

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES FOR 2-22-17

ROLL CALL/SIGN-IN:

PRESENT:

Bettie Harris-Howard
Deborah Wilson
Becky Batchelder
Corinna Cole (alt)

Laura Bragg
Skip Wood
Jeri Basko

Sean Bright
Rebecca Beal
Judy Churchard

SELECTMEN:

None, but Royce Heath came
in after the BOS meeting
ended.

PUBLIC:

Ben Thompson

Bettie motioned to open the meeting at 6:44 pm. Deb seconded.

The Budget Committee meeting for 2-15-17 was cancelled due to a storm. It was agreed that it would be helpful if Becky put page numbers and dates on each page of the minutes. Minutes from the 2-8-17 meeting were read and approved with a few corrections. Deb motioned. Jeri seconded.

NEW BUSINESS:

MAPPING BUDGET: The Mapping budget amount of \$7000 was felt to be reasonable and all agreed not to change it.

NO SPRAY BUDGET: The Town is in year 2 of a 3-year contract. The amount of \$22,199 is the agreed upon amount. There was very little discussion on this budget.

HYDRANTS BUDGET: This is a 99-year contract with E. Rochester and is still a bargain at \$1,680.

CONTINGENCY BUDGET: The total amount of this budget is \$50,000. Overlay is figured by a percentage of the tax commitment. The Contingency Budget is used to pay abatements and can be also be used for unexpected expenses. Very Little discussion.

LEGAL FEES: The total for legal fees has been increased by \$10,000 to reflect the cost of transferring the Prospect Hill Cemetery to the Town of Lebanon.

- Milton has always taken care of PHC. The Cemetery Committee requested that the BOS put the legal expenses in Legal, instead of the Cemeteries budget. This is appropriate because there are other issues to be resolved by legal.

- Rebecca Beal asked Deb what the role of the Cemetery Committee is. The volunteers on this committee have been appointed by the BOS to document the cemeteries. Deb has lots of pictures of gravestones on her camera and is waiting for space on the Town Website. When finished, this will be a resource for Genealogy searches. They also refer neglected cemeteries to the BOS.
- The American Legion does Veteran celebrations. The Venture Club is helping with clean-up. The committee has visited 16 cemeteries so far. Flags for Memorial Day are bought from the American Legion. Deb estimated that the Town will need 60 additional flags for PHC.
- On March 2, Tom Gray from the Milton BOS will meet with our Town Treasurer.
- There are numerous small trust funds for perpetual care of sites in various cemeteries across Lebanon, but the town can only use the earned interest income which is usually a few cents. The BOS will contact the Attorney General about combining the small trusts into one trust, the income from which will help with the cemetery budgets.
- The Budget is \$48,000. All agreed that was an appropriate amount.

CEMETERIES BUDGET: Refer to the discussion under the Legal Fees Budget for clarification. This budget provides for mowing and repairs necessary at the cemeteries in Town. This budget of \$50,000 was acceptable.

GENERAL ASSISTANCE BUDGET:

- There was a lot of discussion about the decision by the BOS to reduce this budget by \$9,425. The BOS felt that since people do not access this help, it was a safe budget to cut. Last year only \$2906.25 was used out of the \$24,425 budget. The guidelines are similar to State guidelines. If you do not receive assistance from the State, the Town will probably not be able to cover expenses.
- Deb shared a personal experience with General Assistance and spoke in opposition to the cuts in the budget. She felt that people just don't know they can ask for help from the Town.
- Bettie said that the problem is with the criteria which are updated yearly by the State of Maine. Judy agreed that the BOS should have more discretion. Since rent is covered, it would be nice if mortgages could be covered since we have so little rental property in town.
- Rebecca Beal mentioned that the State Welfare Budget is being cut and there will be more people without insurance, housing, food, and heat.
- The Town gets a 50% reimbursement by the State.
- Jeri said that if people qualify, the Town will help them regardless of whether this fund has run out of money. She felt we shouldn't increase this amount because it is reflected in the mil rate.

- Discussion followed about where to put the proposed increase. Deb motioned to increase rent back to the previous amount of \$15,000 and electricity to \$1300. Judy seconded. Motion approved 7:3. The total BOS recommendation is \$15,000 which is a decrease of \$9,425 from last year's budget. The BC recommendation is \$18,100 which is a decrease of \$6,325. From last year's budget.

OLD BUSINESS:

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

CODE ENFORCEMENT BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE:

- Total budget is \$47,628. This is a slight increase over last year because of an added \$100 in Dues and Subscriptions. This is necessary so that Mike has the latest codes, regulations and resources to do his job. This will potentially save money in the long run because he can give correct information to contractors and homeowners. Less litigation!
- Mike has budgeted a Cost of Living raise of \$910 or about 3%.
- Mike was asked about shirts on the uniforms line. He has budgeted for 4 shirts at \$23.95 each which equals \$95.80. We recommended transferring \$100 out of the books line and into uniforms.
- Mike makes the same amount every week but FICA is never the same. Jordan doesn't know what is wrong, but he will call TRIO for guidance.
- FICA has not been adjusted to the current rate of 7.65%.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE:

- The Highway subcommittee was provided clean copies of the Highway budget. It was noted that it did not include any of the changes Tommy Torno (R.C.) had agreed on when he met with us to present his budget.
- Tommy was invited to attend this meeting, but he did not come. He texted Bettie that he is busy for the next several weeks.
- We are unsure what to recommend under "supplies" because the budget is too confusing. For example: Signs (supplies) is listed under labor and Signs (labor is listed under supplies.
- Nothing has been requested for Capital Improvement. Several roads are listed. Where will that money come from?
- FICA was corrected to 7.65%, a savings of \$310.
- The numbers did not show a justification for the huge increases that were requested. After a lengthy deliberation and comparing past expenses and present, we were able to

shave off a total of \$93,800. For example: "Brush Cutting in 2015-16 was approved for \$1000. This year he is requesting \$6000 even though only \$936 has been spent.

- Approximately 1,888 hours of labor were reported without explanation of how they were used. That's about 15.7 hours/day in July, Aug, Sept. and Oct. That would be about 2.3 men + trucks at \$52/hour 7 days a week...about \$780/day. That does not include hourly workers. The total expenditure for these categories for July, Aug, Sept., and Oct, 2017, is \$98,167.
- Careful itemization on line items with transparency into how the money is spent as well as cooperation with the Budget Committee would allow us to more fully understand the needs of the department.
- There was a lot of discussion about the cuts in this budget. Four people spent about 2 ½ hours looking at each line: the expenses, the balances, and the requests in the new budget. We have discussed this budget at several meetings. It was felt that a lot of work had gone into this budget and we accepted the subcommittee's recommendation.
- The final recommendation of the Budget Committee is a total of \$687,565.

EMERGENCY SERVICES BUDGET:

- Sean and Rebecca Beal reviewed the Fire & EMS budget with Chief Meehan. All questions were answered thoroughly. The Chief Pointed out several line corrections he has recently made. He meets with the Town Treasurer almost daily.
- FICA corrections have not been made at this time. Sean crunched some numbers and said that the correction will save about \$1100 on the overall budget. The final amount will be about \$452,000, which is slightly lower than the requested budget (\$453,108) from last year, but higher than the special-vote approved budget (\$417,904) at the special town meeting last year.
- We congratulated the Chief on a thorough, transparent budget and his willingness to address concerns. His budget could be used as a template for correcting other budgets that are very hard to understand and lacking in transparency.
- The EMS collected \$126,229 in revenues in 2016. It is understood that the revenues do not go to the Fire and EMS account. The money goes into the General Fund to help keep the Mil rate lower.
- The Chief will try to negotiate to lower the billing fees again now that the department has a good record of submitting all claims. Conversation followed that the EMS department is responsible for paying the billing fees, but the revenue goes into the General Fund. Jeri thought this was a good idea because it is in the best interest of the EMS budget to keep the billing fees as low as possible.

TRANSFER STATION BUDGET:

- There was a long discussion about the wages category. After calculating several scenarios, it was decided to keep the wages at \$70,000. If the budget is too low, the

Transfer Station will have to shut down completely and we wanted to avoid that. FICA should be \$5355.

- We felt it was important to increase the Electricity from \$4500 to \$5000, due to uncertainty about rates.
- The foreman says he has enough people to cover the 27 hours they are open.
- Anyone working under 35 hours does not get benefits. There are no full-time employees.
- The Waste Management line is likely to change due to a change in rubbish tonnage. The Transfer Station is only open 3 days a week, so the cans fill up; leaving no room for the demolition debris they used to top it off with. Now demolition does not fit in the cans, so it will be billed differently. That line may need to be increased.
- The Transfer Station will be closed on Monday again for the next fiscal year.

Jeri motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 pm. Bettie seconded. All in favor.

The next meeting will be on March 1, 2017 at 6:30 at the Town Office.

Old Business:

- Questions for the BOS and answers given.
- Do we have letters from the Relief Agencies?
- We need updates of all expense reports once they are corrected. Our recommendations need to be finished by March 13.
- What is the total recommended for the Transfer Station Budget.
- Revisit the Highway Budget—hauling line.

New Business:

- New budgets.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca W. Beal