



**BUDGET COMMITTEE**  
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**MINUTES OF THE BUDGET COMMITTEE HEARING**

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Thursday, December 14, 2017 – 6:30 p.m. – Town Hall Conference Room

*Members Present:* Chair Bob Krasko, Tibby Fogarty-Cail, James Connelly, Mark Connelly, Sharon Hussey-McLaughlin, Steve McKenzie, Don Miller, Patty Porter, Kristen Syphers, Chip Hussey – Selectmen's Rep

*Late Arrival:* Randy Bunnell – School Board Rep (6:38 p.m.)

*Also Present:* Karen Anderson, Town Administrator; Vaughan Morgan – Chairman, Board of Selectmen; Members of the Board of Selectmen

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Chair Krasko opened the Budget Committee meeting at 6:30 p.m. A roll call was taken by the Chair; he announced a quorum was present and the meeting was being recorded.

1. Approval of Minutes: Thursday, November 30, 2017 and Wednesday, December 06, 2017

MOTION: D. Miller moved to accept the minutes of Thursday, November 30, 2017 and Wednesday, December 06, 2017. Second – K. Syphers; eight in favor, two abstain. MOTION CARRIED

2. Right-to-Know Law

K. Anderson explained that anytime a quorum is communicating, in person, electronically, email, etc., that is a public meeting subject to the Right-to-Know law. She received some complaints during the week that the Budget Committee was asked to send questions to the School Board or School Rep, and members were replying "all". A public board can communicate one-on-one, but cannot "reply all" to include the entire group at the same time; it's a violation of the Right-to-Know law. K. Anderson further explained an elected board can only meet in public.

Town Budget Review
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D. Miller asked the tax impact of the proposed budget, not including the warrant articles. K. Anderson responded the tax rate would be impacted \$3.39, it's currently \$3.38. D. Miller clarified the Town rate would increase \$.01; K. Anderson agreed and added that was before the revaluation.

K. Syphers stated that every question she had was answered, and the requests were legitimate. Chair Krasko was in agreement.

The Town Clerk requested an increase in Staff Development for mileage because they will be taking deposits to the bank. The Treasurer is not required to do the State deposit. K. Syphers added that training for the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk was important.

M. Connelly questioned the rationale behind the 3% salary increase. C. Hussey responded that in previous years the CPI growth and economy wasn't taken into consideration; last year's increase was 2.5%. The Board of Selectmen was trying to stay within the CPI growth and still be reasonable.

R. Bunnell questioned the Undesignated Fund Balance of \$2.2 million and the rationale of taking only \$85,000 from it this year. K. Anderson responded the Selectmen are looking at using that over the next few years to increase the capital reserve funds for road construction and infrastructure repairs. The Selectmen could have used more but didn't want to have a huge decrease in the tax rate because it's much easier for residents to have a stable rate. If they had used more and reduced the tax rate, the tax rate could jump the next year. The goal is to use that as a stabilization fund to try to maintain a flat tax rate. The fund balance should always be between \$1.5 million and \$1.7 million, which is the Town's cash flow before the tax bills go out in July; otherwise, the Town doesn't function. In addition, the County Tax has gone to a fiscal year for 2018; 18 months (\$768,000) of the County Tax will need to be paid rather than 12 months. That will be paid from the Fund Balance and the Town will be able to absorb that "blip" without impacting the taxpayers.

K. Anderson further explained that the Undesignated Fund Balance is from revenues above what's anticipated and expenditures that aren't spent at year-end. The funds can be used in an emergency with DRA's permission, other than to offset the tax rate. Every year the Selectmen offset the tax rate to keep it stable. Vaughan Morgan, Board of Selectmen Chairman and resident, added that there are many other things being looked at: the School, roads, possible fire station or Library, etc. The Undesignated Fund Balance gives the Town a good credit rating and bond rating. The rates are better when the Town looks financially secure. K. Anderson noted that the last bond went out to auction and the rate was lower than offered by bond banks. The only current debt is the School and road construction.

C. Hussey and K. Anderson explained that the building maintenance was for exterior repairs, including replacement of rotted wood with white plastic board. This will be a warrant article in the amount of \$35,000. Warrant articles were not discussed.

S. McKenzie stated the Town budget looked fine, but had questions about the default budget. Default budget: K. Anderson explained that assessing is included because it's two contracts for the statistical update required by DRA every five years. DRA has approved the contracts. DWI Funds/Grant: the Police Department receives funds through the State Highway Safety Commission for targeted overtime shifts for DWI street patrols. The grant is actually a match; 100% of the expense is reimbursed. It will show as a budgeted line item in the Police Department budget as well as the Town's revenue page. Grants will not come in for more than is awarded.

The Police Department Administrative Assistant will start as part-time (35 hours), and become full-time (40 hours) if the budget passes at Town Meeting. The position is currently in the NH Retirement System, but there are no benefits. Chair Krasko stated that Chief Laurent received the fuel price of \$2.08 per gallon from the State. However, they will have to drive to North Hampton for fuel and didn't feel the extra mileage was worth the price. Fuel will be purchased in Town from Cumberland Farms or the truck stop; the cost will be \$2.43 per gallon rather than the proposed \$2.86. Responding to a question from T. Fogarty-Cail, the Police Department can use any station that accepts the WEX card; all Cumberland Farms accept that card. State fuel taxes are removed when using that card. Chair Krasko added it decreases the Police Department budget by \$2,000. Chief Laurent is requesting a decrease in the fuel line to \$14,580. With the WEX card, the pump price is paid minus the State taxes.

T. Fogarty-Cail asked if there was a subsidized program through the State or federal government for naran. K. Anderson explained that each patient who is administered naran is an ambulance run; the

patient's insurance company or Medicare is billed. There's no reimbursement if the patient has no income or insurance. The reimbursement doesn't funnel back into the Town budget, but into the Fire/Ambulance Special Revenue Fund which is a revolving fund. The current balance is \$191,000 and builds to buy an ambulance or fire truck. Funds from that account can only be spent by vote at Town Meeting. K. Anderson noted that ambulance revenue is up substantially; some of the Town's EMT's have gone to paramedic level; advance life support is being used as well as administering some drugs.

R. Bunnell questioned the long-term plan for the Fire Department, if hiring the two full-time lieutenants was Phase I and where was it heading. K. Anderson responded that a study of the Fire Department was done by Municipal Resources, Inc. They anticipate the two full-time lieutenants along with support staff will be sufficient for the next five years. It was recommended that the emphasis be on the facility; staff wise the department was functioning well.

T. Fogarty-Cail questioned the rationale behind the \$15,000 salary increase for the Chief. V. Morgan stated that Fire Chiefs and Assistant Fire Chiefs in this area were making more than the Town's Chief, part-time or full-time. In his opinion, the Town was getting "the best bang for the buck" that they could ask for. V. Morgan suggested the amount to the Board of Selectmen, and the Board was in agreement; he felt it was fair and justified. He added that within the next two years Chief Cresta will be ebbing out slowly. The MRI report requested that he stay for the next couple years to train new personnel. Chief Cresta will stay as long as needed. M. Connelly commented that he knows Chief Cresta has done a lot for the last 30 years, and he probably doesn't have a big quibble with the salary, however, it's a big chunk in one year. He was unsure if it was a good precedent to be setting. V. Morgan responded that he wanted to keep Chief Cresta for the next couple of years to help with training. V. Morgan clarified that Chief Cresta did not request the increase; it was his idea. J. Connelly stated that last year Chief Cresta was given an additional \$10,000, and this year was given \$15,000 without asking; he was struggling with the request. Some members were concerned about a precedent being set. S. McKenzie was in agreement with V. Morgan; for years Chief Cresta was compensated very little. There was a discussion about the cost of hiring a new Chief. T. Fogarty-Cail requested salaries for Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs in the surrounding area. D. Miller stated that he questioned the raise also. After doing research and discussions with Selectmen, he is in agreement. If the two lieutenants are hired and they can do some of the work, then the salary can be reduced. The Selectmen would like to pay Chief Cresta this year in order for the Fire Department to continue to operate in the manner the Town expects. The days of the volunteer no longer exist. S. McKenzie suggested planning beyond a couple of years and looking at cooperative efforts with other towns.

M. Connelly stated that he appreciated the Selectmen being transparent by putting it into the budget and not doing it after the fact. He will probably vote "yes" but didn't like the precedent. There was a discussion about the fuel line; it will not change.

Chair Krasko stated that many residents don't realize there are over 100 new houses in Town. The Town had to be prepared to serve the people school-wise and through emergency services. A full-time Fire Department and new station will be needed eventually. J. Connelly asked if there was a master plan for large ticket items (Library, Fire Station, roads, etc.) that shows the tax impact projected for a number of years. K. Anderson responded that the Capital Improvement Plan is done by the Planning Board.

C. Hussey responded to S. McKenzie's suggestion about cooperative efforts with other towns by stating it doesn't seem to be going in that direction. Towns don't want to lose control. Money is not saved with regionalization, it's saved on equipment. S. McKenzie felt a Chief and two lieutenants, and possibly more, would be needed. He didn't want the Town to be blind-sided budget-wise. T. Fogarty-Cail cautioned there would be needs on the School side also.

T. Fogarty-Cail questioned if the building to be replaced at the Transfer Station could be donated; the original building was donated in the 1980's. There was a discussion regarding the donation of a building.

Road repairs will be based on the survey done by Underwood Engineers. The plan for 2018 is for a section of Portsmouth Avenue, Anne's Lane and one other road; Tuttle Lane was on that schedule but was able to be done this year because of a highway safety payment from the State. Willowbrook Avenue funds have been encumbered.

The E-911 process is still on-going; the Bay roads are being done now. The plowing line has been increased, and is currently overspent. Salt prices were discussed.

Chair Krasko questioned the Recreation Department request of \$12,000 for new fencing at Maloney Field. S. Hussey-McLaughlin responded there is not a fence around the field used for soccer or lacrosse. People are parking on the softball field when it's busy. They want to corral the parking as well as a safety concern. They also want to put netting up to catch the balls that are going into the woods or onto another field. Chair Krasko liked the idea but had a problem with the funding. The Rec Department has over \$60,000 in their fund and asked why those funds weren't being used. S. Hussey-McLaughlin responded that because it's considered an asset for the Town, it would come from Town funds. K. Anderson explained that the way the warrant article is written for the Recreation Revolving Fund, it's used for recreation programming and not capital improvement. K. Anderson further explained that the Town doesn't pay for the programs. Recreation revenue goes into their revolving fund and is used to pay their program expenses. Field and park maintenance is Town-wide not just recreation fields.

Denise Grimse reviewed the changes to the Library budget. The Town appropriation remains the same.

R. Bunnell reminded members to email questions in advance of the School Budget review on Tuesday, December 19, 2017.

MOTION: D. Miller moved to adjourn at 8:29 p.m. Second – C. Hussey; in favor. MOTION CARRIED

NEXT MEETING
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Tuesday, December 19, 2017 – 6:30 p.m., School Budget Review, Town Hall Conference Room

Respectfully Submitted: Charlotte Hussey, Secretary to the Boards

Approved: Tuesday, December 19, 2017