



*Budget Committee Meeting
Approved Minutes
February 15, 2012*

These minutes were prepared as a reasonable summary of the essential content of this meeting, not as a transcription.

1. Review Minutes from Previous Meetings

Chair Martino called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Those in attendance were Select Board representative Jim Maggiore, Dickie Garnett, Margaret Allen, Michael Golden, David Peck, Richard Stanton and Victoria Kilroy.

Motion by Rick Stanton to approve the minutes of January 17, 2012. Seconded by Jim Maggiore. Motion carries 7-0-1.

Motion by Dickie Garnett to approve the minutes of January 31, 2012. Seconded by David Peck. Motion carries 7-0-1.

Motion by David Peck to approve the minutes of February 7, 2012 as amended. Seconded by Jim Maggiore. Motion carries 7-0-1.

Town Administrator Fournier stated that he is proposing a reduction in the Health Insurance line by \$25,000 after receiving the numbers from the Local Government Center. This amount reflects a decrease of 5%, with reductions due to non union employees voluntarily switching to a lower cost, higher deductible plan. He further stated that this would bring the town's operating budget down to a 1.7% increase over last year.

Town Administrator Fournier stated that there is \$100,000 in the Capital Reserve Fund for Road Reconstruction, so the Select Board will be proposing to cut the proposed warrant article for road reconstruction by \$100,000.

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Motion by Mr. Peck to take each individual health insurance account number, add up the total, reduce that total by \$25,000, then re-spread the numbers to each of the individual health insurance account numbers so that the net effect of health insurance is a reduction of \$25,000 bringing the total operating budget to \$5,677,880 based on the recommendation of the Town Administrator. Seconded by Dickie Garnett. Motion carries 9-0.

2. Review Library Budget

Dickie Garnett stated that he reviewed the budget via email with Susan Grant and stated that looking at the numbers and the reductions, they almost offset the increases in salaries.

Library Director Susan Grant distributed a copy of salary comparisons from other towns to show a comparison to where the town is compared to others. She further stated that the employees had not had a raise for three years.

Mr. Stanton asked why the librarians had disability insurance and he also asked why there was a decrease under Maintenance and Repairs and what the non appropriated funds were that would be used for these expenses.

Ms. Grant stated that the Non Appropriated funds are used to fill in the gaps of the budget all of the time. She stated that these funds are donations either from individuals, charitable funds, book sales or collected through the conscience fund at the library.

Town Administrator Fournier explained that the Town offers long term and short term disability and it is a benefit that the employees receive.

Mr. Peck stated that he had a question that is more directed at the Library Trustees, and that when he looks at the salary increases, they are a dramatic 7% increase in staff salaries and a 5.4% increase in hourly employees. He further stated he would like to hear from the Trustees why they think that is reasonable.

Kelly Parrott, Library Trustee stated that the Trustees looked at the comparison of what other libraries were making and the number of years they have gone without raises. She further stated that the library does not have a merit pool like the town does to offer increases.

Mr. Peck reiterated that it would mean a 7%, and that the residents of the town could only expect to see an approximate increase of 1.5%.

Mrs. Parrott stated that she realized that, but the Trustees voted unanimously in favor of the increases, and if looked at over a three year period of time it isn't too much to ask for the amount of work that they do.

Mr. Golden stated that he agreed that when looking at the comps that were provided that the director was due for an increase, but the Children's Librarian appears to be at the top.

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Mrs. Allen stated that they also didn't know how long some of the librarians and directors have been in their position, but felt that they have really combed through the budget and are cutting back on a lot of different categories.

Mr. Maggiore stated that he felt there was a big effort to get an offset to the salary increases and had no objections to the budget.

Mr. Hamilton stated that he also agreed with a 1.7% increase, and that he trusted the Trustees and the librarian to allot the resources that they have.

Mr. Golden stated that the library consistently year after year presented a lot of value to the dollars that are spent and commended them for delivering another workable budget.

3. Review Police Budget

Chief Page gave an overview of his proposed budget for 2012/2013 by line item.

Chief Page explained that the salary line item includes a full complement of officers and they are currently down by one officer at this time. He further stated that last year there was a high turnover rate for the first time in eight to nine years and the department was down an average of three or four officers for the last two and one half years.

Mr. Golden asked for clarification in the Holiday Pay line item and if it is an additional amount on top of the employee's salary.

Chief Page stated that by contract each employee receives a separate check for holiday pay.

Mrs. Kilroy asked if the SERT Coalition was a set rate or if was a per usage fee.

Chief Page stated that it is a set rate, however because the police department has a sniper and two crisis negotiators on the team it cuts the dues in half.

Mr. Peck stated when looking at the 12 month rolling total in Vehicle Repairs and Maintenance it is a lot more than what is being budgeted for, and wondered if it was an anomaly as compared to prior years expended.

Chief Page explained that the 2004 Ford Explorer has cost almost \$4,000 so far this year in repairs. He further stated that also in the past, there has been another line item within the budget for deductibles related to vehicle accidents, but it is now coming out of the police department budget. Chief Page stated that there have been two collisions this year.

Mr. Golden asked if historically gas consumption has gone up or down, or has it remained the same.

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Chief Page stated that it was down due to lack of personnel, and not as many vehicles on the road.

Mr. Golden asked what the reason has been for the turnover in personnel.

Chief Page stated that the response he has gotten was that they are leaving for a promotion.

Mr. Peck asked about the spike in the retirement line item.

Town Administrator Fournier stated that there was a spike due to the state cutting their funding of retirement, and passing the cost to the town.

Mrs. Allen commented that she felt the Chief had presented a very solid budget.

Mr. Peck stated that as a multiyear member of the budget committee, it is always a joy to hear Chief Page's presentations, because he is the most prepared department head that the town has.

Chief Page stated that up until 2005, the police department bought the cruisers outright, but that it was costing such a high number in the warrant articles at the polls, they started to fail. He further stated that he became concerned and with the suggestion of two former budget committee members, looked into a lease/ purchase program. Chief Page stated that historically this has been very successful since 2005, and a warrant article has not failed under the lease/ purchase program as it shows the public that funds are being used out of the police detail revolving program. He further stated that the current balance is approximately \$110,000 in the police detail revolving account.

Chief Page reviewed mileage and hours on each of the police cruisers and explained his reasoning for only budgeting for one police cruiser instead of two. He stated that he did not want to propose a warrant article that was too high and take the risk of the article failing. Chief Page further stated that he also chose to propose one cruiser (a utility) because they were having to go with a new model this year, as the Crown Victoria has been discontinued.

Chair Martino asked Town Administrator Fournier for more information on the copier lease/purchase for the next meeting.

4. Review Fire Dept. Budget

Chief Cote stated that his budget shows a 3.7% increase, which will now change due to the lower health care cost information that was recently received. He further explained that most of the items with an increase to the budget are contractual.

Chief Cote stated that there is an increase in the overtime of 7%. He further stated that of the twelve full time employees, seven of them receive three weeks of vacation time, plus days after ten.

Chief Cote explained that the increase in training is due to the reclassification by the National Registry of EMT's of the basic to intermediate.

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Mr. Peck questioned why there was a much higher amount being budgeted than was actual spent in the Dues and Subscriptions line.

Chief Cote stated that he would have to research that further and get back to the budget committee with that information.

Chief Cote stated that Radio Maintenance has proposed increase of \$230. Chief Cote explained that the fire department has received grants for radio communication and equipment. However, batteries need to be replaced and are not covered under any warranties.

Chief Cote explained that his fuel line was high last year due to the department being extremely busy during the summer months.

Chief Cote stated that there is a big issue with vehicle maintenance. He stated that with the exception of \$3,500 the money is strictly budgeted for services, certifications for the aerial and the pump, as well as inspections for all of the vehicles. The past year and this year have seen large, unplanned expenses for repairs.

Mr. Peck asked for clarification as to why the amount proposed for vehicle maintenance was 50% higher than prior years.

Chief Cote stated that close to \$10,000 for vehicle maintenance was classified under the wrong account, and that the Town Accountant would be adjusting that account.

Chair Martino asked what the cost of a new ambulance would be.

Chief Cote stated that they can run anywhere between \$170,000 to \$205,000.

Chief Cote stated that there is a proposed increase of \$2,100 in Equipment. This amount is for a specific piece of equipment for the ambulance called a RAD 57 that measures CO level.

Mr. Stanton asked for an update on the paramedic program.

Town Administrator Fournier stated that the Select Board did implement the paramedic program and offered it to employees. No employees took part in it and unfair labor practice was filed against the town for not negotiating the creation of a paramedic program with the Local 3211. He further stated that it is the town's prerogative to create new programs and they are awaiting a decision.

Town Administrator Fournier noted that Chief Cote has been very active in securing grants and has been working on everything for securing grants for fire trucks to training.

Mr. Stanton stated that he wanted to give some feed back as to what he has learned during the budgeting process as fire department liaison.

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Mr. Stanton stated that there is a lot of difference between the police and fire departments in how they work.

Mr. Stanton reviewed scheduling, full time employees versus part time, response times, insurance rates.

Mr. Stanton stated that he was surprised at the lack of a Deputy Fire Chief within the town's fire department. He further stated that some of the Chief's duties such as public relations, has been set aside because there is not the ability to step away and hand the command over to a Deputy. Mr. Stanton stated that he asked the Chief to put together some numbers for what it would take to have a Captain or a Deputy and found that \$75,000 would include an increase in salary, but a decrease in the overtime budget. He further stated that for the benefit of the town, there needs to be somebody that is second in command.

Mr. Peck stated that although he agreed that the town has a great Chief and department, he did not agree that the town needed a Deputy Chief. He further stated that when looking at towns in the area of comparable size, almost none have a Deputy Chief, and is completely unnecessary for a town of 5,000 people.

Mr. Peck stated that he also disagreed with the 24 hour shift, and felt it is not used 90% of the time, but more likely 50%, and he further stated that the overtime budget spiked significantly when the 24 hour shift was made. Mr. Peck stated that he would rather have someone that is well rested after a 10 hour shift attend to him then someone who is at the tail end of a 24 hour shift.

Chief Cote stated that he has a warrant article for \$50,000 to be funded from the Capital Reserve account for refurbishment work to Engine 2 to be sure that the vehicle will last.

Chair Martino called for a brief recess before starting the Highway budget presentation.

Chair Martino called the meeting back to order.

5. Review Highway Budget

Mr. Garnett stated that the highway budget comes in at the number that the budget committee asked it to be. He further stated that street lights was budgeted a little higher as it has been expended over the past few years.

Public Works Director John Hubbard reviewed the highlights of his budget, and stated that it is a 1.5% increase over last year. Some of the increases include part time pay, health insurance, contract snowplowing, fuel and equipment.

Mr. Peck asked for clarification on the overtime budget because the amount spent has not come close to what has been budgeted.

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Mr. Hubbard stated that a lot of the overtime budget has to do with snow removal and many of the storms last year were during the weekday hours when the employees would normally be working. He further stated he did have an employee out on disability last year.

Mr. Peck stated he would like to have the highway overtime budget as an action item so that they could take another look at it.

Chair Martino asked if the paving for the three roads that were approved last year will be done.

Mr. Hubbard stated that reclamation work has begun on Cherry Road and will be completed in the spring. He further stated that he is working on a 15 year road condition and proposed maintenance plan that will be distributed in a few weeks.

Mr. Peck asked when the Solid Waste contract ends.

Mr. Hubbard stated that the town's contract is up at the end of 2015.

Mrs. Kilroy asked if the town went to mandatory recycling, would the tipping fees drop considerably.

Town Administrator Fournier stated that the only way you could get a mandatory recycling program to work is if you also implement a pay as you throw program because you have to pay more to throw away trash so people tend to recycle more.

Mr. Hubbard stated that 30% of the waste in town is recycled.

Chair Martino stated that the Recycling budget seems to be under spent by close to 20% over the past two years.

Mr. Hubbard stated that he can foresee some expenses coming with a baler and a fork truck.

Chair Martino and Mr. Peck asked that Mr. Hubbard take another look at the budget to be sure the numbers are correct.

Mr. Hubbard reviewed his proposed warrant articles, with the first being a replacement vehicle for the 2003 Ford F550. Mr. Hubbard handed out copies of what the vehicle is and what it consists of. The proposed truck is a Ford F650 with double the life expectancy of a F550 which figures out to 15 to 20 years, and it is also a more efficient and versatile truck.

Mr. Golden asked what has been the spending history on repairs and maintenance for the current vehicles.

Mr. Hubbard stated that normally between \$2,000 and \$3,000 is spent.

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Mr. Hubbard stated that his next warrant article is for road resurfacing on Rockrimmon, North Road, South Road and Fern Road. He stated that the funds would be for resurfacing only. Drainage issues and any other expenses will come from the highway budget.

Mr. Golden asked what would happen if the warrant article was voted down.

Mr. Hubbard stated there would be no projects completed for that year.

6. Other

Chair Martino stated that at next week's meeting he would like go over the items that have been flagged at the last meeting as well as this meeting, as well as a review of the warrant articles.

Mrs. Allen asked if the school provides the budget committee with expenditure updates on a regular basis.

Mr. Peck stated that they are received on a quarterly basis.

Town Administrator Fournier reminded all committee members about email communications and the Right to Know Law. He cautioned committee members not to ask and answer questions via email as this is a violation of the law, and up to a \$250 fine can be levied for those who violate it.

Motion by Mr. Peck to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 PM. Seconded by Mrs. Allen. Motion carries

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Facella, Administrative Assistant

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