

Members Present: John E. Arnold, Chair, Ed Behn, Peter Allen, Jo Lown, Jim Tepper, Kathy Rosenblum Senie, J. J. Malone, Lisa Blazejewski. Absent: Bill Linnane.

At 7:00 p.m. Mr. Arnold called the meeting to order in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

Call to Order/Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Preparation for FY2013 Annual Town Meeting

Veterans Services

George Perry, Veterans Agent, appeared before the Committee to present this budget. Mr. Arnold noted that the main change to this budget is the additional wages for the Assistant Veterans Agent. Mr. Perry explained the rationale behind the increase, noting that for some years his assistant, Ken Ferrera, has received approx. \$88/month (for a yearly stipend of \$1000). Under Chapter 115, the state requires a full-time Veterans agent be provided in towns with a population over 12,000. Mr. Perry's department has been in violation of this requirement for many years, but is now under pressure from the Attorney General to comply. The stipend increase from \$1000 to \$4000 will pay Mr. Ferrera to cover the office on Tuesday and Thursday (Mr. Perry works Monday, Wednesday, and Friday), a move toward satisfying the state requirement. Mr. Tepper clarified that Mr. Perry's department deals with veterans with special needs under Chapter 115, and is not the same as Veterans Affairs.

Health Dept/Landfill Contract (Liaison report)

Ms. Blazejewski had distributed information in response to the Committee's questions. Regarding the overages in the Landfill 2011 budget, Director of Public Health Paul McNulty was aware of them and had reduced tonnage, which should result in less of an overage going forward. Regarding the Board of Health budget, there was some discussion of the fact that this department cannot always accurately estimate how much to budget for cases which are unexpected and unplanned, which sometimes leads to a surplus or the need to request a transfer. (E.g., tuberculosis cases.) Mr. Malone would like a follow up on whether the Health Dept. is now being more successful in getting people served to request Medicare reimbursements for the town.

Youth & Family Services (Liaison report)

Ms. Blazejewski had distributed a report to the Committee. Mr. Arnold noted that this department is looking to reinstate some funding which had been lost during previous budget cuts. Ms. Blazejewski explained that fundraising has been a drain on staff as private donations have begun to dry up. Ms. Lown noted the history of Expenses in this department, at \$9900 in 2008-9, \$7000 in 2010, and down to \$4100 in 2011. Ms. Blazejewski noted that the staff doesn't get benefits, but the request for the training lets the Town make sure they get the proper training so they can do their jobs. This department does a lot with limited resources.

Historical Commission (Liaison report)

Ms. Blazejewski had provided a report on her meeting with the Historical Commission. Ms. Blazejewski noted that money allocated for Other Professional Services (earmarked for gravestone preservation) had not been spent during an 18-month period. The department assures the Committee that bidding for the work is now moving forward, and all monies would be expensed by year end. Mr. Tepper was concerned about the \$2000 unspent in Salaries/Wages, money Raised and Appropriated but not utilized. He asked

that we follow up with a question about whether their plan was to fully utilize the hours budgeted for the Commission's Administrative Assistant. There was some discussion about whether this department should plan to come to the AFC for more funds if necessary, rather than including the funds in their budget.

Proposed Charter and non-Zoning Bylaw changes (Draft Warrant #7 articles 19-28)

The Committee reviewed the proposed Charter and Bylaw changes.

Article 19. Charter Amendments.

Charter article 2-4. Mr. Arnold noted that this article proposes to remove language regarding requiring division heads' attendance at Town Meetings. He reminded the Committee that Mr. Malloy is attempting to remove from the bylaws what is not current practice or conflicts in current practice. Mr. Arnold will ask Mr. Malloy which departments actually have divisions.

Charter Article 4-2(b)(10). Mr. Arnold noted that this change would explicitly allow the School Department or Library to ask for the Town Manager's assistance. Ms. Lown felt the school/library should be asked their views on this change.

Charter Article 4-2(b)(14). Mr. Arnold explained that this change would remove the "purchase and service" phrase, which has been the cause of some confusion. Ms. Lown noted that there is a clear division of duties and responsibilities for the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and the Town Manager, and felt that removing this limiting phrase changed the bylaw significantly. She added that there is a distinct difference between the BOS negotiating a contract, and having someone else negotiate and bring to the BOS for final approval. She would like to hear the Selectmen's views on this.

Charter Article 6-6(d). Mr. Arnold noted that this would delete the phrase "major piece of equipment." Mr. Tepper wondered if this broadened the bylaw's scope. Mr. Allen questioned whether the wording in the Warrant was correct.

Bylaw Amendments.

Article 20. Bylaw Article 3-4. Mr. Arnold explained that, based on the Committee's request, Mr. Malloy indicated in email that he was going to remove this article from the Warrant. He invited the Committee to join him in attending the Selectmen's meeting next Tuesday to discuss this and the Committee's request regarding Article 8D, if necessary.

Article 21. Bylaw Article 4-3. Mr. Arnold noted the Town Manager's comment that the bonds are currently maintained in the Selectmen's office, not in the local bank as specified in the bylaw. Mr. Behn added that keeping the bonds at a separate location is better practice, but the change would reflect current practice. The Committee questioned whether back-up information was kept in case of loss, and whether the bonds should in fact be kept off-site.

Article 22 & 23. Ms. Lown felt these two articles could be combined.

Article 24. Fee Bylaws. Mr. Arnold noted that, as explained in the Town Manager's statement, if these sections are deleted, the Selectmen would set any fees not specified by law, and felt this change required more discussion than time allowed tonight. Ms. Lown will look into this with regard to the State statutes that are mentioned.

Discussion on the remainder of the Articles will be deferred to a future meeting.

Discussion of approaches to deliberations/voting on recommendations

Mr. Allen felt a discussion of how the Committee intended to deal with contingencies would be useful. Mr. Behn noted that a chart detailing the percentage changes in the budget, not just the dollar amounts, would give a sense of how each dollar increase impacts the tax rate. He added that it could also be used to show how much of each department's budget the Committee felt was contingency. There was some discussion about the difference between surplus and contingency in the budget. Mr. Behn felt a first step might be identifying budgets which had been underspent, and then liaisons could identify more

specifically where contingencies might be. Mr. Arnold noted that a chart ranked and sorted by surplus amount, dollar amount change, and percentage increase or decrease, would provide a list of departments to look at more closely. He added that if departments reduce contingencies in their budgets, the Committee should make sure the General Reserve Fund is adequate to cover potential needs of departments should the Committee's estimates prove too low. Ms. Lown pointed out that between the regular Special Town Meeting, the General Reserve Fund and end of year transfers, there were multiple ways departments could cope with shortages in their budgets during the fiscal year. She added that changes in appropriations can also be authorized at Town Meeting, providing yet another tool for departments to utilize, making excessive amounts of contingencies in budgets unnecessary.

Mr. Arnold asked the Committee if they wanted to discuss the overall requested budget amount to compare the requested bottom line for the budget to previous years' so members can form opinions about the budget as a whole in addition to the voting on a department-by-department basis. Mr. Behn was in favor of such a target, noting that the Committee's premise has been that taxes are going up too much, and Proposition 2-1/2 is intended to mitigate that rise. He noted that when Town Assessor Linda Swadel's final estimate is known in March the Committee will have a better sense of how the tax bill will be impacted. Ms. Rosenblum Senie asked if there was a way to accurately estimate the impact in time for it to be useful to the Committee's deliberations on the budgets. Ms. Lown suggested plugging the final new valuation numbers into the spreadsheet to see the effect of those changes. Mr. Arnold added that considering the estimated impact on the tax bill for each budget item and article could help show the potential impact on the tax bill as each member decided whether the proposed expenditures or changes in expenditures are appropriate.

Ms. Lown distributed two spreadsheets for Total Valuation and Financial Revenue & Expenditure Estimates.

Schedule of meetings planned through March 2012

Mr. Arnold noted that the Committee's questions received by the School Department would be answered at the meeting next Thursday evening. Mr. Behn added that the School Budget book is now available. Mr. Arnold will find out if it is available electronically. He asked the Committee to consider whether a meeting on President's Day, February 20th, is necessary.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Arnold had received a copy of the Beacon, the Massachusetts Municipal Association publication. He will meet with the Board of Selectmen on Tuesday to request the article wording change.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

Mr. Arnold noted that as all voting and the Report and Recommendations needs to be completed by March 8th; voting could begin February 23rd or 27th at the earliest. Mr. Allen explained that he would be unable to attend meetings after February 27th through the Annual Town Meeting.

Mr. Tepper felt it was a bit late to be talking about a percentage cap on the budget, now that budget requests have already been finalized. He felt that message should go out to the Town and departments earlier, when budgets are being developed, and noted that the Town must learn to live within its constraints. Mr. Arnold pointed out that the Town Manager (under the Board of Selectmen), not the AFC, send out the budget message to departments. Mr. Tepper noted the frustration of having so much of the budget tied up in contracts which have already been negotiated and which the Town Meeting is expected to fully fund.

The Committee recessed at 9:23 p.m.

Spreadsheet training

The Committee reconvened at 9:30 p.m. for the purpose of continuing the Advisory Finance Committee spreadsheet training that was started at last Monday's meeting. Only members Arnold, Behn, and Lown were able to stay for the training. The Committee members in attendance walked through the steps of tying together the various worksheets and the process for updating the various workbooks as revised budget amounts were provided or voted. They also reviewed the process for updating the spreadsheet as new estimates were received from the Town Accountant, Town Assessors, or others.

Adjournment

Mr. Behn moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:35 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 3 in favor, with 3 being present.

Document List

Accreditation Program National Account Customers info sheet, provided by Building Commissioner.
Building Department Accreditation Community-wide value info, provided by Building Commissioner.
Community Rating System info, provided by Building Commissioner
FY2007-12 Revenue & Budget Chart, provided by Building Commissioner.
New England Municipal Buildings Seminar info, provided by Building Commissioner.
AFC Department Meetings Budgets ATM FY13, version 12.
AFC Workbook Training Version, provided by Jo Lown.
FY13 Preliminary Tax Rate Calculation, provided by Mr. Behn.
Warrant Article Summary ATM FY13, version 8, provided by John E. Arnold.
MIS/GIS Budget Presentation 2012, provided by Mark Stockman.
MIS/GIS List of Desktop Computer Users with Laptops, provided by Mark Stockman.
Custodian (N-8) Job Responsibilities list 1999, Dec. 2011, & Sept. 2011, provided by Maureen Ambrosino.
Bill for Dell Library computer systems July 2011, provided by Maureen Ambrosino.
Library Expense Ledger, provided by Maureen Ambrosino.
Library Salary & Wage Request FY13, provided by Maureen Ambrosino.
Library PC Specifications info, provided by Maureen Ambrosino.
Landfill Expense Ledger FY12, provided by Paul McNulty.
Historical Commission Budget Overview email, from Lisa Blazejewski.
BOH/Landfill info email, from Lisa Blazejewski.