

FREMONT BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
Fremont Town Hall
295 Main Street
Fremont, NH 03044
October 8, 2014
7:00 PM

I CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mike Nygren called the October 8, 2014 Budget Committee meeting to order at 7:00 PM on the main floor of Fremont Town Hall.

Present were: Budget Committee members Mary Anderson (arriving at 7:03 PM), Gene Cordes, Greg Fraize, Neal Janvrin, Mark Kidd, Pat Martel, Mike Nygren, and Tyra Vargas, and Town Administrator Heidi Carlson.

Mike Nygren made a motion to postpone the approval of the minutes of September 24, 2014. Neal Janvrin seconded the motion. Motion passed 7:0.

II. REVIEW TOWN BUDGET SUBMISSIONS (WITH SELECTMEN'S RECOMMENDATIONS)

A. 4210 POLICE

Chief Twiss reviewed the Police budget, emphasizing the benefit of having full time police officers: experience, continuity (e.g. in investigations, follow-ups, paperwork, etc.), better availability during higher-risk times, etc. He noted that, with the uptick in heroin episodes, suicides, domestic events, and other felony-level crimes, having full time officers would reduce liability and provide a better "work product." Though he understood the concerns about taxes and the economy, he said that Fremont had only 3 full-time officers, which was under the state average of 9 officers. He distributed information on officer ratios and noted that Fremont's ratio was .93 per thousand whereas it should be 2.4 per 1,000 population. Chief Twiss shared information about a recent event in Brentwood and noted that part-time officers do not have the same skill level as full-time officers and sometimes they make mistakes that can cost lives. Part-time officers are not always available to fill in for those who are out sick, etc. because they have other jobs. There was a big turnaround in part-time officers.

Mr. Janvrin noted that Fremont used to have 4 officers and he asked if there would be double shifts e.g. on heavy nights. Chief Twiss distributed a tentative schedule showing some overlaps, such as at busy times of the day/night. Mr. Janvrin asked what the rationale was for 4 10-hour days vs. 5 8-hour days. Chief Twiss replied that 4 10-hour days would provide double coverage.

Mr. Kidd said that most towns similar to Fremont had higher crime rates. Chief Twiss replied that some were higher and some lower but the types of crimes were basically similar. He noted that, looking at statistics in 2013, Fremont's Police Department did not have proper leadership so that documentation was not as consistent as it now was. He said call activity had increased.

The cost per officer was \$79,275 and included vacation, uniforms, etc. The Board of Selectmen recommended adding one full-time police officer. If this was approved, someone would probably be hired in July/August, then go on to training academy and probably start work in Fremont around January 2016.

Ms. Anderson felt that having 6 of 10 officers doing one shift per week seemed a deficit for Fremont. Mr. Fraize favored having 3 full-time officers for the safety of the people. Ms. Anderson felt that it was reasonable to afford at least 1 full-time officer and that 2 or 3 officers might not pass the vote in March.

Mr. Cordes said that the Selectmen had spoken with Chief Twiss about a full-time officer, it was noted that there would be less part-time shifts, training would still be required for part-timers, and that it was good to have experienced people for investigation into certain cases and for continuity.

Neal Janvrin made a motion to recommend \$509,161 in the line 4210 POLICE (this added \$22,669 to the budget (2nd full-time officer) Greg Fraize seconded the motion. Motion failed 3 aye: 5 nay.

Mr. Nygren made a suggestion of funding a second full-time officer by foregoing raises for a year. He noted that Fremont had a small amount of taxable land and that sometimes some things needed to be given up for other things.

Mr. Fraize asked what the monetary difference was as part-time work was reduced. Mr. Cordes said that there would be a reduction of about \$20,000 by year 2. Mr. Fraize suggested that the facts/figures/comparison sheets provided tonight by Chief Twiss be included in the Town report to inform the tax payers about the benefit of having a full-time officer.

Mary Anderson recommended the Board of Selectmen's budget recommendation of \$486,492 with the stipulation that Chief Twiss would work to have a plan in place to get the necessary level of staffing within the next few years. Neal Janvrin seconded the motion. Motion passed 6 aye: 2 nay.

Chief Twiss thanked the Committee for their vote and said they were going in the right direction.

B. 4152 REVALUATION OF PROPERTY

Ms. Carlson noted that the Town needed to start funding the capital reserve funds again. It cost about \$110,000 to do property valuations. Ms. Anderson noted that all properties had to remain at 100% valuation in order for the school to get federal funding. She suggested that it be noted to the public why this was important.

Neal Janvrin recommended the Board of Selectmen's budget recommendation of \$38,526 in line 4152 REVALUATION OF PROPERTY. Greg Fraize seconded the motion. Motion passed 8:0.

C. 4155 PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION

Mary Anderson recommended the Board of Selectmen's budget recommendation of \$275,800 in line 4155 PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION. Neal Janvrin seconded the motion. Motion passed 8:0.

D. 4194 GENERAL GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

Highlights included: long-deferred maintenance at the historical society building (roof replacement, tree work); the expiration of the electric supply contract in January 2015; and putting some money in the capital reserve fund for Town Hall renovations (furnace issues).

Neal Janvrin recommended the Board of Selectmen's budget recommendation of \$91,669 in line 4194 GENERAL GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS. Greg Fraize seconded the motion. Motion passed 8:0.

E. 4220 FIRE RESCUE

Defibrillator was purchased this year. Ms. Carlson mentioned that many Fire Chiefs wait until the end of the year to get things done (points, etc.)

Mary Anderson recommended the Board of Selectmen's budget recommendation of \$181,019 in line 4220 FIRE RESCUE. Neal Janvrin seconded the motion. Motion passed 8:0.

F. 4312 HIGHWAY

Ms. Carlson noted that the Town had got an interpretation that changes in elected officials' pay needed to be put to voters. Mr. Cordes noted that the Road Agent job description needed to be revised a bit, that it was largely an administrative role (about 10-12 hours/week) Mr. Nygren expressed disagreement and said that the position did not warrant the proposed salary. Ms. Anderson suggested this be looked at as an appointed position. Ms. Carlson noted that the Town now had a backhoe and that there was less need of the same type of work as before (when the Agent used personally-owned equipment). Mr. Cordes agreed that expectations of the role should be made clear and that the Agent should be able to delegate the job to someone in the case he/she is out of town.

The Warrant Article would ask voters if they were in favor of increasing the Road Agent salary (not specifying a dollar amount). Mr. Nygren had concern about changing salary without voters knowing about it. He felt that, until a decision was made, the budget should be the same dollar value. Mr. Cordes would bring these concerns to the Board of Selectmen.

Neal Janvrin made a motion to table a vote on the Highway budget until it was brought back from the Selectmen. Pat Martel seconded the motion. Vote passed 8:0.

Neal Janvrin made a motion to withdraw his previous motion. Pat Martel seconded the motion. Motion passed 8:0.

Greg Fraize made a motion to remove the Road Agent salary/reduce it to \$4,200 and put \$10,800 back to the summer equipment hire line. Mary Anderson seconded the motion. Motion passed 8:0.

G. 4290 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Neal Janvrin recommended the Board of Selectmen's budget recommendation of \$4,000 in line 4290 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT. Greg Fraize seconded the motion. Motion passed 8:0.

H. 4520 PARKS & RECREATION

The term "Assistant Director" should replace "Activities Director" in the budget. In order to get more experienced people, a \$1/hour increased was being proposed for Parks & Rec. staff.

Mr. Nygren was concerned about the low cost of pre-care and after-care of the summer program where Town employees were not getting raises. Ms. Carlson noted that the revenues covered the whole program last year. The ratio (counselor to child) was about 1:7.

Ms. Anderson was concerned that the average tax payer would see an increase of \$10,000 in the Parks & Recreation budget (where there were no raises for other Town employees) and not see the revenue part. She felt that if one Department got raises, all Departments should get raises – this would show that everyone was valued.

Greg Fraize recommended the Board of Selectmen's budget recommendation of \$50,950 in line 4520 PARKS & RECREATION. Mark Kidd seconded the motion. Motion passed 4 aye: 3 nay: 1 abstention.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 24, 2014

Mary Anderson made a motion to amend the Minutes of September 24, 2014 to change the word "devise" to "revise". Gene Cordes seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0:3 (abstentions from T. Vargas, P. Martel and G. Fraize).

Neal Janvrin made a motion to approve the minutes of September 24, 2014 as amended. Mary Anderson seconded the motion. Motion passed 5:0:3 (abstentions from T. Vargas, P. Martel and G. Fraize).

IV. OTHER

Ms. Anderson suggested adding to the Town Expendable Trust Fund each year (for furnace, pump, etc.). There was discussion about the importance of saving for what was needed.

Mr. Cordes said that the past few years there has been a Warrant Article for a fire truck that came close to passing the vote but failed. He brought up an idea about putting a truck in the operating budget. There would be a 75-80 cent increase in the tax rate for one year.

Mr. Cordes talked about changing the heat source at the school to a pellet boiler system. Grants were available, but a support letter would be necessary from the Budget Committee. Cons of changing to pellet include: cost savings; renewable energy source; product production in NH. Mr. Cordes would put together a draft on behalf of the Energy Committee.

Individuals could schedule tours of the improvements done to the school facilities.

V. NEXT MEETING DATE: OCTOBER 22, 2014

Susan Penny would be at the next Budget Committee meeting on October 22, 2014 to answer questions. Mr. Fraize will try to have another School Board member attend in his absence.

The October 28, 2014 School Board meeting was changed to October 30, 2014 but the date when the Budget Committee would receive the School Budget would still be November 7, 2014. Mr. Fraize would bring them to the Town Hall.

Subsequent meetings would be listed as: November 12 and 19 and December 3, 10, and 17, 2014.

The Public Hearing would be set for January 13, 2015 with a snow date of January 14, 2015.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:20 PM, Neal Janvrin made a motion to adjourn. Greg Fraize seconded the motion. Motion passed 8:0.

Respectfully submitted by,
Susan Perry,
Budget Committee Secretary