

Minutes
Nottingham Budget Committee Meeting
November 21, 2013

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

Excused Absences: Jason Marcotte

Other in Attendance: Secretary Dawn Wirkkala, Town Administrator Charles Brown, Library Trustee Kathleen Matthews, Librarian Rhoda Capron, Mary Bonser, Police Chief Gunnar Foss, Road Agent John Fernald

Chair Batchelder called the meeting to order and introductions were completed.

Approval of Minutes

Motion: by Mr. Perron, second by Mr. Dumas to approve the November 7, 2013 minutes as amended.

Vote: 6 in favor / 3 abstained

Chair Batchelder stated he received a request from the Moderator to submit her comments regarding her budget. Mr. Brown stated he requested that Ms. Winona email the office which can then be distributed to the committee members.

Chair Batchelder asked about the Land Use Change Tax (LUCT)/Current Use information that was distributed at the prior meeting. Mr. Carpenter explained it is a full list of every transaction from the Conservation Commission Fund, including the amount of LUCT collected and the fund expenses; a simple income and expense sheet. The information also contains the total number of acres currently enrolled in the current use program. The Selectmen are discussing Conservation Commission efforts, proposed projects, and considering suggesting a possible cap to the fund in order to determine if some of the funds can be returned to the town to offset taxes. Ms Bonser reminded the committee the funds for Mulligan Forest were raised by taxation and did not come from the Conservation Fund and there should be a consideration if any LUCT can be returned to offset taxes. Mr. Carpenter stated anyone was welcome to attend the open meeting with the Conservation Commission.

Chair Batchelder asked for a review of the type of account and if a change to the account could take place to earn more interest.

TOWN DEPARTMENT REVIEW 2014 BUDGET:

7:15 pm Library: Ms. Capron and Ms. Matthews reviewed the Library budget. Ms. Capron stated the Selectmen only recently decided on a 2% COLA, there is the belief the Library Trustees will accept the adjustment from the originally calculated 3%, and a change may be coming.

Ms. Capron reviewed the materials distributed, including overall explanation of appropriations, staff members and their length of employment, a new part-time position of Children's Librarian, comparison of salaries from surrounding communities, and the patron/program participant statistics.

Ms. Capron explained the new proposed Children's Librarian position is budgeted for April to December. This position will be able to focus strictly on the significant amount of material available to children, in addition to spend more time on programs for children. There is a high

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volume of child participation at the Library and the expansion has been determined to be needed at this time; current staff is unable to provide all the time and hours needed.

Ms. Capron explained the Library receives a lump sum payment from the Town; expenses are not broken out as other town accounts are. However, a breakdown of the Library expenses is provided.

The Town provides payments through town accounts for the telephone, electricity and building and grounds maintenance. Ms. Capron reviewed the Library budget breakdown, most of which remained level funded. Furniture, Landscaping, Magazine/Newspapers, Professional Dues, Programming and Movies all have slight increases.

Discussion took place about the increases to Landscaping. The Library has had some significant issues with invasive plants, bittersweet and poison ivy and is requesting funds for replanting. The separate Town Library Building account also includes funds to continue preventing growth of invasive species to make sure the area and building is repaired, making the space usable again.

Ms. Capron stated additional magazines have been ordered. Professional Dues has been overspent in prior years but with the elimination of one membership, it has increased only slightly. Programming is increased to plan for the addition of new programs with the new Children's Librarian position and the Library will also help the Friends Program purchase passes to the Museum of Science and will split the cost.

Mr. Carpenter asked if museum passes were received at a reduced rate. Ms. Capron stated each museum has their own plan, some at a reduced rate, others not as much, but the passes are used by the patrons.

Ms. Capron and Ms. Matthews explained tracking of materials loaned at the library has shown a significant increase in the amount of movies borrowed and the increase of \$150.00 will provide more resources. Ms. Capron reviewed the circulation statistics for movies, books and other materials for the Library and recently adjusted the borrowing policies, extending the length of time that materials can be borrowed.

Mr. Ferland asked what classifies a new patron. Ms. Capron stated a new patron is a new library card. The Library currently has a total of 2165 library cards issues, library cards are renewed every three years, but the number of people who actually use the Library year round is a different total.

7:45 pm Police: Chief Foss reviewed the increases and decreases in his budget; the majority of lines remain level funded with increases for Salaries, the Rockingham County Attorney, Uniforms/Cleanings, Cruiser, Equipment Procurement/Maintenance for vehicle equipment and decreases in Radio Repair and the Highway Safety Grant.

Salaries include an additional 1% or 2% merit increase above the 2% COLA, in addition to needing more court time with less pre-trial negotiations taking place and an increase in calls received by the department; the full time overtime has also been increased for 2014. The part time salary budget is increased for the Investigator and also includes a request for a new part time officer to fill in when full time officers are using sick or vacation time or additional coverage is needed, which won't start until at least late summer. The Administrative Assistant budget also includes a part time assistant who will help cover the front desk due to a required leave of absence at the beginning of the year and during summer vacations as well. Officers are unable to cover for the Administrative Assistant and the front desk cannot remain empty and duties not done for any significant length of time.

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The Rockingham County Attorney budget has increased slightly as the hours needed can't always be anticipated. Uniforms and Cleaning is increased to cover the uniform and gear for the new part time officer.

Chief Foss stated he is requesting to purchase another Ford Explorer in 2014, a slightly more expensive option over the Ford Taurus, but it is a much better Police vehicle. There is the expectation of a much lesser trade in amount for the Crown Victoria, which has over 145,000 miles on it. Chief Foss stated the Ford Explorer is the best Police vehicle he has ever driven and while the Taurus is a very fine vehicle, the significantly smaller size makes it more difficult for the Officer to operate when inside. The Taurus and Explorer receive similar miles per gallon; with the recent reduction in gasoline prices there is an expectation the gasoline line will be further reduced. The Equipment Procurement/Maintenance will outfit the new vehicle as needed.

Mr. Ferland asked about consideration of a school resource officer. Mr. Foss stated discussion about a resource officer took place after the Sandy Hook school incident. After review and discussion of emergency procedures, officers are provided more quickly whenever they are requested, increases in the amount of visiting time during the mornings and afternoons have also been provided, and changes suggested increasing school security measures. Hiring a part time officer only for the school year and for elementary age students will be difficult to hire for and it is a difficult situation no matter how it is reviewed.

Chief Foss stated the Emergency Management budget is level funded. Services are available if they are needed.

Mr. Dumas asked if the department has started preparing for the FBI increased security policies. Chief Foss stated he is aware but has not made any changes. The Department works with Rockingham County Dispatch for calls, the department has their own radio maintenance staff and because changes are still taking place he will wait until final changes are required before updating in-house systems.

Chief Foss stated the funds for the 2013 Highway Safety Grant will remain unspent, because the matching grant was given to another group and he will not be seeking funds for 2014.

8:15 pm Highway: Mr. John Fernald reviewed the highway budget, which remained level funded for many lines. Increases are seen in Salaries, Equipment Parts (vehicles) and for the Shim and Seal Coat budget and decreases in Grader/Loader Lease and Salt.

Salaries were increased with the 2% COLA for both full time and part time staff. Equipment Parts was increased by \$5000.00 because of the increase seen for repairs in 2013, which did cause the 2013 Highway budget to go over budget. Payments for the Grader/Loader Lease finished in 2013 and the line was decreased to zero for 2014.

Chair Batchelder asked about the number of culverts replaced in 2013 and less money being spent. Mr. Koester asked if additional culverts will need to be replaced next year because fewer were replaced this year. Mr. John Fernald stated he didn't spend as much because of the increase in vehicle maintenance, replaced fewer culverts in 2013 but is comfortable with the amount replaced and doesn't expect any increases for 2014 by completing fewer this year.

Mr. John Fernald explained the cost of salt has gone down, possibly because of overstocking from the prior year, but the exact cause isn't known. Mr. Brown stated Mr. Marcotte asked about

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purchasing additional salt with any remaining 2013 funds and there isn't a lot of space to purchase a significant stockpile and Mr. John Fernald will not spend funds unless he needs to. Mr. John Fernald has a specific understanding of what he might need for the season and while a significant change in weather can cause an increase in use, salt can be purchased with a quick delivery time.

Mr. John Fernald reviewed fuel usage, stating it is level funded; he has a good understanding of the overall budget based on the total used by the middle of the summer and the amount of equipment being used for road repairs.

Mr. John Fernald stated the Highway Department has an overall decrease for 2014 of \$28,295.00

Mr. John Fernald stated he is proposing repairs and new asphalt for Lincoln and a complete rebuild of Berry Road for Highway Construction/Reconstruction with a slight increase of \$4,060.00. Shim and Seal Coat was increased by \$11,000.00 to continue the road maintenance schedule and increased cost of asphalt materials.

CIP UPDATE: Mr. Perron stated he did not bring the material and it would be moved to the next agenda.

SCHOOL BUDGET: Chair Batchelder asked if anyone had questions regarding the school budget.

Ms. Snow asked if additional discussion has taken place about the reading specialist. Mr. Perron stated additional documentation and support for the extra position has been requested a review of all staffing is taking place. The School Board is considering that no other schools have three reading specialists and whether the position should be a multi-purpose position or even another math specialist to assist in the lower scoring math area. Review of how reading scores can be maintained using other education methods is taking place; the same review is taking place for all education areas. The goal is to have a final decision by the second draft of the budget.

Ms. Danis stated she felt a lot of good questions were asked during the first meeting and does have any current additional questions, they can wait until the second draft. Ms. Danis stated the Budget Committee has been requesting to see the Technology Plan for two years now; the committee can make better informed decisions about technology by better understanding the plan for the 2014/2015 budget. Mr. Perron stated there is a significant purchase being considered this year but the goal is to move to the 1 to 1 computer for each student. How it is used and how quickly the school will get there is the part to be determined. Phase one is this year to establish what the 1 to 1 platform will be in addition to the projectors in each classroom, leading forward to a phase two and then three. Ms. Danis asked to have supporting documentation for where the plan is headed in the future to support the currently proposed plan. Ms. Danis believed the school spent a lot of time in the prior year selling the Smart Board platform without offering an alternative and this year is now proposing a more cost effective alternative.

Mr. Perron stated the Technology Committee spent the time this year to research the alternatives to Smart Boards, which might have been done in the past but wasn't. Mr. Carpenter stated he believed the Budget Committee challenged the School Board to find an alternative.

Mr. Perron stated Chromebooks is being researched as what appears to be a preferred alternative to a laptop use; because it is approximately half the cost of a regular laptop; it remains to be seen if the Computer Lab is eliminated.

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Mr. Ferland stated his research indicates the new smart boards have received great reviews, except for lack of use with Apple products. Mr. Perron stated the School Board will probably not go with the Apple platform because of the significant increase in expense, in comparison to other options.

Mr. Carpenter asked if 1 to 1 would be provided to every student in every grade. Mr. Perron stated the current cut off appears to be grades 3 to 8 for school use only with classroom use only and no student/parent expense participation. Discussion took place about some type of parent purchase participation, insurance or a reimbursement plan if a student breaks a machine. Whether or not students use the same machine for multiple years, similar to high school plans will be determined.

Mr. Dumas stated school that have gone to a 1 to 1 platform have seen many decreases in computer related expenses, with the exception of increases in the area of maintenance support and repairs and the school may need to consider hiring additional technology support staff. Mr. Perron stated it is one reason to go with the Chromebooks, because it appears there may be less maintenance with the cloud feature; Microsoft would require an IT staff. Mr. Dumas stated more infrastructure will be needed with the cloud feature.

Mr. Ferland asked how many specialists the school currently has. Mr. Perron replied two reading specialists, one math specialist, and one Title One part time position. Mr. Perron reviewed the history of the specialists position and continued that the School Board has requested research into how reading progress has improved by having three reading specialist; validating that increased results are because of the three specialists and can't be continued using other methods.

Ms. Danis asked about volunteer support from UNH or other sources. Mr. Perron stated the school missed the cut off request date for UNH but it is something being considered.

Mr. Carpenter asked about the possible curriculum coordinator position. Mr. Perron stated the curriculum coordinator position would coordinate education curriculums between the elementary school grades for better consistency, but also with the primary high schools to make sure all students are better prepared. Some schools coordinate curriculums as part of the duties of the Vice Principal or teachers and the Vice Principal, but the school board is looking at the over all approach to improve education results. The SAU is becoming more involved in helping determine what improvements are needed at the school to become part of the top 10% of performing schools. There is the idea that the teachers should understand the curriculum but not plan curriculum.

Mr. Dumas asked if there is value to having a specialist certified in both reading and math. Mr. Perron stated there is a lot involved to get the certification, but it is something to consider.

OTHER BUSINESS: Chair Batchelder reviewed the upcoming agenda's for school and town budgets; the town will continue their department review on December 5th but then won't come in again until their final review on January 23, 2014, the school will present the 2nd draft on December 12. Mr. Carpenter stated an update of the full town budget and any significant changes will be provided to the committee at the December 5 meeting.

ROUNDTABLE: Mr. Koester stated the process is running smoothly.

Ms. Danis thanked Mr. Perron for taking a lot of questions about what is taking place with the school budget; it is appreciated.

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Mr. Perron thanked the committee for their understanding, as the School Board is working with a significant number of new staff at the SAU, in addition to making significant changes at the school level on both an education and staffing level, the questions and comments are welcome.

Chair Batchelder asked for a copy of the tax rate setting calculation sheet to be presented at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: Having no further business,

9:09 PM **Motion:** by Ms. Danis, second by Mr. Perron.

Vote: 10 – 0 in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Wirkkala