

Lebanon Budget Committee

Meeting Minutes

1- 6 -16

Members Present - Jeri Basko, Laura Bragg, Judy Churchard, Corinna Cole, Chris Gilpatrick, Chip Harlow, Bettie Harris-Howard, Nancy Neubert, Skip Wood

Selectmen Present - Chairperson Thompson, Royce Heath

Department Head - Ronnie Patch

Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Harlow at 6:40. Minutes from the 12-2-15 meeting were approved with a unanimous 9 - 0 vote.

Old Business

Chairperson Harlow read a prepared statement in reference to a disagreement between himself and the Chairman of the Selectboard (see attached). The issues were discussing personnel as they relate to the budgets and the audio recording of meetings. Harlow cited laws in reference to the personnel issue and he has turned over recordings of the budget committee meetings. He will no longer be recording the meetings.

The selectmen said that Mike Lonnegan from Norton Insurance would not be meeting with the committee. He would like any questions to be given to the Selectmen in writing if we need any further information.

The committee received a memo from the Town Treasurer which further clarified the Committee's request for more information on the town's portion of dog licensing fees. The Treasurer was present video taping the meeting but would not answer any questions as she was not being paid to be at the meeting.

Transfer Station

Ronnie Patch presented the Transfer Station budget. Wages and payroll taxes are the same as this year. There are 5 employees: Roger Neault, Jenn Griffin, Ronnie Patch, Robert Patch, and Lorraine Patch. 4 people work 22.5 hours/week at \$13.40/hour. Ronnie works 29 hours/week at 16.00/hour. The Committee questioned why there was such a fluctuation in payroll amounts - some weeks payroll was as high as \$1,904. while other weeks it was \$1200 (these were not weeks when there was heavy traffic at the station). Patch had no explanation for this, even after Selectman Thompson pulled the payroll warrant for 2 different weeks.

Supplies are up \$500. This line is probably up because they will need to order more stickers next year but Patch wasn't certain.

Electricity and Phone lines are the same as last year.

Building Maintenance is at the same amount - \$5,000. - as this year but no money has been spent this year to date. The committee questioned why there is never any specific budget for this line - it's just in case they need it.

The Equipment line is up \$150. (\$600.). This line is for safety equipment for the employees. The Town pays the transfer station employees \$75. towards the purchase of steel-toed boots. The committee questioned if the town has a policy regarding other employees' safety equipment. The town does not pay for safety equipment for the Transportation department. Since the transfer station has only used \$75. in this line, the committee recommended that it stay at \$450.

The Outside Services line is the same as last year.

The Waste Management line is the same as last year but the selectmen may be changing that after they sign the new contract with WM. They are reviewing the new proposal at this time. The committee found an item in the Waste Management line of the expense detail report that needs to be moved. This was a reimbursement for boots for Roger Neault. It should be moved to the Equipment line.

There is a new line for Advertising in the Transfer Station budget. This will be used for advertising job openings and/or updating the disposal fees.

There was much discussion about the collecting of money at the station. Harlow asked if anyone at the town office was in charge of reconciling the receipts and money that are turned in to the office. Money and receipts are turned in about once a week. Patch left the meeting at 8:27 in the middle of this discussion. There were also questions about commercial haulers who are still dumping their trash in town. Selectman Heath said that he never saw that when he was working there and if people witness this they should take a picture.

Next Week - Library, Elections, General Government

Jeri Basko motioned to adjourn at 8:56 and was seconded by Laura Bragg. The vote was unanimous to adjourn.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Neubert, Secretary

Approved 1- 13-16

January 6, 2016

During our Holiday break, several issues came up that I would like to address. I'm doing this as a prepared statement, so that I do not ramble, as I'm prone to do, and to try to keep it as succinct and brief as I can. We can certainly discuss after I'm done.

The first issue has to do with discussing personnel as it relates to a proposed budget and the budget committee. This issue came up as a result of my public email questioning the qualifications of our CEO. Ben, in an email dated 12/4/2015, a copy of which is attached, sternly warned us not to discuss in any further detail. This attempt to silence the Committee has not gone unnoticed. What is being missed is that employees do not work for the Budget Committee and so the Selectmen's rules do not apply to us. We are an independent, key word - independent, duly elected committee, and as such the Selectmen do not have any control over how we conduct our meetings, as long as we follow the laws of the State of Maine. And that law, 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (A), states that in regards to permitted deliberations in Executive session that deal with employment, appointment, assignment, duties, promotion, demotion, compensation, evaluation, disciplining, resignation, or dismissal; that "This paragraph does not apply to discussion of a budget or budget proposal". Copy of law attached.

In our case, an increase in the CEO's budget is being recommended, yet the current CEO is currently not qualified, and worse, it was this committee that had to bring to light what was needed for him to be qualified. So, discussion of his qualifications along with his public comments during his budget presentation, are certainly within the boundaries of the law. All this being said, discussions involving town personnel should have a direct correlation to the budgeting process, otherwise we should refrain from going down that path.

The second issue revolves around the recording of Budget Committee meetings. It is the opinion of Town Counsel, that copies of Any recording of meetings, performed by a Committee member, need to be turned over to the Town, regardless of the purpose or whether personal equipment is being used. Non-committee public may record and are not subject to this.

It is my hope that these issues do not prevent us from continuing to have a professional working atmosphere with the Selectmen. Perhaps we should all tone it down a bit, and realize that we are all working for the common good of the Town. But I urge that professional courtesy and good communications will certainly help in this regard.

Respectfully,

Richard "Chip" Harlow
Chairman Budget Committee

