry responded by stating that such a question is not open for public debate. Marilyn Robicheau stated that she feels any budget concerns should be discussed publicly. Gerry responded that some budget issues are personnel issues and not open for debate by the public. Walter stated that the budget committee meeting is only a workshop and opinions are welcome from the public however, the budget is not open publicly for debate. Arthur asked why Line 124 has increased and

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Scott responded by stating that there are two officers that are currently in the police academy and Line 124 for Investigations covers the hiring process including physical/psychological testing, polygraphs and background investigations. Arthur also asked why Line 122, New Equipment, is down 23.53%. Scott responded that he had asked for \$18,000 to get portable radios for cruisers but have covered most of the cost through grants. He also stated that after discussion with the Board of Selectman it was proposed that half the radios get purchased this year and the other half next year. Line 122 for New Equipment may or may not be increasing as it is still under discussion. Scott also stated that the purchasing of the radios for the department is not a want but instead an absolute need for the safety of his officers. Tom asked what the cost is exactly for what the department needs and Scott responded that six radios are needed at \$3,000 per radio. He also stated that through grant money six other radios including equipment needed for the functioning of those radios have been purchased. While he didn't have enough money left to purchase the other six radios still needed, he did have enough to purchase the options for those remaining six, making solely the radios themselves an issue. Scott felt that because the budget requested for the police department is down to the bare minimum and also the fact that during his tenure as Police Chief he has brought in over \$400,000 to the department, that \$18,000 for new radios should not be a question. Twelve total radios are needed for each officer in the department in regards to regular shifts and public events in the town. Right now they only have enough to cover six officers at a time. Walter asked about the possible use of cell phones and Scott responded that while they may work it really is a safety issue for his officers in regards to other calls coming in, signal strength and reliability. He stated that the radios that are being requested have vital safety features needed for the protection of his officers. Walter pointed out that State Police have laptops, cell phones, radios and communicate in several different ways with dispatch. Scott responded that with the requested digital radios the department is making a step in that direction for the future of technology in the Town of Farmington. *Bernie made a motion to add \$9,000 to the appropriate line for the cost of half the radios needed by the Police Department. Sylvia seconded the motion.* Discussion ensued regarding the motion. *Vote resulted in Arthur, Sylvia, Gail, Tom, Bernie, Todd and Kristen for the motion. Gerry opposed. Motion passed to add \$9,000 to Line 173 of the Capitol Outlay (4902).* Walter asked why Line 118, Gasoline, was reduced. Scott responded that it is reflecting actual usage.

Pg 12, Welfare (4441)

Line 137, Welfare officer stipend discussed. Ernie pointed out that for the first time the welfare officer of the past year has been successful in getting welfare paid back to the town. \$2,000 is estimated to have been paid back to the town from money given to welfare recipient.

Pg13, Intergov't'l Welfare Pay (4444)

Line 137, Stratford County CAP discussed briefly. Ernie explained how CAP is a County assistance program that helps residents with security deposits, fuel assistance, rental assistance and food before the resident comes to their town of residence. (Farmington). No opposition.

Pg 11, Health Agencies and Hospitals (4415)

No changes proposed and no opposition. Short discussion on Line 139, Juvenile Division regarding its success rate. Arthur stated that the program has a 73% success rate. The program is still mainly funded through grants though.

Pg1, Administration (4155)

Line 39, Health/Medical Insurance discussed. Arthur pointed out the lack of town employee contribution to their healthcare. He also stated that it seems that the town is paying for a very large amount of medical costs for employees. It was estimated last night by Ernie that employees are only covering 6-7% of their health care. Ernie pointed out that he did a comparison with surrounding towns and found that other towns do offer their employees similar compensation; some even cover 100% of the cost. Walter suggested that perhaps insurance costs not be a flat fee but instead a percentage of an employee's salary. He stated that the insurance issue is something to be looked into by the Selectman and that the budget committee should not change that line.

Pg 4, Insurance (4196)

No changes proposed and no opposition. Ernie explained current insurance program in place regarding what is covered for the town.

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Pg 17, TAN Interest (4723)

Line 173, TAN Interest, Ernie stated that it has mostly been used for bonding expenses. Arthur pointed out that in past years the expended budget has never reached the proposed \$15,000. Ernie explained that the proposed budget has always been \$15,000 and it has never been discussed. *Arthur made a motion to reduce Line 173 to \$10,000. Gail seconded the motion. Vote resulted in all in favor. Motion passed to reduce Line.*

Pg 19, Economic Development (4651)

No change proposed and no opposition. Sylvia pointed out that the description of Line 158 showed there was an increase requested when there was no proposed increase. Ernie deleted description.

Pg 20, Principal LT & ST (4711)

Line 155 decreased as explained by Ernie due to the John Deere being paid off last year.

Pg 18, Capitol Outlay (4902)

Line 17, E911 Street Signs discussed. Sylvia pointed out that only \$71.11 of proposed budget \$1,500 was used last year. Ernie stated that the streets are getting done one by one. He explained that the project is very involved and many corrections are anticipated. Estimates 10-15 signs done this year at \$30 per sign. *Sylvia made a motion to reduce Line 17 to \$500. Gail seconded the motion. Vote resulted in Gail, Sylvia, Tom, Bernie, Kristina and Todd in favor with Gerry and Arthur opposed. Motion passed to reduce Line.* Line 183 and 181 discussed briefly. No opposition. Ernie explained that Line 181 in part to fixing Tibbetts Hill Road Bridge. Also, \$7,500 being used to build a new addition onto the Highway garage to keep equipment undercover and serve as storage.

Motion to adjourn made by Arthur. Sylvia seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 10:13pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Catherine Plourde

Accepted as Per Vote of the Budget Committee:

Walter Mills, Chairman

Date

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