

SELECTMEN'S MINUTES
November 19, 2011 Budget Workshop

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Ross McLeod, Selectmen Bruce Breton, Roger Hohenberger, Phil Lochiatto and Kathleen DiFruscia were present, as was Town Administrator David Sullivan and several Department Heads. Mr. McLeod called the meeting to order at approximately 9:10 am.

The Board addressed the Police Department budget with Chief Lewis, Captain Caron and Captain Wagner. Discussion ensued regarding Board members' questions on particular line items, including the training budget, annual incentive payments and holiday pay. It was explained that these are paid as prescribed in the Police Union contract. Mr. Hohenberger noted that he would like to discuss these items further as part of future contract negotiations. Discussion turned to the discretionary component of the training budget, versus mandatory items. Chief Lewis noted that there are always training opportunities that present themselves during the course of the year that he would like to send his personnel to, and that he would request this item be maintained at the proposed level, as it had been reduced the previous year as a cost cutting measure.

Mr. Breton wished to commend Chief Lewis on bringing in an overtime budget that was less than the prior year. It was noted that some of the decrease can be attributed to replacement officers at lower pay rates than seasoned officers. Further discussion on various line items including radio communication maintenance, vehicle fuel and maintenance, vehicle equipment and property maintenance resulted in no changes to the budget as proposed.

The Board then addressed the Dispatch budget with Chief Lewis. Discussion ensued regarding training. No changes to the budget were made.

The Board addressed the Fire Department/Emergency Management budgets with Chief McPherson, Assistant Chief Morgan and Deputy Martineau. Discussion ensued regarding Board members' questions on particular line items. The Board discussed the training budget and how the department provides training on shift in order to reduce overtime to the extent possible. The Chief answered questions regarding the Property Maintenance line item. It was noted that all departments now utilize this line item to record the cost of bottled water in the buildings. Additionally, in previous years, many department budgets eliminated the Miscellaneous line item and realigned items to the Property Maintenance budget line, as it relates to operating each building.

The Board then discussed the proposed replacement of the utility truck and Chief McPherson noted that the existing truck has exceeded the guideline prescribed in the Vehicle Maintenance Policy and the

department is unable to install a plow on the existing truck. After discussion regarding the planned use of the proposed new utility truck, specifically in regards to plowing in the vicinity of cisterns, it was discussed that the Chief should coordinate with the Highway Agent to ensure the cisterns are accessible and possibly borrow another town truck that is already outfitted with a plow, to supplement the work done by the Highway department. The Chief noted that the department is working on an "Adopt A Cistern" program, however, he feels that the utility truck has additional uses beyond plowing. Mr. Breton motioned to not purchase the new truck and reduce the Vehicle Equipment line item by \$12,250. Mr. LoChiato seconded and motion passed unanimously.

Discussion turned to the Overtime line item. The Chief revisited the history of events that have occurred during this current budget year which have resulted in a significant overexpenditure of this line item. While the department's standard operating guidelines result in five personnel per shift, in an effort to manage the 2011 budget, if one person is out for their shift, they are not currently being replaced via overtime, therefore, that shift will run with four members. Mr. Sullivan presented statistics regarding calls, overtime for earned time usage, coverage of unforeseen personnel disabilities and the correlation between overtime required for these purposes and overtime required for operational demand and callbacks. Mr. Sullivan indicated through the use of statistics over the last several years, that the overtime cost will be incurred either way, however, whether four or five members are on a shift will determine whether the overtime will be paid as coverage for earned time or coverage for operational demand. Mr. Sullivan reminded the Board that similar to the Police budget, the overtime budget for Fire is determined based on a statistical formula that hasn't changed for 20+ years. The actual events of the given year, which can't be determined in advance, will drive the actual costs expended. Mr. Sullivan reiterated that the budget is developed based on the need for a five person shift, however, it is the Board's purvue to make a policy decision to not fill the fifth person on a shift every time the fifth person is out, which would be a continuation of the process put in place earlier this year due to the 2011 budget constraints. Mr. Breton asked what the savings has been since August when this policy has been put in place, and Mr. Sullivan indicated this represents approximately \$25,000 for a 3-month period.

Chief McPherson addressed the Board's previous concerns and how the department has addressed the budget issues they have faced this year including excessive coverage for firefighters being out, as well as unforeseen events such as Hurricane Irene and the October 30 snowstorm. Chief McPherson addressed members' of the Board's concerns regarding a recent article in the paper from a resident/Firefighter regarding Fire department staffing and public safety. Mr. Breton indicated that over \$1 million in salaries over the previous 5 years has been added to the Fire department budget as a result of the SAFER grant. He also noted that the overtime budgets over the previous years have been exceeded. The Chief indicated that although he firmly believes a five person shift is warranted for the department, with budget

constraints bringing the shift down to four at times, he is satisfied that public safety is still maintained. In previous discussions, he has stated what benefits that fifth person brings to the operations of an emergency scene. The Chief indicated that he plans to operate with the normal process of filling the fifth person on shift beginning January 1. Mr. Hohenberger suggested that the “current policy”, since it is saving money, should be continually implemented at the beginning of the year and wait to see how the effect of operational demand and callbacks effects the overall budget. Mr. Sullivan indicated that he believes that type of policy decision should be made on the Board’s regular agenda at a later date, if the Board does not intend to adjust the budget number.

Discussion turned to the management of the number of calls and the ability of the Chief Officers to respond to calls. Mr. Breton indicated that he would be researching ways to potentially add a Firefighter/Inspector position and revisit the department management positions. Chief McPherson indicated that he felt it was inappropriate to discuss at this budget hearing.

Throughout the discussion, the Board accepted questions from residents attending in the audience. Mr. Lewandowski asked about the disparity between the overtime budget of the Police department, as a percentage of salaries, as compared to the Fire department. Chief McPherson indicated the Fire department overtime needs tend to be reactive based on operational demands. It was noted that the Fire department tends to callback multiple personnel for incidents and simultaneous calls, while this doesn’t tend to occur in the Police department. Mr. Lewandowski asked about the concept of earned time. Mr. Sullivan clarified that earned time, representing paid time off for vacation, sick and personal time, is for all employees, including Fire, and a certain minimum amount is required to be used each year, which in turn requires overtime coverage, primarily for Police and Fire due to 24/7 coverage. It was questioned whether the overtime budget is calculated properly if it is being overexpended year after year. Ms. Call noted that what the “chart” for the overtime (only) line item does not depict is the offsetting savings in the regular salary line item for many of those years as a result of personnel out on disability/workers compensation time. It was noted that staff will add this chart to the budget analysis. Further in the overtime budget, it was noted that there is no requirement for the JLMC meetings, as participation in this committee does not require Firefighter overtime. Mr. Breton motioned to reduce the overtime budget by \$1,140 for this purpose and Mr. LoChiatto seconded. Passed unanimously.

Discussion turned to the vehicle maintenance and the use of the Firefighter/Mechanic for overtime incurred on both Fire and Police vehicle repairs. Mr. LoChiatto asked about putting those costs in one place and any potential liability the Town takes on by doing mechanic work in-house. Mr. LoChiatto noted that this is not a reflection on the work done by Firefighter Zins, a certified mechanic, but both an overall cost and liability question. Chief McPherson indicated that there are many items that are either beyond Firefighter Zins’ training and ability or

are warranty items, which would be sent out to an outside repair facility. Mr. Sullivan clarified that the overtime line item for the mechanic is segregated, with one component included in the Overtime line, which represents work done on fire department vehicles that is not able to be done on shift due to complexity. The Firefighter/Mechanic is paid overtime & this gets included in that employee's incentive recalculation. Whereas the work done on non-Fire vehicles is budgeted in the Vehicle Maintenance line item (at straight-time) and this is not eligible for incentive recalculation. It was requested that Administration review the cost of providing non-Fire vehicle maintenance through the Firefighter/Mechanic versus an outside facility. Mr. Sullivan noted this has been analyzed in the past and was found to be cost effective, however, it will be reviewed again.

Discussion turned to additional questions on other line items within the Fire budget including the calculation of vehicle fuel costs and the increase in radio/communication maintenance costs due to the required transition to narrow band compliance for public safety departments, and no changes were made. The Board addressed the EM budget and no changes were made.

The Board met with Laura Scott regarding the Community Development budget. Ms. Scott discussed the proposed changes affecting the salary and benefit line items including an addition of a "minutes taker" position for Planning Board and Zoning Board, as well as a reduction to 20 hours per week for the department Secretary, from the current 32 hours. The addition of the minutes taker will allow existing department assistants (part-time Planning Assistant and ZBA/CC Assistant) to spend more of their hours doing in-office work including assisting customers at the counter and not attending meetings/typing minutes. Mrs. Difruscia asked about the impact on the existing department Secretary due to the reduction in hours and it was noted that the individual's health insurance benefits would be eliminated under this proposal, representing the bulk of the budgetary savings. Mr. Hohenberger expressed that he is not in favor of the proposal on a combined basis; noting that he understands the reduction of the department Secretary hours but doesn't agree with adding the minutes taker, as the existing Planning Department Assistant position was, in his view, originally designed to take minutes. Mr. Hohenberger noted that previous Board decisions regarding department staffing are being reopened by this proposal. Mr. LoChiatto noted he is in favor of this proposal due to the efficiencies that will be gained in the department and Mr. Breton agreed.

The Board briefly discussed the line item for Rockingham Regional Planning Commission membership dues and it was noted that there has been some discussion of requesting that Windham be shifted to the Southern NH Regional Planning Commission instead. It was noted that this topic should be scheduled for a future Selectmen meeting, with input from the Planning Board, therefore, no changes to the budget were made.

Discussion turned to funding for special studies requested by the Planning Board in the Contracted Services line item (\$2,000 for Public Safety impact fee revisions and \$2,500 for rewrite assistance for Site Plan Regulations). Mr. Hohenberger expressed his concern regarding hiring consultants to rewrite regulations that already exist, as he feels department staff should be able to do this work. Mr. Hohenberger motioned and Mr. Breton seconded to reduce this line item by \$4,500. Ms. Scott indicated that the Public Safety impact fee work needs to be defended in court, thus the rationale for hiring an outside consultant. In addition, the Site Plan Regulation rewrites require expertise in engineering that the department staff does not have. Mr. Lochiatto agreed and indicated that he could support a motion to reduce funds for the Public Safety impact fee work, but not the Site Plan Regulation work. Mr. Hohenberger agreed to withdraw his original motion and Mr. Breton withdrew his second. Mr. Lochiatto motioned to reduce the Contracted Services line item by \$2,000, representing the elimination of Public Safety impact fee work only. Mr. Breton seconded and motion passed 4-1 with Mrs. DiFruscia opposed.

Mr. Lochiatto motioned to accept the Community Development department budget as amended. Mr. Breton seconded and motion passed 4-1 with Mr. McLeod opposed. Mr. Sullivan indicated that this is not the appropriate procedure as the entire operating budget will be moved to the warrant at a later date. Mr. Lochiatto requested reconsideration of his original motion and Mr. Breton seconded. Passed unanimously. Mr. Lochiatto then motioned to support the organizational change as proposed in the 2012 department budget and Mr. Breton seconded. Motion failed 2-3 with Mr. McLeod, Mr. Hohenberger and Mrs. DiFruscia opposed. Mr. Hohenberger then noted that he wishes to revisit this organizational change at another meeting, however, it was noted by several that if the organizational change is not ultimately supported, significant additional funds will need to be added to the budget. Mr. Breton asked that this amount be calculated before leaving this workshop. Mr. Hohenberger noted that he has a prior commitment and in the interest of moving it forward for discussion, he would agree to change his vote to be in favor of the motion. After further discussion regarding whether or not there was a valid motion on the table and if reconsideration is required, and in the interest of time, consensus of the Board was to address the organizational change and budget requirements at a future meeting. Mrs. DiFruscia noted that she needed more time to evaluate both the budgetary considerations and the needs of operating the department. Mr. Sullivan noted that, historically, all items in the budget are available for reconsideration by the Board, and are typically handled at the last scheduled budget workshop prior to posting for public hearing.

The Board then discussed the Highway budget with Jack McCartney. Much of the discussion was regarding the new line item proposed for "Site Improvements" for \$9,000. It was noted by Administration that this was additional work beyond the scope of the original site work for the Salt Shed/Highway Garage completed earlier this year. Mr. McCartney indicated that his intention was to complete additional

clearing and site work over the course of 3-5 years with funding through the operating budget as funding allows. It was clarified that the approximate \$4,000 remaining from the original article could be used to fund a portion of this additional site work, however, Mr. McCartney clarified that he intends to clear an additional 1 acre of land on the site, at an approximate overall cost of \$50,000-\$60,000. Discussion turned to whether this could be done in one year as part of a CIP request and it was determined that the remaining \$4,000 could be used in 2012, giving additional time to assess whether a CIP item should be pursued for 2013. Mr. Hohenberger motioned to remove the \$9,000 from the Highway budget Site Improvements line item and Mr. Breton seconded. Motion passed unanimously. No other changes were made to the Highway budget.

Mr. Breton motioned and Mr. Hohenberger seconded to adjourn. Passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dana Call

Asst Town Administrator-Finance

NOTE: These minutes are prepared in draft form and have not been submitted to the Board for approval.