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BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
December 10, 2015

Members Present: Carl Hagstrom, Virginia Doerpholz, Martin Nolan, Fred Wilkinson, and Selectmen's Representative, Nancy Carney

Members Absent: Natasha Michelson, Ben Thomas, Win Wright

Chairman Hagstrom convened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Hagstrom asked members to review the minutes of last week's meeting.

Ms. Doerpholz made a motion to approve the December 3, 2015 Minutes. Mr. Nolan seconded. Mr. Hagstrom abstained. The motion passed.

7:10 – Conservation Commission:

Committee members stated that the budget was pretty straightforward. Mr. Nolan shared that a \$5,000 request had been submitted to CIP.

Barbara Green presented the Conservation Commission budget.

Ms. Green reported that there was very little change from last year's budget.

Line 120 – Salaries – Part-Time – increase of \$100 – biggest expense – fewer hours put in this past year.

Line 315 – Consultant Services – no change. Used for various things – unpredictable. Update of maps – digital version to be put on-line. This was for Connie Porter's computer time in designing map changes. Maps haven't been printed in more than a year.

Line 353 – Advertising – no change - for newsletter inserts.

Mr. Nolan asked about the significance of having a special insert versus an article in the newsletter. Ms. Green replied that if they were unable to meet the newsletter deadline, there was still time to get an insert in as it could be done at the end.

Line 550 - Printing – no change. This was for maps. Mr. Wilkinson asked if it included the insert and Ms. Green replied that it did.

Line 560 - Dues/Subscriptions – increase of \$50 - annual membership.

Line 610 - General supplies – no change – for small miscellaneous items.

Line 625 - Postage – no change – post office box rental.

Line 650 – Groundskeeping – no change – taking care of clearing trails of fallen trees/cutting – for most part volunteer labor.

Line 820 – Meetings/Conferences – no change.

Line 825 – Mileage/Travel Expense – for the most part mileage wasn't claimed unless it was an unusual distance.

Ms. Green stated that it was important to put away a small amount of money, in the event an opportunity for conservation land becomes available, they would have funds to do it.

Ms. Favreau shared that \$17,448 was in the fund as of December.

Frank Bequaert mentioned the \$5,000 in funding for land (Line 710). Mr. Bequaert stated that when you think about what the Budget Committee does - it's a difficult job but there are 3 things to allocate money to. First, for the town to defend itself against problems and prevent things from happening, i.e. quarries and pipeline, it requires significant budgeting but doesn't buy much for the town. Second, money needed to run the town and keep infrastructure going. Third, being pro-active benefits the town and adds value to the town as a place to live. The problem is that sometimes that gets cut because it's the only thing to cut. Money for the Conservation Commission was that kind of money – goes into real improvement of the town. Last year, that didn't get in the budget and the Conservation Commission put in a petition warrant article that was voted in. Mr. Bequaert also stated the message he saw was that the people of the town wanted it and the Budget Committee should seriously consider it.

Mr. Wilkinson asked if there had been a situation that land was available and they couldn't purchase it. Ms. Green stated that the Maynard property resulted in offering access from the Rhododendron Road. Mr. Nolan asked if there wasn't any money in the fund so the property couldn't be purchased. Mr. Wilkinson asked if the sale price was too high. Ms. Green stated funds were available when the opportunity to purchase the property came up. The Commission was hoping that if some other property comes up they could purchase it. Mr. Wilkinson asked what amount was needed. Ms. Green shared that the expendable trust was for the purchase of land and the only way to add to it was to ask for money each year to fund. Ms. Green stated that it wasn't unreasonable that in 10 years property would become available to purchase. Mr. Bequaert stated that land was available and if it was more than what was in the fund it was easier to raise the difference and that the town was willing to do it. Mr. Hagstrom stated that if there was \$17,000 in the fund now and the town wanted the land – there was enough to get a contract and at the next Town meeting to vote to come up with the remaining amount.

Mr. Nolan stated that he took exception with Mr. Bequaert's tone about the town. Mr. Nolan also stated that everything out there was for the betterment of the town – i.e. police, highway – in operating budget as a support – not just a fulfillment of an obligation of the town. If we don't maintain our roads, our library – there's a balance that needed to be struck between what needed to be done and what we could afford to do and not everyone gets what they want. Mr. Nolan shared that he personally felt that it had come out fairly well over the years.

Mr. Hagstrom stated that he agreed with what Mr. Bequaert and Mr. Nolan were saying – trying to get taxes as low as possible and if the town votes against it - could lose the deposit.

Mr. Wilkinson asked about last year's operating budget and stated half had been expended through October and wanted to know if they were going to use the balance this year. Ms. Green stated that it was an unusual year. Mr. Wilkinson asked if they would be using the funds in their budget next year or were they just numbers. Ms. Green stated that they were asking for a modest amount and they couldn't predict what they would do in the coming year and that what they do varies from year to year.

Mr. Hagstrom asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Hagstrom thanked Ms. Green for meeting with them.

7:25 – Budget Work Session:

The Committee reviewed the following budgets and approved preliminary budgets:

Mr. Hagstrom shared that he made a list of the budgets they would review so that they don't repeat unless there was a question. Mr. Nolan suggested they review the easier budgets first, since there were a few members absent. Mr. Hagstrom agreed.

Cemetery budget was reviewed - \$30,906.

Mr. Nolan shared that \$2,400 for stone and grave work was submitted to CIP. Mr. Nolan asked why it was brought to CIP instead of being a regular budgeted amount as it was ongoing. Mr. Nolan recommended that \$1,000 be put in CIP. Ms. Favreau stated that nothing was put in this year. Discussion was held regarding, loam, fertilizer, and grass seed. Mr. Nolan stated that \$2,400 for stone and marker repairs was not in the budget this year but was in last year and should be in their regular budget. Mr. Hagstrom asked if the work was hired out and Mr. Nolan stated that they could do some work, as they bought a tripod. Ms. Carney stated that they were able to do the work if they weren't mowing.

Mr. Hagstrom asked if CIP thought that they needed a mower and Mr. Nolan stated that no decision had been made and CIP ranked the request as needed but not necessary. The rank of "needed" was classed as 1-3 years. Mr. Hagstrom discussed the difficulty of purchasing parts and Mr. Wilkinson asked about the difference in the CIP budget now.

Mr. Hagstrom asked members to mark the budget reviewed with the date and that it was ok.

Police department budget was reviewed - \$331,588.

Mr. Hagstrom stated that he noticed there was a lot of discussion regarding the police department budget and that it was revised.

Mr. Wilkinson stated the budget increase was now 1% from the original 3%. Ms. Carney reported that it was Chief DiSalvo's second year doing a budget and that he met with the Board of Selectmen, who were still in the process of looking at what could be prepaid.

Line 635 – Gasoline - \$14,000 – discussion was held on whether the amount could be reduced by \$5,000 or \$4,500 and the amortization of this year's expenditure was \$9,300. After discussion it was agreed to reduce the gasoline budget to \$10,000.

Discussion was held on the need for a 3rd cruiser. Ms. Carney reported the Board of Selectmen approved the repair of the 09 to get it through the winter. Mr. Nolan shared that Chief DiSalvo's reason for needing a third cruiser was that 2 shifts overlap and if one cruiser was broken down – they would still have 2 cruisers. Ms. Carney stated that 3 officers were going to training and would be taking a cruiser – not paying mileage for individuals.

Mr. Nolan stated that he didn't personally see the need for a 3rd cruiser and that a CIP request had been submitted for a cruiser next year. Mr. Wilkinson asked how many years a cruiser lasted and Mr. Nolan stated 5 years. Ms. Carney shared that the police department doesn't have an expendable trust for replacement of vehicles and wouldn't it be advisable to take money this year for the future. Ms. Carney asked about creating an expendable trust to put money away and discussion continued on what would be most cost effective for the town. Ms. Favreau stated we purchase every year and that was the schedule they were on. The first year would be under a warrant article and subsequent years under their budget. Discussion continued on the payment schedule and the amount and what would make the most sense. Ms. Carney stated that a 3 year lease was normally done. Discussion continued on the need to have more than 2 cruisers, and the benefit of mileage being split between multiple vehicles.

Mr. Nolan stated that he doesn't feel the number of officers and hours are needed and discussed the amount the budget had increased each year and Mr. Nolan felt the police department was trying to create an empire. The number of part-time officers had increased and overtime was kept at the same level. Mr. Wilkinson discussed that on average there was a 5% increase each year and if they haven't spent their entire budget, it reverts back to the town's general fund. Mr. Wilkinson asked what the town wanted for coverage. Mr. Hagstrom stated that there were 3 full-time officers and 5 part-time – including the administrative assistant. Ms. Carney discussed the schedule and coverage for the holidays, overtime and how coverage was provided.

Mr. Hagstrom asked about taking \$4,000 out of the budget and Mr. Nolan wanted \$2,000 taken out of overtime as every year it doesn't get spent. Mr. Hagstrom stated that you don't know. Mr. Nolan and Mr. Wilkinson wanted to reduce the overtime budget to \$8,000 and Ms. Doerpholz and Mr. Hagstrom wanted to leave it at \$10,000. Discussion continued on the possibility of a catastrophe and in the event should something serious happen there would be money to cover it.

Ms. Carney shared that when the budget was passed at town meeting, the Board of Selectmen have never micromanaged the individual line items – it's the bottom line. Discussion continued on what had historically been spent for overtime, the number of officers, and having an extra officer should equate to less overtime. Line 120 – Salaries – Part-Time was up \$9,506. After discussion, Mr. Hagstrom stated that he agreed with reducing the overtime budget to \$8,000.

Mr. Hagstrom asked about the Code Enforcement budget and Ms. Carney stated the Board of Selectmen would be presenting that budget.

Ambulance budget was reviewed - \$26,900.

Ms. Carney stated that nothing was submitted to CIP this year. Funding for an ambulance doesn't need to be requested for 6-10 years and a cardiac monitor was purchased from the charitable donation from the Estate of Joe and Ruth Tartiff.

Fire department budget was reviewed - \$47,200.

Mr. Hagstrom asked about getting volunteers and Ms. Carney stated they were always looking for new members.

Discussion was held regarding the wage scale, different levels, definition of a call, pay for time on call, classes, and CPR recertification. Mr. Hagstrom asked about CPR for the average person in town and Ms. Carney stated that they planned to do a hands only CPR class which would be good for 2 years.

Emergency Management budget was reviewed - \$2,285.

Mr. Hagstrom stated they were requesting a stipend for the Deputy Director.

Mr. Hagstrom asked if the Health budget would be part of the Board of Selectmen's budget and Ms. Carney stated that the Selectmen were meeting on Sunday.

Animal Control budget was reviewed - \$8,006.

Mr. Hagstrom shared that the police department does this budget. It is another on-call situation. Warren Hall was called and not a police officer.

Recreation budget was reviewed - \$41,975.

Mr. Hagstrom asked if someone had looked into the pump issue. Mr. Nolan shared that it would be done when an electrician was doing other work.

Ms. Carney shared that overall everyone was making an effort to keep their CIP requests below last year's requests.

Committee members agreed that the budget seemed to be right on compared to some years.

There being no further business, Mr. Hagstrom adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Submitted by;



Sheryl White
Secretary