**BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES FOR 2-1-17**

**ROLL CALL/SIGN-IN:**

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| **PRESENT:** |  |  |
| Bettie Harris-Howard | Laura Bragg | Sean Bright |
| Deborah Wilson | Skip Wood | Rebecca Beal |
| Becky Batchelder | Jeri Basko | Corinna Cole (alt) |
| **ABSENT:** |  |  |
| Judy Churchard |  |  |
| **SELECTMEN:** |  |  |
| Royce Heath | Paul Nadeau |  |
| **PUBLIC:** |  |  |
| Dana Coull | Ben Thompson | Tommy Torno (Road Commissioner) |

Bettie motioned to open the meeting at 6:36 pm. Sean seconded.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

* **Budget Committee minutes for the 6-8-16** meeting were read and discussed. Sean motioned to accept them as written. Deb seconded.
* **Budget Committee Meeting Minutes for the 1-25-17** meeting were read and discussed. Bettie motioned to accept the minutes with a few minor changes. Sean seconded.
* This was to be a joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Budget Committee to discuss questions about the Transfer Station Budget, but Christine is ill, so we’ll try for next week after the Selectmen meet with Robert Patch, the Supervisor of the Transfer Station, to get some of the answers.
* **Budget Committee Protocol**:
  + The Chair (Bettie) is the one to go to the Treasurer with questions. Otherwise we will be a community member and may be charged for copies. Bettie motioned that changes made at the Budget Committee meeting are submitted to the Selectmen. Deb seconded.
  + Everyone was given copies of the **Budget Committee Establishment Ordinance** which is what was voted on by the public last year. These are the rules the Committee must abide by. Copies of the old By-Laws were discarded.
  + Our job is appropriation of money and oversight of the departmental budgets. We do not discuss **Personnel** issues.
* **Conservation Commission Scholarship**: Bettie said we have no firm answer yet. Deb said this was discussed at the Board of Selectmen meeting. The Scholarship should be separate funds, not part of the Budget. It can be put on the ballot as a warrant article.
* Deb asked about the $100 for a phone for Jen Griffin, Secretary of Planning Board. It is not being used at this time, but it was left in the budget just in case it doesn’t work out for her to use the phone at the Town Office.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

* The **timeline** for our budget reviews was discussed. Sean pointed out that we still have 14 budgets left. They are General Government, Elections, Legal, Insurance, Mapping, Dispatch, Contingency, CMP No Spray, Hydrants, General Assistance, Relief Agencies, Cemeteries, Annual Festival, and Capital Improvement. Bettie expressed concern that we are running out of time. It was mentioned that some of the remaining budgets are small and can be done quickly. The only really big one is the General Government budget. We decided that **March 13 would be our target date** to have all the budget reviews done. Nomination Papers can be picked up after Feb. 13 for those of us up for re-election. They must be turned in by March 20. The ballot must be sent to print in time for the Public Hearing and then the Election on May 9.
* At 7:10 pm, Bettie motioned that we go off the record while we waited to Tommy Torno to arrive. Deb seconded. At 7:15 Jeri motioned that we go back on the record. Deb seconded.

**Highway Budget:** Tommy Torno, the Road Commissioner, presented the Highway Budget. Throughout our discussing, a common theme was that expenses were not detailed enough for us to understand the expenditure or they were listed on the wrong line. When this happened, it will be identified as wrong line **(WL)** or not enough information **(NEI)**. Contracted labor **(WL)** should be under Outside Services. It was discussed that Tommy decides where items should be listed.

* **Wages** stayed the same. The$79,600 includes his salary of $32,000. His contract is for $32 hour/week, but he never works less than 40 hours. Contracted services are people who are not Town employees who step in to cut brush, etc. It was discussed that they should be on the payroll so they are covered by Liability insurance in case they are hurt working for the Town. Deb mentioned that CMP did a lot of cutting on one side of the road. Tommy replied that they did nothing down low. Tommy needs to hire a tree company for anything high because he does not have the equipment to do it. Sean stated that he believes wages will be lower than the $79,600 that is budgeted.
* **Supplies** are budgeted at $500, but this is not accurate because many items on other lines should come under supplies. Worksafe Traffic vests **(WL)** ($199.95) should be under Safety (line 35). We would like the budget to be more specific as to what is bought.
* **Vehicle Fuel**—Tommy gets a weekly fuel reimbursement ($50) (for using his personal truck) in lieu of mileage, but it is not listed consistently on this line. There is 250 gallon fuel tank at the Transfer Station. It is inside the office building. It was paid for out of last year’s budget. It was necessary because they were going through too many tires on the backhoe driving to the gas station and back. The backhoe was not designed for travel on roads. It costs $492 to fill the tank up. Skip mentioned that if they use the credit card, the Town would be reimbursed for Fuel Tax, which would save about $.56/gallon. The difficult decision is what to do if it does not add up to $50. It is a Selectmen decision. We will add that to the list of questions for the Selectmen at the joint meeting. It was felt that fuel prices have stabilized and that this line may be too high. Jeri also felt that the fuel line was too high at $9000. It was recommended to ask the Selectmen to reduce the fuel budget to $7500. Royce and Paul said that whatever Tommy feels comfortable is OK with them. Tommy agreed with that recommendation.
* **Utilities**: Electric heat is used at the Highway Dept Office. The thermostat is set on 52 degrees. Bettie motioned to leave that amount at $1600. Sean seconded. Tommy agreed. The payroll items under the phone budget reflect a $35/month reimbursement for Tommy’s phone. This should be corrected to show that it is a reimbursement.
* **Building Maintenance budget** has gone up $500 because of needed repairs to the trim and roof of the Highway Department building.
* Radio maintenance is budgeted at $500 in case a radio needs to be replaced.
* The **backhoe** is now paid for which should result in a decrease of $34,403 in the overall Highway budget. Repairs for the backhoe are budgeted at $6500.
* **Equipment Rental** ($750) is the same. This allows them to rent a piece of equipment they don’t own.
* Sean recommended that Tommy **meet weekly with the Town Treasurer** to go over receipts so they can be categorized correctly and he sees the invoices that go directly to the Town Office.
* **Sanding:** Tommy reported that sanding is the bulk of what he’s done so far this winter and that he expects to go over budget.
* **Plowing:** Plow drivers are paid plowing bonuses so that they can provide their own cutting edge which saves wear and tear on the plow. Plow drivers are paid $80/hr which is lower that of surrounding towns. Plow drivers are in short supply.
* **Excavating:** They need to contract for an excavator because the Town does not own one. The Excavator is used for digging deep ditches and pulling stumps.
* **Ditching:** The backhoe is used for ditching. It has been used to rebuild several roads this year.
* **Hauling:** Should this include brush hauling and stump hauling, as well as hauling the backhoe?
* **Signs:** If Tommy goes out, it is included in his salary. However, if the signs are for a power line down, he needs more than one person because he has to do both ends. When putting up road signs, he saves them up until he has an 8-hour day. There is not line item to explain the need for signs “Assist EMS”, or “picking up trash” (washer and dryer dumped on the side of the road), or “road work”.
* Laura asked whether the Town should buy a 1 ton truck and trailer to avoid paying for hauling. Tommy said that would be great, but he couldn’t garage it in the Sand shed because it would rot. The Town would need to build a garage, too. He would love someone to write a grant to do this. This led to a discussion of the need for a Town Manager and a Comprehensive Plan.
* **Mowing (NEI)** is still somewhat confusing. The Highway Dept. mows the old transfer station and one side of the new transfer station once a year with a brush hog. Sean stated that all properties should be in one bid. Tommy said they have put it out to bid, but no one responds.
* **Shoulder Repair** is for fixing the holes in the side of the road, especially for the Post Office Delivery.
* **Paving** is after replacing culverts. It can’t go under CIP because it is not capital improvement.
* **Brush Cutting** (**NEI)** involves the low brush on the side of the road.
* **Cold Patch**: Tommy stated that he tries to patch every week. He does not expect that $10,000 will be enough. He wants to fix some of the roads that have extreme potholes. This includes Indian Lake Shores, Jim Grant Rd, and Lower Guinea Rd.
* **Culverts**: All the metal culverts seem to be going bad all at once and need to be systematically replaced.
* **Grading** is for dirt roads.
* **Cutting trees: (NEI)** Tommy needs to contract with a private company to do the tall trees, but they do not take out the stump. Deb asked whether cutting trees and cutting brush should be on the same line. There are several items (Chain saw files, earplugs, and highway dept supplies **(WL)**) on this line which should be listed under Supplies.
* **Winter sand and salt** are expected to be over budget.
* **Cold Patch and Hot Top lines** refer to the cost of buying each.
* **Guardrails** are budgeted at $2000, but it is only needed if an accident takes out a guardrail or if a resident complains about a safety issue and one needs to be installed.
* **Culverts** are budgeted at 10,000. This is the cost of buying new culverts.
* **Tools and Safety Supplies** ($2000) include a new Road Sensor which tells the temperature of the roads so Tommy knows when to apply sand or salt. It is installed on Tommy’s truck because it is part of his job.
* **Sign Materials ($2000)** refers to the cost of buying new signs to replace those vandalized or stolen.
* Jeri mentioned that this budget contains a lot of **black holes** in which money gets lost in the accounting process. That money when found could go toward the purchase of a 1 ton plow truck and trailer.
* Bettie motioned to ask the Board of Selectmen and Treasurer for more detail. Rebecca Beal seconded.

**Summary:** It was agreed by all members of the committee that the budget needs some serious cleaning up before we can answer questions from the public. The **Description on each line** was inadequate for transparency into the budget. There are multiple jobs on each pay check (every 2 weeks) so it is difficult to see exactly what each person was being paid for. It should be made clear when the line is to purchase an item (like culverts or hot top) and when it is for labor for installation. We would like more clarification and more careful categorizing of each line. For example, road work should indicate where the work was done. We need more accountability on payroll and paperwork. It is confusing whether Tommy is being paid under his contract or whether it is his business. This needs to be clarified. The budget needs to be pretty tight because any unexpended funds go into a Restricted Fund that has been reserved for Highway. Surplus money can be used to alleviate taxes, but if released by a vote of the public. It was also recommended that Tommy meet with the Town Treasurer every week to go over line items and invoices that go directly to the Town Office. Several members voiced concern that they could not vote to approve the budget if these issues are not cleared up before we vote. **Deb made a motion to ask Tom to clean up the budget before we vote. Jeri seconded.**

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

**Ben Thompson** asked…

* Why are things on the wrong line item? Tommy replied that he’s been working on it. He’s doing better, but must have missed some. Ben replied that this problem goes back a long time…to before he was Selectman.
* Why is the public not provided with paperwork being discussed? Bettie responded that we can do that.
* He quoted Bettie saying that a line item budget would make sense. He stated that we do have a line item budget. There is supposed to be accountability, not “a lump of money” which is a term he has heard used.
* Ben asked when the fuel tank was installed at the Highway Dept. The answer was June, 2016.
* Ben asked why there was no surveillance camera on the tank as was previously discussed.
* He mentioned the $50/week reimbursement for fuel in lieu of mileage. If Tommy used the credit card, how would we deal with it if the amount did not total $50?
* Why use red fuel? Under TBS17 you can simply add red dye. Royce replied that they had to adhere to certain Emission Standards. Ben said that was changed in 2007.
* Ben agreed that there are black holes in this budget.
* Ben observed that Bettie often answered for Tommy and she should let him answer for himself. Bettie said she doesn’t like to invite someone in and have them bombarded with questions, so she sometimes answers for them to ease the pressure on them. She will try not to do that anymore.

**NEXT MEETING:**

The next meeting will be on Feb. 8, 2017 at the Town Office at 6:30 pm.

**AGENDA:**

**New Business:**

* Approve the Minutes of our 2-1-17 meeting.
* Joint meeting with Selectmen about the Transfer Station Budget. Sean will be the spokesperson. We will only ask additional questions when Sean has finished. Add these questions to the list:
  + **Why not allow Tommy to use a credit card for fuel so the Town can be reimbursed for the Fuel Tax?**
  + **What is being charged for FICA taxes? The current rate is 7.65%**

Old Business:

* Revisit the Highway Budget.
* Conservation Commission Scholarship.

**Sean made a motion to adjourn at about 9:30. Bettie seconded.**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Rebecca W. Beal**

**Approved by Budget Committee 2-8-17**