

Town of Farmington
Budget Committee
Public Hearing - Town Budget
Minutes for Friday, February 7, 2014
6:30PM
Selectmen's Chambers
356 Main Street

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Brian St. Onge (Chairperson), Jodi Connolly, Gerry McCarthy, Sam Cataldo, Ann Titus, Neil Johnson, and Arthur Capello (Selectman's Rep)

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT - EXCUSED:

Gail Young, Steve Henry, and Kathy King (School Board's Rep),

TOWN REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

Keith Trefethen (Town Administrator), Kathy Seaver (Town Clerk/Tax Collector), Rick Conway (Recreation Dept.), Paula Proulx (Board of Selectmen), and Shanna Smith (Goodwin Library Director)

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Sharon Lester, Joyce White, Amy Cornwell, Melody LaRoche, Tami LaRock, Randi Gallagher, Patience Taylor, Bobbie Stormann, Matthew Stormann, Tiffany Madison, Michelle Elbert, Elaine Aylard, Ethan Elbert, Kyle Elbert, Nathan Smith, Torri Trembley, Kerry Giglio, and Carol O'Connell

1. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Brian called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:33 PM.

Brian welcomed everyone to the Budget Committee's Public Hearing for the Municipal Budget and noted that it was the largest crowd he has seen at a BC meeting. He then asked Keith if he wanted to give an overview of the Town's budget.

Keith told the Budget Committee that their new packets included the Municipal Budget Summary sheet, draft of all Warrant Articles 1 through 24, the MS27 form that the BC is required to sign, and the detail break downs of all the expenses, as well as all revenue funds. He added that at the last BC meeting he was asked to bring back the details of the water and sewer costs which he has also added to their packets. Keith told the Budget Committee that generally we have used the Warrant Articles as the template moving through the budgeted items. He added that he is also aware there are individuals present this evening that have something to say about the budget. Brian asked who from the public was here to speak and there was a large show of hands. Brian asked if everyone was here to discuss the same item and they all said they wanted to talk about the cuts to the Library budget.

Brian stated that the Budget Summary sheet shows a \$250,000 proposed budget for the Library and asked if anyone had anything to say.

Ms. Bobbie Stormann stepped forward and explained why she and her family moved to Farmington and told the Budget Committee that making the \$31,000 cut to the Library budget is a concern to her. She added that the school also relies on the Library.

Ms. Tiffany Madison, read a letter she prepared that explained what the Library has meant to her and what it offers to the community, including the convenience of the operational hours and the technology resources that are needed and used. She explained the great job each staff member brings to the Library, how it is a positive and safe place for the community, and how the Library helps to contribute to educating our youth and keeping them from negative activities. Ms. Madison ended by saying that the Goodwin Library could provide even more positive services if there were to have more funding and she wanted to stress the importance of the Library and all the services they provide.

Ms. Carol O'Connell explained how the school each summer partners with the Library and how they have found that if students do not continue to interact with the skills they have learned during the school year, they will lose those valuable skills. She asked if the Library cut is a one-time cut or is this something that the town will continue to cut in the future. Ms. O'Connell then asked the Budget Committee to reconsider and fund the full requested amount. Brian explained that in preparing this budget, the Board of Selectmen looked at where possible cuts could be made and by doing so the decision was made to only fund about 75% of any agency's request. He then explained that the Town's portion of funding for the Library in the past has been about 93% of their total budget and this year the request was for \$291,000. Brian added that the \$31,000 cut in this year's budget represents the reduction in the percentage of funding for this agency and not an actual cut to their budget.

Ms. Shanna Smith stated that as a Library we are so much more than books, and explained how they assist the community with resources and technology they normally could not afford. She also explained how they would like to enhance the quality of their programs and how the Library helps to keep students off the street and provided them a safe place. Sam asked how many computers they have and what operating system they are currently running. Ms. Smith said they have 4 computers in the adult area and 4 in the child area that are currently running XP or Vista, and explained that they need to update all the computers since they were given to the Library a few years ago. Arthur asked Ms. Smith if she was able to find out what happened to the Capital Reserve money from last year and Ms. Smith explained that the Capital Reserve accounts are not expendable. Arthur then asked what happened with the excess funds from last year, and Ms. Smith explained that she was hired as the Library Director only a short time ago and she is still looking into that.

Ms. Elaine Aylard stepped forward and explained that the Library staff does not get paid much, how there is no extra money left over at the end of each year, and the only reason there was is because the Library did not have a Director for most of the year. She added that interest rates are low; however they are working on trying to increase dividends to help with funding. Neil asked what cuts are going to have to be made, and Ms. Smith said that the \$31,000 cut is a large cut for such a small budget. She then explained how they already work within a very tight budget, there is no room to cut back any further, and that she will have no choice but to cut back staff and operational hours. Arthur said that the BOS had to cut back every department's budget this year. Jodi said that is not so because the police department's budget is actually going up. Arthur said that is not true and Jodi said yes it is.

Keith explained that the Board of Selectmen made the decided to not fund more than 75% of an agency's total budget request and up to this point the town has been funding about 93% of the Library's total budget.

Mr. Matthew Stormann said the Town is already cutting resources and funding at the schools, so if you take away this important piece of our community, what will be left. He added that without the Library, there will be no place for the youth and the community to go to get the resources they need. Ms. Aylard said she grew up in a very poor town and the Library was a tremendous resource, gift and asset to that community.

Brian said that he wanted to make it clear that no one is cutting out the Library and the BOS just reduced the percentage of funding to match other agencies. Arthur said just so everyone is clear, we are not shutting down the Schools, the Recreation Center, and the Library. Matt Scruton said that the Town's portion of funding for the Library this year is a quarter of a million dollars and that is a sufficient amount of funding. He added that they had to cut all departments and the Board of Selectmen does in fact support the Library. Jodi told the public that if the Library budget is not approved for an increase tonight, she encourages everyone to come to the town meeting and recommend an increase in funding for the Library from the floor. Arthur stated that even if that happens, the town can choose to send that money anyway they wanted because we operate on a bottom line budget. Jodi said then we can vote those people out when that time comes. Ms. Smith said that she is very concerned because this proposed budget cut will take the Library's budget back to what it was at 7 years ago. Brian said that the Library has not been level funded by the Town during all those years. Arthur told the public that he did not feel it was the responsibility of the Library to raise children. There was a personal debate between Arthur and a few members of the public so Brian called the meeting to back to order.

Gerry stated that he understands that the electric is going up at the Library as well as all the other costs and expenses, however there are a lot of people in this town having the same problem and we all have to make cuts. Another member of the public, who did not give her name, came forward and said she has 3 young children and they love the Library. She explained that her children look at the Library as an extension of the school and a place to learn differently then they learn at home. She told Arthur that yes we should all do our own parenting but it is a disgrace that you would say that the Library is not a place where values can be learned that are not always done at home. She added that she has been a Farmington resident for over 10 years and it would be such a shame to decrease the funding for the Library at this time. Brian said that he feels no one has really addressed what actual cuts would need to be made at the Library in order to work within this budget. Ms. Smith said the books and materials line has already been reduced this year, so she will have no choice but to cut staff hours and reduce hours of operation. She added that it is dishearten to think that there are members of the BOS and BC that don't recognize the need of the community or care what services we will lose as much as what the bottom line figures are, and then I hear that other town employees are getting a cost of living raise and the Library staff is not. Arthur said that he takes offense with the comment that the BOS does not recognized the need and then asked why the Library has not asked surrounding towns to pay for the services of the Library that they use. Shanna said we are a free Library and how do you ask some people to pay and not others.

Brian asked if anyone had any new information and there was none. He then said we are going to move on and review the budget.

MOTION: At 7:23 PM, Arthur motioned to take a 5 minute recess.

SECOND: Ann

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: All in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

The Committee returned from recess at 7:30 PM.

2. TOWN BUDGET REVIEW:

Brian stated that the Budget Committee will start by going down the Budget Summary Sheet and if anyone has any questions please speak up. He then began at the top and read each category and its proposed budgeted amount as follows:

- 1) Executive = \$252,748
- 2) Election Reg. Vital = \$174,569
- 3) Finance Admin = \$147,928
- 4) Revaluation = \$45,835
- 5) Legal = \$40,000
- 6) Personnel Admin = \$46,000
- 7) General Govt. Buildings \$106,292
- 8) Insurance = \$95,300
- 9) Police = \$1,475,145

Keith stated that he wanted to point out that the \$1,475,145 for the Police was a correct number and the expense sheet will show \$80,000 more that is represented in a Warrant Article.

- 10) Fire = \$518,316
- 11) Building Inspection = \$44,378
- 12) Emergency Management = \$5,000
- 13) Admin Highway & Streets = \$583,642
- 14) Highway & Streets = \$603,361
- 15) Bridges & Railings = \$6,000
- 16) Street Lights = \$44,100
- 17) Sanitation Admin = \$102,080
- 18) SW Deposal = \$87,620
- 19) Animal Control = \$18,877
- 20) Health Agencies & Hospitals = \$9,892
- 21) Welfare Admin = 21,881
- 22) Inter Govt. Welfare Payments = \$1,944
- 23) Welfare = \$40,000
- 24) Parks & Recreation = \$152,049
- 25) Library = \$250,000
- 26) Patriotic Purposes = \$1,000
- 27) Other Culture & Rec = \$2,000
- 28) Conservation Commission = \$3,505
- 29) Economic Development = \$1,250
- 30) Principal Bonds & Notes = \$197,481
- 31) Interest Bonds & Notes = \$57,549
- 32) Capital Outlay = \$100,000

Ann asked where the Coast Bus funding was and Paula said that it was previously in the Economic Development budget. Arthur added that the Coast Bus Services did not collect the funding from the Town they asked for last year and this year the BOS choose not to fund it. Jodi asked where the Bonds and Notes show in the actual budget and Keith stated it is on page 17. Brian stated that the total proposed budget amount without the Warrant Articles is \$6,118,541 which is represented in Warrant Article 7.

MOTION: Jodi motioned to level fund the Library budget to the amount it was last year equaling \$281,117.

SECOND: None

DISCUSSION:

VOTE: No vote was taken. Motion failed.

3. APPROVAL OF WARRANT ARTICLES:

Brian stated that the Budget Committee will now vote on the Warrant Articles starting with Article 7.

- **Warrant Article 7: Operating Budget – To raise and appropriated the sum of \$6,811,541 for General Municipal Operations.**

MOTION: Arthur motioned to approve Warrant Article #7 for \$6,811,541.

SECOND: Ann

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Jodi opposed, Sam abstained / All others in favor. Motion passed 5-1-1.

- **Warrant Article 8: Police Department Collective Bargaining Agreement – To raise and appropriated the sum of \$22,592 for Fiscal Year 2014.**

MOTION: Gerry motioned to approve Warrant Article #8.

SECOND: Arthur

DISCUSSION: Arthur explained that this is a one year agreement and covers all costs of salaries and benefits. Neil asked what was the percent increase and Keith explained that it depended on the position and ranges from 1.5% to 8%.

VOTE: Jodi & Neil opposed / All others in favor. Motion passed 5-2.

- **Warrant Article 10: Public Works Collective Bargaining Agreement – Net decrease of (\$10,953) for Fiscal Year 2014.**

MOTION: Gerry motioned to approve Warrant Article #10.

SECOND: Ann

DISCUSSION: Arthur stated that this is a formality for the agreement, and explained that the actual agreement has not yet been signed and may not be presented as a Warrant Article if it is not ratified in time. Keith added that the deadline is up and they did not presented another offer.

VOTE: Jodi opposed & Arthur abstained / All others in favor. Motion passed 5-1-1.

- **Warrant Article 12: Future Technology Capital Reserve Fund – To raise and appropriate the sum of \$20,000.**

MOTION: Neil motioned to approve Warrant Article #12.

SECOND: Ann

DISCUSSION: Jodi asked what the funds will be used for and Keith explained that approximately 12 computers need operating system upgrades as well as plans for some network services. Arthur added that the computers are not just located in this building.

Ms. Joyce White asked if this requested budget item was also reduced like the Library budget, and wanted to know if it wasn't, can it be cut by \$5,000 to save money. Keith explained that the amount is represented in the Executive line on the Summary Sheet and Kathy Seaver pointed out that the town pays more than \$12,000 when the services are kept in house.

VOTE: Jodi opposed / All others in favor. Motion passed 6-1.

- **Warrant Article 13: Town Employee Financial Obligation Capital Reserve Fund – To raise and appropriated the sum of \$10,000.**

MOTION: Arthur motioned to approve Warrant Article #13.

SECOND: Neil

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: All in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

- **Warrant Article 14: Farmington Community Television Special Revenue Fund - To raise and appropriated, and to withdrawal the sum of \$60,000.**

MOTION: Gerry motioned to approve Warrant Article #14.

SECOND: Arthur

DISCUSSION: Jodi asked for an explanation of the item and Arthur explained how the money is collected from users and added to this account for the purposes of withdrawing and using as the Article states.

VOTE: All in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

- **Warrant Article # 15: Police Department Outside Detail Special Revenue Fund - To rise and appropriated, and to withdrawal the sum of \$80,000.**

MOTION: Neil motioned to approve Warrant Article #15.

SECOND: Ann

DISCUSSION: Brian asked how this account was funded and Arthur explained the funds come from the fees that are collected from companies such as tree cutting services that need the Police to control traffic or other services.

VOTE: Jodi opposed / All others in favor. Motion passed 6-1.

- **Warrant Article # 16: Building Inspector Position Special Revenue Fund - To raise and appropriate, and to withdrawal the sum of \$45,000.**

MOTION: Neil motioned to approve Warrant Article #16.

SECOND: Arthur

DISCUSSION: Arthur said that this Article is similar to the previous ones.

VOTE: All in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

- **Warrant Article # 17: Fire Vehicle & Equipment Capital Reserve Fund for Power Cot - To raise and appropriated, and to withdrawal the sum of \$16,000.**

MOTION: Arthur motioned to approve Warrant Article #17.

SECOND: Ann

DISCUSSION: Brian explained that this item is for the purchase of a power stretcher that will be used to assist in lifting heavy people and reducing injuries.

VOTE: All in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

- **Warrant Article # 18: CRF Appropriation Emergency Medical Motorized Equipment Fund - To raise and appropriated the sum of \$25,000.**

MOTION: Arthur motioned to approve Warrant Article #18.

SECOND: Ann

DISCUSSION: Brian said this is the fund used to purchase ambulances. Jodi asked how much does one cost and Arthur said about \$70,000. Keith said that there is currently only \$860 in this fund.

VOTE: All in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

- **Warrant Article # 19: Police Cruisers - Outside Detail Special Revenue Fund - To raise and appropriated the sum of \$64,000, and to withdrawal the sum of \$54,000 from the surplus funds in the Police Outside Details Special Revenue Fund to apply to the purchase.**

MOTION: Neil motioned to approve Warrant Article #15.

SECOND: Ann

DISCUSSION: Sam asked if this would be used to increase the number of cruisers we currently have. Arthur said no that it will be used to replacement two older cruisers. Neil asked if the Budget Committee had to make a motion to make a correction to the wording and Keith said no because the BOS will make that adjustment. Neil said that he thought this fund was getting low and was surprised to see much money was in the fund.

VOTE: Jodi opposed / All others in favor. Motion passed 6-1.

- **Warrant Article # 20: Landfill Closure Fund - To raise and appropriate, and to withdraw the sum of \$66,000.**

MOTION: Jerry motioned to approve Warrant Article #20.

SECOND: Arthur

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: All in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

- **Warrant Article # 21: Landfill Closure Fund – (NOTE – New language is pending) for the purpose to capture grant funds in the sum of \$51,000 from the Department of Environmental Services Solid Waste Unlined Municipal Landfill Closure Grant.**

Keith explained that the Town had received \$51,000 from the Landfill Closure Grant this year and didn't have a place to put the funds. He added that the purpose of this Article is to withdraw these grant funds and place them in the correct designated fund, however the exact wording of the Article is still being worked on. Neil asked if the funds would be going into a capital reserve fund and Keith said that the BOS is still working on determining that. He then explained that Special Revenue Funds must be funded by user fees and that is why the funds cannot be put there. Brian stated that he was not sure what they are actually voting for and Keith said that they are voting to except the \$51,000 and to put it into some fund that is yet to be named.

MOTION: Neil motioned to approve Warrant Article #21 not as written, in the amount of \$51,000 to be placed in a fund yet to be determined.

SECOND: Ann

DISCUSSION: Jerry asked Keith if he could forward the correct wording to the Budget Committee as soon as it has been finalized and Keith said he would. Arthur added that if the intent changes, we can reconsider.

VOTE: Jerry abstained / All others in favor. Motion passed 6-0-1.

4. OTHER:

Arthur said that he felt there was some heated but good discussions this evening and added that there are currently 3 open seats on the Budget Committee if anyone was interested. Kathy Seaver added that there are also 3 seats up for the Trustees of the Trust Funds and currently no one has shown interested in filling these seats.

Brian asked if anyone else had any questions or comments and there were none.

Brian closed the public hearing at 8:30 PM.

5. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: Arthur motioned to adjourn.

SECOND: Neil

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: All in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

Committee adjourned meeting at 8:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Debra Cantwell, Recording Secretary