

**TOWN OF FARMINGTON
BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday – February 8, 2011
356 Main Street - Farmington, NH**

Members Present: Arthur Capello, Brian St.Onge, Ann Titus, Steve Henry, Cindy Snowdon and Neil Johnson

Members Absent: Chris Somma, Chris Biron and Mike Morin

Selectman's Rep:Gail Ellis

School Board Rep: Ken Dickie (absent)

Public Present:Dave Connolly, Joanne Doke, Anna Dickie, Linda Hotchkiss, Frank Smart, Lorraine Meyers, Paula Proulx, Charlie King, Tonya Hughes, William Vachon and Mrs. Johnson

Town Staff Present: Deb Christie, Carla Smith, Kathy Seaver, Rick Conway, Kathy Menici, Scott Hazelton, Scott Roberge, Pam Merrill and Rich Fowler.

Chairman Brian St. Onge opened the meeting at 6:02pm and opened the Public Hearing for the Town Budget Review.

1. Brian reviewed the bottom line amounts for each department for the public.
2. Linda Hotchkiss, representative from the Rochester Visiting Nurses Association (VNA) explained that they have provided quality care for Farmington residents for many years. She explained that even though they lose money in Farmington each year they continue to provide services to Farmington residents. Ms. Hotchkiss added that last year they did have a surplus and the VNA Board voted unanimously to give out \$68,214 in bonuses to their 86 employees; however their employee pay rates are much lower than those of similar jobs. Mr. Smart, President of the VNA Board added that the bonuses paid to their employees was a decision made by the Board in order to give back to the employees who had worked very hard during their computer software transition. He then added that VNA has received numerous awards on the State and National level.

Charlie King, Selectman, commented that the Selectman started the budget this year with a \$350,000 deficit due to the deletion of the Rooms and Meals Tax revenue. The Selectman cut from all departments and this section of the budget (donations) was all cut by 20% to assist with the budget deficit. Arthur asked where the 12% increase came from that was discussed at an earlier meeting. Ms. Hotchkiss noted that one position received a 4% merit increase and then a few months later when her position was evaluated she was given another 6%. Gail followed up by asking if that position also received a bonus and Ms. Hotchkiss replied yes, all employees received the bonus except for herself. Gail then asked if the VNA has been able to give their employees merit raises consistently and Ms. Hotchkiss replied yes for as far back as she can remember. Gail then stated that the Board was never concerned with the quality of care provided by VNA because they know the care is of high quality. Gail then added that the

Board of Selectman recognize the service provided and were trying to be fair and equitable with hopes to be able to save some money so that the town employees, who have not received any type of raise for the past three years, might get some type of salary increase this year.

3. William Vachon, resident, stated he does not agree with cutting the hours from the Rec Department in order to save on the benefits and believes this would be a big mistake. Tonya Hughes, resident, also stated that she does not agree the Rec budget should be cut because they provide such a great service to the children and elderly in town.
4. Deb Christie, Librarian, explained that the Library requested a 2% increase from last year request in order to meet the demands of the 28% increase in usage of the library. The Selectman voted to level fund this budget. Ms. Christie pointed out that only one cent from the tax rate goes to the library. Kathy Seaver commented it is actually ten cents that goes to the library.
5. Paula Proulx presented the Committee with the request letter from the 500 Boys and Girls Club that was requested.
6. Brian reviewed the warrant articles.
7. Gail explained that the warrant article for the fire engine lease purchase caught the town attorney's attention in that it does not include an option to opt out if the capital reserve funds does not have sufficient funding. Rich Fowler, Fire Chief, stated that he believes this petition warrant article came from the Fireman's Association because the town does have a need for a new fire vehicle. He further stated he did not present this purchase to the Selectmen because of the tough economic times this year but he would support the purchase. The capital reserve fund currently has \$68,000 in it which will not be enough to purchase a new truck. Gail added that the Town has been careful not to place too much money in this fund because the Town lost out on a grant when the Quint truck was purchased because there was too much money in the reserve fund.

At 7:09pm, Brian closed the public hearing and the Committee took a five minute recess.

At 7:22 the Committee reconvened.

8. The Committee reviewed the budget.
9. *Arthur Capello motioned to reduce the legal services line by \$4,000 which would make the new line amount of \$46,000, 2nd Steve Henry. Discussion followed where Gail noted the town has several non-public items that will/might require legal services. Motion failed; Arthur Capello (yes), Ann Titus (no), Steve Henry (no), Brian St. Onge (abstain), Neil Johnson (yes), Gail Ellis (no) and Cindy Snowdon (no).*
10. *Arthur Capello motioned to cut the sidewalk line by \$5,000. Motion failed for lack of a second.*
11. *Steve Henry motioned to increase the street lighting by \$2500. Motion failed for lack of a second.*

- 12. Arthur Capello motioned to reduce the landfill sticker line by \$4,000, 2nd Steve Henry.** Discussion followed where Scott Hazelton, DPW Director, explained Fund 14 is for the land closure and he budgeted the sticker cost knowing there is a short fall in the closure fund. Charlie King added that the increased sticker fee does not close the gap of the shortfall which is estimated at \$350,000. They are hoping to raise the remaining funds through competitive bidding. **Motion carried: Arthur Capello (yes), Ann Titus (yes), Steve Henry (yes), Brian St. Onge (yes), Neil Johnson (yes), Gail Ellis (no) and Cindy Snowdon (no).**
- 13. Neil Johnson motioned to reduce the tire removal line to \$4,000, 2nd Cindy Snowdon.** **Motion failed: Arthur Capello (yes), Ann Titus (no), Steve Henry (no), Brian St. Onge (no), Neil Johnson (yes), Gail Ellis (no) and Cindy Snowdon (yes).**
- 14. Ann Titus motioned to increase the VNA line by \$3,000. Motion failed for lack of a second.**
- 15. Arthur Capello motioned to cut the Health Agencies and Hospital budget section by 10% for a total of \$1,992, 2nd Neil Johnson.** Discussion followed where Arthur explained he is making this motion because these outside agencies have been able to give their employees raises and the town has been unable to do this for several years. **Motion carried: Arthur Capello (yes), Ann Titus (no), Steve Henry (no), Brian St. Onge (yes), Neil Johnson (yes), Gail Ellis (yes) and Cindy Snowdon (no).**
- 16. Ann Titus motioned to increase the 500 Boys and Girls Club line to \$900, 2nd Steve Henry.** **Motion failed; Arthur Capello (no), Ann Titus (yes), Steve Henry (yes), Brian St. Onge (no), Neil Johnson (no), Gail Ellis (abstain) and Cindy Snowdon (no).**
- 17. Arthur Capello motioned to reduce the Strafford County CAP line to \$2,880, 2nd Ann Titus.** **Motion carried; Arthur Capello (yes), Ann Titus (yes), Steve Henry (yes), Brian St. Onge (yes), Neil Johnson (yes), Gail Ellis (no) and Cindy Snowdon (no).**
- 18. Cindy Snowdon motioned to increase the Recreation Department bottom line by \$10,000, 2nd Steve Henry.** Discussion followed where Arthur questioned if this increase will allow the position to stay full-time that was cut by the Selectmen. Gail noted the position was placed under the Rec Revolving Fund where it should be given the duties of the position, along with reducing the position by 8 hours. Rick Conway, Rec. Director, stated he is unsure if the additional \$10,000 would keep the position full-time that is being discussed because a little over \$25,000 was cut from the budget when the position was reduced and moved into the revolving fund. Steve Henry stated he would like to see the Town request 10% of the funding for the administrative costs. Rick replied that at this time Middleton residents are less than 10% of our participants. **Motion failed; Arthur Capello (no), Ann Titus (no), Steve Henry (yes), Brian St. Onge (no), Neil Johnson (no), Gail Ellis (no) and Cindy Snowdon (yes).**
- 19. Neil asked why the COAST bus line was not reduced like the other agencies and Gail explained COAST came to the Selectmen's meeting on Monday and said they would have to make a reduction in services to the town and charge a surcharge. Neil Johnson motioned to reduce the COAST bus line to \$10,785, 2nd Steve Henry.** Discussion followed where Gail stated the current ridership is about 4500 residents. If the town decreases the line they will charge a \$1-\$2 surcharge which will reduce the ridership by approximately half and then ultimately cut the

service. This will also bring a larger burden onto the welfare department because people will be unable to get to doctors appointments, state welfare appointments and jobs. Rich Fowler stated he sees people utilizing this service everyday and by making this cut it could end up costing the town more money in ambulance services. *Steve asked Neil to accept an additional 60 cents to the line so the funding doesn't go below 70% of the request and Neil Johnson accepted the amendment. Motion carried; Arthur Capello (yes), Ann Titus (no), Steve Henry (yes), Brian St. Onge (yes), Neil Johnson (yes), Gail Ellis (no) and Cindy Snowdon (no).*

20. The Budget Committee's budget shows the tax rate increase at six cents which includes the warrants. The bottom line budget without the warrant articles is \$5,704,644.
21. *Arthur Capello motioned to recommend Article 4 for Emergency Medical Motorized Equipment, 2nd Steve Henry. Motion carried with all in favor.*
22. *Arthur Capello motioned to recommend Article 5 for the Public Buildings Maintenance CRF, 2nd Ann Titus. Motion carried with Steve Henry opposed.*
23. *Arthur Capello motioned to recommend Article 6 for the Fire Vehicle/ Equipment CRF, 2nd Ann Titus. Motion carried with all in favor.*
24. *Arthur Capello motioned to recommend Article 7 for the Town Employee Financial Obligation CRF, 2nd Steve Henry. Motion carried with all in favor.*
25. *Arthur Capello motioned to recommend Article 8 for the Landfill Closure Transfer Station Special Revenue Fund, 2nd Ann Titus. Motion carried with all in favor.*
26. *Arthur Capello motioned to recommend Article 9 for Highway Equipment CRF, 2nd Ann Titus. Motion carried with Cindy Snowdon opposed.*
27. *Steve Henry motioned to recommend Article 10 for the Trash Bag Sticker Revenue, 2nd Ann Titus. Motion carried with Arthur Capello opposed.*
28. *Neil Johnson motioned to recommend Article 11 for the Conservation Fund, 2nd Gail Ellis.* Discussion followed where Steve questioned what limits the revenues from a timber harvest being placed in this account that are not from conservation lands. Jim Horgan, Conservation Commission, noted the funds raised through the timber harvest will be utilized to manage the conservation properties in town. *Motion withdrawn.*
29. *Neil Johnson motioned to recommend the changing of the wording of Article 11 to add "managed by the Conservation Commission, after "owned land" and before "to be deposited" and then recommend the Article, 2nd Gail Ellis. Motion carried with Arthur Capello opposed.*
30. *Arthur Capello motioned to not recommend Article 16 which speaks to purchasing a fire engine through a lease, 2nd Gail Ellis.* Discussion followed where Kathy Seaver explained this is not a legal article really because there is no escape clause with the Capital Reserve funding and therefore it would be binding for multiple years which is not legal. *Motion carried with Ann Titus opposed.*

Amended and accepted 2-23-11

31. Arthur Capello motioned to recommend Article 3 with a total budget line of \$5,703,052 which is a 5 cent increase to the tax rate, 2nd Steve Henry. Motion carried with Gail Ellis opposed.

At 9:11pm, Ann Titus motioned to adjourn, 2nd Gail Ellis. Motion carried with all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brandy Sanger
Recording Secretary