

Minutes
Nottingham Budget Committee Meeting
November 14, 2013

Members Present: Chet Batchelder, Donna Danis, Anthony Dumas, Korey Ferland, Jason Marcotte, James O'Brien, Jackie Snow, Jeff Wheeler, Mark Carpenter – BOS Representative, Peter Perron – School Board Representative

Members Absent: Michael Koester

Others: Dawn Wirkkala – Secretary, Town Administrator Charles Brown, Selectmen Mary Bonser
Chair Batchelder opened the meeting and introductions were completed.

OUTSTANDING MINUTES: Chair Batchelder stated minute approval will take place at the next meeting.

TOWN BUDGET 1ST DRAFT: Chair Batchelder requested an overview of the budget planning process and a review of the budget amounts.

Mr. Brown stated the budget planning guidelines were previously submitted to committee members. The Selectmen have started with an initial 3% COLA but a change of the percentage is expected. The Selectmen have not met with every department yet or completed a line by line review of the Administrative and regular Town account amounts and changes will continue as additional information is received.

The Town recently had an energy audit of electric usage to determine where savings might be found and will be completing the suggested upgrades to Town buildings in the next couple of months. While electric costs are steady in most buildings, the new Fire House has seen increases for unknown reasons; reviews to determine why continue.

The Executive account has a slight overall increase primarily because of salary changes, but many of the account lines remain unchanged.

The Town Clerk account has increased. The Salary and Fees are calculated by averaging the total amount collected from the prior year and the office will start to accept Boat Registration for the first time in over 10 years. Required training for accepting boat registrations will be a one time \$400.00 expense and software has a \$50.00 annual support fee.

Mr. Wheeler asked where the boat fees were paid before and Mr. Dumas asked if the registrations would pay for the proposed expenses. Mr. Brown stated registration fees were paid to other town clerks or in stores and he isn't sure about the total amount of fees that will be collected; the Town Clerk processes an estimated \$72,000.00 in revenue for Nottingham which is over the requested expense amount.

The Election account has increased by \$7,444.00. Mr. Brown reviewed the Moderator has requested a change in how the position is paid, significantly increasing the salary line. The request is to change from a \$300.00 annual stipend to an hourly wage, similar to how the Supervisors of the Checklist and Ballot Clerks are paid. There is also a request for a Deputy Moderator.

Ms. Danis asked if the requested number of hours is realistic, Mr. Perron asked if the Town has been deficient with their Election procedures and Ms. Snow asked what other towns do for the Moderator position. Mr. Carpenter and Ms. Bonser stated Nottingham hasn't been deficient, the duties being completed by other Moderators at the \$300.00 annual stipend and Mr. Brown stated he isn't sure what other towns pay their moderators. Mr. Carpenter stated this is an elected position and should be done more on a volunteer basis and not to earn a salary. Mr. Brown stated the Moderator position has had an increase in election duty requirements, but they are still similar to requirements of the past.

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Mr. Perron agreed, elected positions should be a stipend amount; if the Selectmen or School Board calculated the hours they worked, the amount they earn would be significantly higher than what they receive.

Discussion took place about the number of elections and duties of the Moderator and Supervisors of the Checklist. The Supervisor has also requested increasing their hourly rate, in addition to the Election workers.

The Financial Administration/Tax Collector account has increased. The Tax Collector has requested an increase in salary where he has not in the past few years and new locking cabinets for secure storage. Mr. Brown stated the Bookkeeper, and other office staff, often does not request/include the hours they work over 40 hours on their timesheets although they often work over 40 hours. The annual accounting audit also increased for the first year of the federal GASB guidelines review.

Mr. Ferland asked if the Tax Collector position was also an elected position and should there be a difference when calculating an increase between this position and the Moderator position. It was stated the Tax Collector works 9 hours a week and additional hours to complete the required duties. The Moderator works only for the elections, with set up, the day of, and any re-counts.

Mr. Brown stated the Assessing/Revaluation line has decreased, despite recommending the Assessing Coordinator position change from part time to full time. The salary is decreased due to a lower hourly rate, but an increase is seen on insurance lines. Mr. Brown stated the work load is such that he has recommended the change to full time for many years, but the offer was refused by the prior coordinator.

Ms. Danis asked about the assessing process, data verification and the duties of the Assessor in relation to the duties of the Assessing Coordinator. Mr. Brown stated data verification is completed by the contract assessor and even though there is one contract it is a separate account line item. The Assessor completes tasks requiring specific certification levels, while the Coordinator processes any work needed for or provided by the Assessor, entering property information collected during data verification and other data collection, in addition to a variety of other assessing related tasks.

Mr. Brown stated the Legal expenses may be reduced even further. However, there is an anticipated lawsuit, which hopefully will be resolved by the end of 2013 and the extra amount could be removed from the budget. Mr. Perron asked about the Legal Enforcement line. Mr. Brown stated he requested these lines be broken out to clarify when legal requests were for enforcement of zoning and other town ordinances.

Personnel Administration is increased with the 7.9% health insurance premium changes and the account also includes other insurances and co-pay assistance. The Town has requested to receive health insurance proposals from a new company and insurance may change if the quote is significantly less.

Mr. Marcotte asked about the 7.9% as the increase appears to be more than that amount and Mr. Wheeler asked how payments are made. Mr. Carpenter stated overall premiums increased 7.9% and the line also includes the addition of more employees covered and Mr. Brown stated insurance is paid on a monthly basis.

Mr. Carpenter asked about the Fire and Police Department retirement amounts. Mr. Brown stated the amounts cannot be calculated until the final COLA is established. The payment is a downshift of cost to the Town because the State mandates the amount but does not offer the financial assistance they did in the past.

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Planning Board has an overall decrease, despite an increase for the Planning Board Secretary. The Zoning Board account is slightly decreased. Dues and Conferences typically remain unused, despite availability for training, and it has been decreased for the Zoning Board.

Town Buildings and Maintenance has a slight increase overall, but the majority of lines are decreasing. Part of increase includes the COLA and 2 additional hours per week for cleaning staff. Mowing/Shoveling is increased to cover actual costs and someone is also needed for snow shoveling.

Mr. Dumas asked why fewer services were offered at a higher cost. Mr. Brown explained the prior contractor's bid was significantly lower than other proposals and unfortunately the quality of work reflected the lower price, causing a change in contractor. The new contractor agreed to complete the lawn work at the lower price to help out the town, but next year it will be at a higher amount and shoveling isn't provided. Mr. Marcotte asked if there is enough work to hire a laborer to complete all the needed tasks. Mr. Brown stated there might be enough tasks but it would also mean purchasing all the equipment.

Mr. Brown stated the Recycle Center needs a new roof and proposals have been received. Mr. Marcotte asked about the CIP plan and proposed expense for a new building. Mr. Carpenter stated the Selectmen requested a placeholder for consideration of new construction because of the age and condition of the building. Ms. Bonser stated the Selectmen will also include a building needs study in 2015 to determine what exact changes will be needed at the Center.

The Grange maintenance has been completed; a new company has been contracted to maintain the all town building HVAC systems which should provide better and consistent service; the Library has requested outside invasive weed removal.

Mr. Brown stated the cost for the Town Offices trash dumpster is also continuing to increase for unknown reasons. Ms. Bonser stated a call should be placed to Waste Management to request a decrease.

Mr. Ferland asked if the maintenance cost for the ball fields and reseeding was shared by all the users. Mr. Brown stated the Town pays for all municipal grounds mowing and maintenance. Mr. Marcotte asked about the playground and receiving maintenance; repairs and maintenance is covered by volunteer work and the Playground Fund. Ms. Snow asked if the Town could also help pay for playground maintenance? There was agreement the town could help but it is becoming a concern with lack of donation and general discussion took place about maintaining the playground and whose responsibility it is to maintain.

Discussion took place about maintaining the ball fields, even with the hope to transition the fields to the Marston Farm. It was stated some interim work might be completed, but it appears it is not clear who actually is responsible for ball field maintenance and the Selectmen should establish it.

Mr. Brown stated Insurance expenses have been increased. The amount charged for Property Liability was increased significantly because of the method used to calculate the premium. Despite having minimal claims, the few the Town had were expensive, and the calculation to determine the rate now also includes an experience rating. The Selectmen requested a determination of increasing the deductible as a method to reduce the premiums.

Mr. Brown stated the Planning Association total remains the same. The Selectmen and Planning Board determined again to refrain from being a due paying member because the services provided are not equal to the requested annual payment. Information about the services being provided has been requested from Strafford Regional Planning Commission, including updating planning maps,

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but the information hasn't been received. A proposal to update the maps has been received, but the expense is still less than the regular annual dues.

The Police Department has increased. Salaries include the COLA as well as merit increases, Officers are providing more hours for court appearances, and with keeping Officers longer they are able to utilize benefits and a new 16 hour a week part time officer is being requested. The part time officer will be available when the full time staff is needed elsewhere and to cover regular duties; the new position should help to keep the over-time budget lower.

Discussion took place about the services provided by the county offices and what services are paid for with the county tax. It was stated the County Attorney fees are not included in the regular county service tax amount and discussion continues about the recently requested additional fees for dispatch services.

The Police Department is requesting another Explorer instead of a sedan because it is an overall better vehicle; the cost difference between the sedan and Explorer is approximately \$2000.00. Vehicles are replaced on an annual rotating basis with a total of four vehicles being used.

Mr. Dumas asked why the Town Office and Police Department don't share an internet connection. Mr. Brown stated the accounts were separate from years ago, when the departments were in separate buildings and it continued, but a combined bill could be reviewed. Mr. Wheeler stated the Town appears to be paying too much for internet and phones across the board.

The Fire Department is increased. The salary line is significantly increased because it now includes all three full time staff members for the entire year, where it hasn't been in the past two years.

Mr. Perron asked why there is an increase in both the staff line and the stipend staff; there should be a justification for the increase of the amount of stipend being used. It was stated the full time staff provide day time coverage only, the stipend staff is night and weekend coverage. The Committee requested more details and justification of the stipend costs; how many and what hours are services provided.

Mr. O'Brien asked if there is an ongoing plan for vaccination and why the budget is significantly increased. Mr. Brown stated they do have a plan but the Selectmen haven't met with the Fire Chief yet so the answer is unknown.

Building Inspector has a minimal increase due to the COLA.

Emergency Management will remain level funded; equipment is available and must be available for emergency use. However, the equipment isn't typically used because people in Nottingham prefer to stay home.

The Highway Department does have a decrease despite salary increases for full time and part time staff; the vehicle equipment parts line is increased as it is typically overspent; the grader payments are completed; and the cost of salt has decreased.

Shim and Sealcoat is increased; covering what is typically an increase in paving material costs.

Mr. Marcotte asked if the department purchases extra quantities of salt when there are any remaining funds in the Salt budget. Mr. Carpenter stated if the funds are available at the end of the year it might be something the Road Agent will consider.

Mr. Carpenter stated the Conservation Commission has requested using less salt, but the alternatives offered had a significant change in equipment and potential cost. Nottingham uses significantly less salt than the surrounding communities and the department does use a combination of salt and sand.

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Recycle Center includes the COLA but the Recycle Committee is asking the Selectmen for additional processing hours. Mr. Carpenter requested to see the 2012 Full time employee expenses for comparison of salary changes and Ms. Bonser requested to see the center electricity costs.

Mr. Brown stated there are increases to the Construction and Equipment lines for changes due to the reconfiguration of material storages. Mr. Carpenter stated the committee is making recommendations for purchases and changes but there will be documentation showing the value of the change.

There were no changes to the Animal Control or Health Officer budgets and only a small increase to the General Assistance budget.

Recreation Department has increased because of the COLA and an increase in base salary for the part time Recreation Assistance.

Mr. Brown stated the Selectmen have not met with the Library yet, salaries will increase and more information is coming.

Conservation Commission has a minimal increase with additional funds for mileage.

Mr. Brown stated he would answer any questions members had about the warrant article items.

There is a slight increase for highway construction, but the amount is typical based on prior year expenses and two roads will be rebuilt. The Social Services account lines requests does include a new service with Seacoast Family Promise but will no longer provide assistance to the closed Women's Aid, most other agencies remain level funded.

Mr. Perron asked about providing funds to Ready Rides; prior budget year discussion indicated the agency would receive start up funding but no funds going forward; it would seek grants and private funding. There was agreement to the understanding, but the answer regarding additional funding wasn't known. It was stated the service has been used by Nottingham residents and was worth the donation provided.

Mr. Brown stated he has introduced a new Cistern/Dry Hydrant Replacement Fund to start raising funds for replacements in the future. Discussion will continue to determine an appropriate amount because of the significant cost of hydrant replacement.

Mr. Brown reviewed the other capital reserve accounts remained level funded.

Committee members thanked Mr. Brown and Ms. Bonser for attending.

CIP COMMITTEE UPDATE: Mr. Perron stated the final touches are being completed and the information will be coming soon; next week it should be added to the agenda for review.

SCHOOL BUDGET INFORMATION: The next school budget review will be presented on December 12. Mr. Perron stated the board continues to work on the details, will review warrant articles and continue review of the default budget but will continue to hear any comments or concerns regarding the school budget from committee members; they can be emailed directly to Mr. Perron.

Chair Batchelder asked for a further breakdown of the curriculum development, any development with the transition of changing bookkeepers, and some of the information listed in the narrative does not match the food services line amount.

Ms. Snow requested to have the school budget as a permanent item on the agenda and agreement was received.

OTHER BUSINESS: The committee reviewed the November 21 agenda items. The LUCT information was distributed and Mr. Carpenter stated the Selectmen have an open and ongoing

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discussion taking place with the Conservation Commission about possibly capping the Conservation Fund.

ROUND TABLE: There were no comments received during round table.

ADJOURNMENT: Having no further business,

9:44 pm MOTION: by Mr. Marcotte, second by Ms. Danis.

Vote: 10 – 0 in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Wirkkala