

**Unofficial
As of 3/06/09**

**HOOKSETT
BUDGET COMMITTEE
MINUTES
PUBLIC HEARING
Thursday, March 5, 2009**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Chairman J. Pieroni, J. Danforth, K. Hughes, M. Miville, D. Pearl, S. Doyon, JR Ouellette, D. Argo, and N. Comai

Excused: S. Doyon

Staff: Christine Soucie, Finance Director and Carol Granfield, Interim Town Administrator

A

Shall the Town raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amount set forth on the budget posted with this warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$15,878,857? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$15,937,590, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of Town Meeting or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. Note: This Article does not include special warrant articles #X through #XX.

J. Pieroni presented the Municipal Operating Budget as recommended by the Council including the Sewer budget for \$16,085,233.00. The Budget Committee has recommended \$15,878,857.00. That compares to a default budget of \$15, 937,590.00.

The areas where the Budget Committee altered the Council's budget:

Community Development – vacation coverage – \$1485.00

Various Departments – reduced for fuel cost adjustment

Police Department – eliminated a patrol detective and communication position.

Reduced the miscellaneous line to zero and the legal line was reduced.

Library – Increased by \$17,000 for a pay equity adjustment based on a study done a few years ago.

Open Public Hearing

Vincent Lembo, 56 Main Street: I would like to know why the Police budget was reduced as much as it was?

J. Pieroni: The Police put in for 29 positions and they presently have funding for 28. The Budget Committee brought it back to 28 positions. They have had a vacant dispatch position for a while so that was eliminated and the miscellaneous line was becoming a catchall so we decided to eliminate that. Based on the historical record over the past five (5) years, they have significant funds remaining at the end of the year, which were either used for other items or returned back to the Town.

V. Lembo: The sign was an issue for a while but the Police had nothing to do with that sign. That sign was put in place based on the Council's decisions. Sandy Oliver pushed for sign when she was Budget Committee chair. The Chief is now being blamed for spending \$30,000 for a sign that he was directed to put in. Because of that, the Budget Committee is taking a shot at him and they feel he wasted \$30,000 on a sign. This is what the papers are saying.

J. Pieroni: I can't comment on what the papers are saying. We did have a meeting with the Committee, the Chief and the Police Commissioners. There were concerns that the sign was spent out of the Police Department's budget. The Police Commission has full authority over the Police Budget. The Council agreed with them doing it but they can't tell them to do it. That was a decision by the Police Department to do it. We were concerned that was never part of the budget process. It was never brought forward and it never went through any review. This came out of the miscellaneous line and was not represented in any of the backup presented. The Budget Committee did have questions about the way the Police budget was spent in previous years. There was a lot of money left in the salary line that was unspent and then used on these items. There were concerns but that was not the basis for the reductions in the budget. We kept the same number of sworn officers as they have funded this year, so we kept that number the same. We reduced the communication position because that has been available for a while. They've had a lot of money left over at the end of the year so we felt we could reallocate that money to other areas and still bring the budget in under default. It's not retribution; it is the reality of how the police budget was spent. The Police Commission had over \$300,000 left in their budget last year from the appropriated to the actual, which they had an appropriation of \$3.9 million of which they spent \$3.6 million even after spending money on the sign, the training range and other police equipment. So they had more than enough money to do a number of projects and purchase equipment and still have \$300,000 left over. That is the basis upon which we reduced the budget approximately \$200,000. It is not a punishment, but a reality. We were trying to bring a budget that did not exceed the default budget; in fact, we came in under the default budget. We did this by funding based upon past experience. We had data from five (5) years that there was money left over. The truth is, the facts show that we funded this based upon the actual expenditures verses the appropriation.

V. Lembo: The Police Chief, over several past years, had excess money in his budget. Is that a fair statement? What does he do with that money?

J. Pieroni: Some of the money was spent; we had a list of what that money was spent on. Some of the money was returned back to the Town to offset the taxes.

V. Lembo: Was it more often than not that he returns most of the money back to the Town's General Fund?

J. Pieroni: I wouldn't say most. I would say that the Police Commission did not expend all of their budget. That is true over the past five (5) years.

V. Lembo: And most of the money he turns back is because of salaries because he can't hire staffing that the voters gave him authorization to have? He can't get the officers so now the voters authorize him to have "x" amount of personnel, and because he can't fill those positions, you as a Budget Committee are eliminating those positions even though the voters voted them in. How can you do that?

J. Pieroni: We eliminated one sworn officer's position; the other one is in the Communications Department. From the Police Department, we reduced the budget by the cost of one officer. The Chief has the option to take money from other areas. For example, there is a patrol car in the budget; they can decide not to buy the patrol car. They have a couple that they haven't even put on the road yet. They can apply that towards it. They have the option to spend. With regard to what authority do we have, it is our job to create the budget, and that is what we have done. As far as how many officers he is able to hire, he and the Police Commission can move monies around as they wish and as they have done in the past.

V. Lembo: If they need money to fill the position that the voters gave them, they have to take it out of another line item to pay the officer that eventually they maybe able to get. In reality, the Budget Committee is reducing the personnel of the Police Department.

J. Pieroni: The funding that we provided for is for 28 officers. That is based upon the history of how many officers they've had and how they've spent the money. It is a tough time and that is the decision that we made. We appreciate your comments and I take it from what you are saying you would prefer us to put the funding back in.

V. Lembo: Yes, I request you have a reconsideration vote tonight to at least reinstate the monies for the personnel you took out of the budget, at the very least. Crime rate is going up, everyone is out of work.

J. Pieroni: We will take it under consideration.

JR Ouellette: We are not eliminating a position, we are eliminating funding.

V. Lembo: For the position, what is the difference?

JR Ouellette: For the past three (3) years there has been \$333,000 just in the wage line that hasn't been spent. That's an average.

V. Lembo: And it's been returned back to the Town.

N. Comai: Some of these decisions were made based on what other Town's our size have for positions and I felt that we were overweight and I felt we could take some that money out and hire less officers.

V. Lembo: I understand your viewpoint but the voters gave him those positions. So the Budget Committee can just eliminate positions at will even though the voters said...

J. Pieroni: We didn't eliminate positions.

V. Lembo: You did the same thing, Mr. Pieroni. You eliminated the money for those positions.

J. Pieroni: Those positions were never filled so we've taken the money that hasn't been used for the past five (5) years and reallocated it.

J. Danforth: For clarity, I'd like to add that this budget, which we recommended, reflects 28 positions that were funded. The Police Department only has 26 officers on staff. There are still 2 positions that have not been filled. Eliminating funding that would reflect potentially one position, we are not really doing any damage to the Town of Hooksett because he still is yet to hire these two officers that he's receiving funding for.

V. Lembo: So, if he can get these positions filled, he has to come back to the voters to get them reinstated into the budget?

D. Argo: Under the current budget there are 28 sworn officers, the proposed budget has the same amount. The proposal was for 29, and we took it back to the 28 that it is now. So we didn't cut any positions, we didn't allow an additional position; funding for an additional position.

V. Lembo: I'd have to go look at that.

D. Argo: The Police Commission proposed 29, a new position. We did not fund that new position.

V. Lembo: Wouldn't he have to go to Warrant Article to get that position?

D. Argo: The budget doesn't tell you how many officers you can have. The budget tells you how much money you have. He can have one hundred officers if he can get them to work for that same amount of money. The budget doesn't tell you how many officers you have. The 28 number in the present budget came right from the Chief and the Police Commission. That's what they said; they wanted to bring it back up to the 29. We said we were going to leave it at the 28. If he can decide and make choices and needs the 29, he can make those choices as he has in the past, they spend the money on equipment or whatever else they want.

V. Lembo: What about the dispatcher's position, if he gets a person to fill that dispatcher's position, he's got to take the money from another line and fund that position?

M. Miville: On January 31st, Chief Agrafiotis testified at the Budget Committee meeting, described the dispatcher. Dispatch is currently funded for 7 full time positions and we have full time positions. A few years ago, we let go two (2) positions when fire and ambulance went to Concord for coverage. We went from 9 to 7. We currently have 7 full time civilian positions, default has five (5) and five (5) are currently filled. Those two (2) full time positions have been vacant for two (2) years and we've restructured the departments and we have not asked to fill that position in the next budget. We took his advise and made it happen. Those were his words on January 31st.

V. Lembo: You really seem to me, in my opinion to have a chip on your shoulder.

M. Miville: In my deliberations, on how to do this, I'm taking his advise on how to proceed.

B. Gahara: Have we answered all your questions because we need to move on.

V. Lembo: I'd like to make one more statement, I think...

B. Gahara: I think this is a good time to say thank you.

V. Lembo: This is a public hearing and I am a member of the public.

B. Gahara: On the budget.

V. Lembo: Have we talked about anything else except the budget?

B. Gahara: Yes, signage...

V. Lembo: Well signage is part of the budget. If you read in the paper sir, the budget was constructed around issues with that sign.

J. Pieroni: We held a discussion with the Police Commission and the Police Chief before we ever received their budget. Part of our duties is to review how expenditures have taken place in the budgets. In order to have a background to prepare this budget, we had a meeting with the Police Commission and those issues came up. We did not even have their budget at the time we had that discussion with them. That was background information. The discussion of the sign did not take place as part of the deliberation for this budget. It was as a review of last year's budget and the previous year's budget as to how that money was spent. This budget has nothing to do with that sign.

V. Lembo: Committee members should keep their statement out of the paper then.

J. Pieroni: We reviewed it and Committee members can make any statements they make but this Committee, in terms of their deliberation on the budget, made its decision on past expenditure records and that's our job, and that's what we've done. Does anyone else have any comments or questions on the budget? Hearing none, we will move on to the Warrant Articles.

Sewer Bond

Read into the record the revised Warrant Article based on new input from the Sewer Commission

Read into the record

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$6,224,375 (Six Million Two Hundred Twenty Four Thousand Three Hundred Seventy Five Dollars) for the purpose of construction, replacement, and expansion of a portion of the Wastewater Treatment plant, and to authorize the issuance up to \$6,224,375 of bonds or notes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act RSA 33, and to authorize the Town Council to issue and negotiate such bonds or notes and determine the rate of interest thereon; furthermore to authorize Town Council to enter into a grant agreement with the State Revolving Loan Program whereas 50% of this bondnote will be repaid by the State of New Hampshire through the Federal STIMULUS package and balance of not more than 50% will be paid for by sewer system development fees and sewer ratepayers. No money is to be raised by taxation. (3/5 ballot vote required) This article is contingent on the Federal Stimulus grant and if the grant is not received, this article will be null and void. **RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (6-0)***

B

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$75,918 (Seventy Five Thousand Nine Hundred Eighteen Dollars) for salaries and benefits to be set aside in a merit wage pool for non union full-time and part-time Town personnel.

RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (8-0)

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Salaries</u>	<u>Benefits</u>
2009-10	\$64,972	\$10,946

C

To see if the Town will vote to approve the cost item included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Town of Hooksett and the Hooksett Permanent Firefighters Association Local 3264, IAFF which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

Estimated increase over prior year

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Salaries</u>	<u>Taxes</u>	<u>Benefits</u>
2009-10	\$48,412	\$1,053	\$54,441
2010-11	\$38,871	\$ 571	\$ 6,885

and further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$103,906 (One Hundred Three Thousand Nine Hundred Six Dollars) for the current fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits over those of the appropriation at current staffing levels paid in the prior fiscal year. **RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (6-0)**

C-1

Shall the Town, if article #C is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address article #C cost items only? **RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (8-0)**

D

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$31,955 (Thirty One Thousand Nine Hundred Fifty Five Dollars) for the salary, benefits and taxes for a full-time Children's Librarian for the Hooksett Public Library. This appropriation is for six months of the first year's wages, as the employee will be hired in the last six months of the 2009-10 fiscal year. Should this warrant article pass, the full annual amount for salary and benefits will be included in subsequent operating budgets. **RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (6-2)**

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Salaries</u>	<u>Taxes</u>	<u>Benefits</u>
2009-10	\$19,500	\$1,492	\$10,963

E

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 (Ten Thousand Dollars) to be placed in the Town-Wide Computer Development Capital Reserve Fund already established. **RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (8-0),**

F

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$130,000 (One Hundred Thirty Thousand Dollars) to be placed in the Town Building Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund already established. This sum to come from the General fund balance and no amount to be raised from taxation. **RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (8-0)**

G

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$40,000 (Forty Thousand Dollars) to be placed in the Town Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund already established. **RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (8-0),**

H

*To see if the Town will vote to establish a capital reserve fund under the provision of RSA 35:1 for the purpose of updating the Town of Hooksett's Master Plan and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 (Ten Thousand Dollars) to be placed in this fund, and to name the Town Administrator as the agent to expend. **RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (8-0)***

I

*To see if the Town will vote to establish a capital reserve fund under the provision of RSA 35:1 for the purpose of a Road Impact Fee Traffic Study and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$34,000 (Thirty Four Thousand Dollars) to be placed in this fund, and to name the Town Administrator as the agent to expend. **RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (8-0)***

J

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$20,000 (Twenty Thousand Dollars) to be placed in the Fire Air Packs & Bottles Capital Reserve Fund already established. **RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (6-2)***

K

Not recommended by Town Council

L

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 (Ten Thousand Dollars) to be placed in the Fire Cistern Capital Reserve Fund already established. **RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (8-0)***

M

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$140,000 (One Hundred Forty Thousand Dollars) to purchase a Plow Dump Truck for the Highway Department. **RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (7-1),***

N

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$64,000 (Sixty Four Thousand Dollars) for the completion of repairs to the northeast retaining wall located at the corner of Martins Ferry Road and North River Road. This sum to come from the General fund balance and no amount to be raised from taxation. **RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (8-0)***

O

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 (Ten Thousand Dollars) to be placed in the Parks and Recreation Facilities Development Capital Reserve Fund already established. **RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (8-0)***

P

*To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 (Ten Thousand Dollars) to be placed in the Emergency Radio Communication Development Capital Reserve Fund already established. **RECOMMENDED BY TOWN COUNCIL (8-0)***

ADJOURNMENT

The chairman adjourned the meeting at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Ann Moynihan