

MINUTES OF HAVERHILL TOWN BUDGET HEARING
Thursday, February 11, 2016
Draft Subject to Review, Correction and Approval at Following Meeting

Board Members Present: Wayne Fortier, Tom Friel, Rick Ladd (arrived at 7:40) and Robert Maccini

Town Manager: Glenn English

Administrative Assistant/Finance Officer: Jo Lacaillade

Clerk: Karen Hyde

Advisory Budget Committee Members: Barb Dutile, Dan Brady, Chris Luurtsema, Darwin Clogston and Dick Guy

Members of the Public Present: Mike Dannehy, Mary Jo Locke and Ruth Ranno

Call Hearing to Order: Chairman Fortier called the Public Hearing on the proposed 2016 budget to order at 7:00 PM.

Review of proposed 2016 Town Budget:

Chairman Fortier thanked everyone for coming. For the record, the Haverhill Board of Selectmen is opening a Public Hearing and the purpose of the Public Hearing is to discuss the proposed 2016 budget. He mentioned that there were five (5) members of the Advisory Budget Committee and three (3) members of the public in attendance.

Chairman Fortier started with the general budget and did a brief review of all of the departments. He stated that if anyone had a question to please ask as he went along. There was a brief explanation of some of the legal expenses that were incurred in 2015, which included an ongoing utility companies' dispute. There was also some expenses incurred in the Mountain Lakes land dispute and the Town is still in research of that project as there was new information obtained at the Selectboard meeting of February 8, 2016. Chairman Fortier continued on through the list of departments with a brief review of each. Dan Brady asked if the Cemetery Commissioners were up for reelection this year. AA Lacaillade believed that there were three (3) three-year terms on the Warrant. TM English stated that it was 3 out of 5 that were running.

Chairman Fortier commented that currently, there are 7 police officers including the Chief. Last year, the Board budgeted for an eighth officer because it was felt that the eighth officer was really needed in order to promote an individual within the department to the position of detective and that the new person would be hired as a patrol officer, freeing up a detective. The type of activity that the Police Department has experienced over the last three or four years warrants a detective position in an effort to stay on top of felony-level cases and to be more present in court, therefore, freeing up a patrol officer. Unfortunately, that position has not been filled yet. They are in the process of interviewing more candidates, but so far they have not found a suitable candidate. They have still budgeted for the eighth man.

Chairman Fortier stated that Haverhill is unique in that it doesn't have its own Fire Department. There are three (3) separate Fire Departments, but two years ago, the Town was successful in negotiating with the Fire Departments that the budget would fall under the responsibility of the Town. The Town, in essence, controls the purse strings for the departments. He thinks that this was a major step in the right direction. There are still three departments with three Chiefs and they operate their turf under the Chief's direction. It seems to benefit the citizens. Darwin Clogston asked about the Woodsville salaries and how they have gone way up. He was curious why their salaries went so high. TM English stated that the salaries were consistent among the officers and the men in all three Departments. He believed that they leveled them last year, but it is the number of incidences that they have responded to. Their rates are the same as everybody else. Darwin commented that he understood that Haverhill had gone to more fires than Woodsville. Dick Guy offered that

Woodsville does a lot more car accident type calls. They go out a couple of times a week for something like that and every one of those tends to be an hour or two times 10 guys. TM English stated that there were very few fires anymore. Most of the calls tend to be automobile accidents. Chairman Fortier commented that the stats for the Haverhill Fire Department may be higher than Woodsville because Haverhill responds frequently to alarms called in from the Becket School, many of which are false alarms. This is a significant problem that the Haverhill Fire Department is experiencing. TM English just wanted to let everyone know that when they did the Fire Truck appropriation from the Town's reserve, he made a mistake. It is not going to cost any tax money, but the number is different. The amount from the Town for the fire truck is \$180,000; he had said it would be \$120,000. He made a \$60,000 error in what was being appropriated this year into the Town's reserve. It has been corrected and it will not affect taxes. It will affect the bottom line but not taxes. He apologized for the error.

Chairman Fortier discussed briefly the Highway Department. For several years, the Board had toyed with the idea of a \$1 million bond. Last year, the Board decided not to do a bond. At the Public Hearing last year, the public wanted a pay-as-you-go system. The Board instituted a new line item budget for highway funding and the voters voted on it and appropriated \$150,000. It was with the understanding that that \$150,000 would be appropriated each year. In the process of doing that, the Board created a Highway budget committee to help the Town Manager and the Road Agent to look at the futuristic aspects of the Town's roads and what they could do with them. It was not to micromanage the department at all but to come up with a strategic plan on how best to attend to the roads and how they can be maintained. The Committee consists of Howard Hatch, Joe Maccini, TM English and RA Stuart McDanolds. Chairman Fortier also explained the Woodsville Hwy. Reimbursement, which is set by statute, to the audience.

Chairman Fortier explained that the Town does not own a library. There are four (4) libraries in Town and the Town contributes to their financial welfare and has done so for years. The Board was just notified that the Pike Library may be in the process of closing its doors. However, the Board did have a verbal representation of that at the meeting on February 8, 2016. There has not been anything in writing. They are going to try and stay open but if they don't, they will try to sell their proceeds and those proceeds will go to the other libraries or the Town.

Chairman Fortier commented about the excellent work done by Jim Hobbs at Hazen Park. The Board was appreciative of the people from River Meadow Campground who mowed the park all of the 2015 summer. Chairman Fortier also commented on the award that he received from the Lower Cohase Reg Chamber.

Chairman Fortier stated that the budget total before the Warrant Articles was \$4,495,165 and this would be the basic proposed budget. He then went on to the various Warrant Articles. There are a number of agencies that have requested some assistance. Most of these agencies, the Town has assisted in the past. Mike Dannehy thought that the Forest Service might help with the Page Road Culvert Project. TM English explained that they had kicked in for a temporary bridge, which would have been a tremendous cost for the Town. Chairman Fortier commented on the increase in the Recycling line item. The Town received notice that Haverhill may not be able to use the recycling center in Newbury from 2017 on. Their volume has increased so much that they can't handle it. He didn't know what the future holds for recycling, but they had another year. He explained the War Memorial Park Warrant Article, which was new this year. There are two high school students, Dennis Ruprecht and Joe D'Angelo from Woodsville High School, who came to the Board and wanted to express an idea of having a Veterans War Memorial in Haverhill. The Board directed them to the commanders of the VFW and the American Legion. They went, did a study, took pictures and had a recommendation that such a Memorial should be on Main Street in Woodsville. The VFW and the Legion took a second look at that and looked at the availability of the field out back. The VFW, which owns the field, is certainly willing to have a War Memorial established on that field. He hoped that by Town Meeting, there would be a basic sketch of what it might look like. They went to the landowner, Terry Impey, and he walked it with them and gave them permission to cut some trees down over the bank so they could open up the sunset on the western side. This would be years in the making. The first phase would be to erect three (3) large flagpoles and start there with some shrubbery. Eventually, the War Memorial that sits on the corner of Route 10 and Route 116 may be moved to this new location. The \$1,000 is going to be start-up money. All of these Warrant Articles total \$198,548. He ran through the reserve accounts quickly and the total for them is \$255,000. If all of this passes at Town Meeting, the budget would be \$4,948,713, which is approximately a 13.36% increase overall. If the grant money that has already been acquired and the reserve

accounts are factored in, it reduces that by a good deal. Last year, the Board projected the tax rate would go up 49 cents per \$1,000. It came in at 50 cents. He was proud to say that through the diligence of the front office and the department heads, they were able to accomplish that. Though the budget is up, it appears that with the grant money and the reserves that would be used, they might actually lower the tax rate per \$1,000 by 7 cents. He thinks that their figures are accurate and they will be as accurate as they were the past year. The budget does go up, but the impact that the taxpayers will feel is a little less. There were Advisory Budget Committee members there and he asked if any of them wanted to say anything to please put their input in at any time. TM English commented that they went through the budget fairly quickly, but he wanted to assure them that in five or six meetings with the Administration and the Budget Committee, they went through in great detail this request and the Budget Committee endorsed the budget that he originally proposed. It was a very intense and very positive review of the budget. It has had a lot of eyes examine it thoroughly and he felt it was a good budget. Barb Dutile commented on the many, many, many pages of minutes from those meetings. Chris Luurtsema asked about the increase in the Capital Reserve-Vehicle line item. TM English explained that he had asked to double that because in the 10-year capital plan, some highway equipment was coming due for replacement and it's going to be a big expense. Chairman Fortier stated that if there were no questions on Revenue, he would like to go over a few Articles on the Warrant. The first one he discussed was the Town Meeting Business Meeting, which they are asking the voters if they would like to change to a date set by the selectmen in order for more people to attend the Business Meeting. Dan Brady asked about Article 29: Sale of Town Owned Property. Chairman Fortier explained that it was a piece of land by the Airport that used to house the town dump and has been in limbo for a number of years. The Board needs permission from the voters to sell this piece of property. There were no other questions and Chairman Fortier thanked everyone for coming. Mr. Brady also brought up the fact that the lighting at the corner of Route 10 and this driveway was very hard to see in the winter and thought with the War Memorial coming in that they might have some kind of illuminated sign that calls out both the War Memorial and the Municipal Offices. The other thing he was wondering about was if anybody had investigated payments in lieu of taxes for the Becket School. Rick Ladd stated that there would be a bill put in next year that would cover this issue.

Robert Maccini made a motion to adjourn the public hearing; seconded by Tom Friel and carried unanimously. Chairman Fortier closed the public hearing at 8:06 PM. The Board was now in a deliberative session at 8:07 PM.

Robert Maccini made a motion to approve the budget and Warrant as presented; seconded by Rick Ladd. Rick asked that when the budget is presented at Town Meeting, and they are saying that they are reducing the budget based upon grants and reserves. It would be good if they explained that the projects were a one-time thing and wouldn't happen every year. The vote was taken and all approved.

Chairman Fortier again thanked the Advisory Budget Committee for all of their work.

Robert Maccini made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Rick Ladd and all approved. Chairman Fortier adjourned at 8:08 pm.

Minutes transcribed by Karen Hyde