

Advisory Budget Committee

Meeting Minutes

December 30, 2014

The following members were present: Dick McDanolds, Barb Dutile, Andrew Maffei, Christopher Luurtsema, Dan Brady, Dick Fabrizio, Laraine King and Howard Hatch. Also present: Selectboard members Wayne Fortier, Robert Roudebush and Lynn Wheeler; Town Manager Glenn English; Admin. Asst./Finance Officer Jo Lacaillade; Clerk Karen Hyde; and Darwin Clogston.

Dick McDanolds called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Mr. McDanolds stated that there were new members of the Advisory Budget Committee and everyone, including all at the table and in the audience, introduced themselves. Barb Dutile nominated Chris Luurtsema as chairman; seconded by Andy Maffei. There were no other nominations. Chris Luurtsema accepted the nomination.

The Committee decided on the following dates for further meetings:

Monday, January 5th – Highway Department

Wednesday, January 7th – Recreation and Information Technology

Wednesday, January 14th – Police Department

Wednesday, January 28th – Fire Departments

Wednesday, February 4th – Libraries and Warrant Articles

All meetings begin at 7:00 pm at the JRM Building.

The next meeting will be Monday, January 5th, 2015 at 7:00 pm.

TM English presented a brief overview of the 2015 budget. He stated that the Town tax rate is up \$.34 per \$1,000. The revenues were very good this year. The Board had asked TM English for both a flat budget and a budget that he would recommend. TM English commented that both the Highway and the Police Departments were up for 2015, but all the other departments were either flat or down. All of the costs of general government are down 5%. The reason for the new police officer is that there is not enough investigative capacity, so adding a new officer would backfill whatever officer is pulled from patrol for investigations. Chairman Luurtsema asked what the Police Department was investigating. TM English responded “every crime that you could think of”.

The following expenditures were reviewed:

Selectboard – Laraine King had questions about the Professional Services line item. In 2014, the line item was under \$2,000 and this year, it is up to \$7,114. TM English explained that the only

new item in Professional Services is an analysis of the Town's gravel roads by North Country Council, which is \$5,000. North Country Council did an evaluation of the Town's asphalt roads, which included traffic counts and existing conditions and the Selectboard requested a similar study on the gravel roads. TM English did a brief overview of the 10-year Capital Road Plan that he had presented to the Selectboard. Motion to approve by Barb Dutile, seconded by Dick McDanolds and all approved.

Town Administration – Laraine King had a question about Town Administration Health Insurance and why it was up \$3,000. TM English stated that it was in his contract that the Town pays all of his insurance. Motion to approve by Dan Brady, seconded by Barb Dutile; Howard Hatch voted in the negative. The motion was approved.

Town Meeting – There is only one election this year; the moderator is paid \$100 for each election. Motion to approve by Barb Dutile, seconded by Dick McDanolds and all approved.

Trustees & Trust Funds – Chairman Luurtsema asked how much was in the Trust Fund. AA Lacaillade stated that information could be found in the Town Report. She would have the information breakdown at the next meeting. Motion to approve by Howard Hatch, seconded by Barb Dutile and all approved.

Town Clerk – The Town Clerk budget is down this year. The Town Clerk receives a stipend (\$3,000) for the health insurance as she does not take the Town insurance. This is legal as long as she can prove she has other insurance. Motion to approve by Dan Brady, seconded by Dick Fabrizio and all approved.

Voter Registration/Elections – The budget for Voter Registration is down due to the fact that there is only one election this year. Barb Dutile made a motion to approve, seconded by Dick McDanolds and all approved.

Accounting and Auditing – Chairman Luurtsema asked about the increase in Travel. AA Lacaillade stated that there were more and more meetings to attend which have to do with changes in laws. Barb Dutile made a motion to approve, seconded by Dan Brady and all approved.

The Committee decided to take a 5-10 minute break at 8:15 PM. The Committee resumed at 8:21 PM.

Tax Collection – Chairman Luurtsema asked about the decrease in Health Insurance and Retirement for the Tax Collector. TM English explained that the Tax Collector was now part time. Darwin Clogston asked what the percentage was of back taxes. AA Lacaillade stated that she hadn't checked on this particular billing because the due date hadn't hit. She would get those numbers and present them at the next meeting on January 5, 2015. Motion to approve by Dick McDanolds, seconded by Laraine King and all approved.

Treasurer – AA Lacaillade did a brief overview of the Treasurer's responsibilities to the Town. Motion to approve by Dick Fabrizio, seconded by Barb Dutile and all approved.

Information Technology – Chairman Luurtsema asked what departments and the breakdown that this budget supports. AA Lacaillade stated that all departments are now included in this budget. Software support includes Avitar (tax collector and assessing program), BMSI (payroll, accounts payable and fund accounting), and Cartographics Online (online tax card system). The rest of the IT budget will be covered by Jim Marshall on January 7, 2015 and whatever details Mr. Marshall doesn't cover, AA Lacaillade would have those particular details.

Revaluation of Property – Chairman Luurtsema asked what this category was for. TM English stated that this was for the Town's assessing company (M&N Assessing) and also for the assessing company for the various utilities. AA Lacaillade explained to the Committee the 5-year tax assessing cycle. Howard Hatch asked if the assessing company used standards. TM English stated that these were set by the state. Dan Brady made a motion to approve, seconded by Barb Dutile and all approved.

Legal Expense – Chairman Luurtsema commented that this budget had jumped up 40%. TM English explained that this should be broken down: (1) \$6,000 to \$7,000 is routine legal expense of the Town Attorney; (2) \$10,000 was added to protect the Town due to the Life Safety/Fire Code inspections; and (3) the legal expenses to defend the Town against the utilities' appeals. Chairman Luurtsema asked how much the utilities add to the tax base. TM English and AA Lacaillade stated that they did not have the number with them, but would get it to the members of the Committee. Motion to approve by Dan Brady, seconded by Barb Dutile and all approved.

Planning Board – Motion to approve by Dick McDanolds, seconded by Barb Dutile and all approved.

ZBA – Motion to approve by Barb Dutile, seconded by Dick McDanolds and all approved.

Robert E. Clifford Memorial Building – There was a question on the increase in Heating Oil. TM English explained that the building was being used more for various functions. Chairman Luurtsema noted that salaries for the Robert E. Clifford Memorial Building were going up and TM English stated that the salaries were reallocated with the same people with more time at the building. Howard Hatch questioned the price of heating oil and AA Lacaillade stated that the Town was in a consortium with the school at a fixed rate. She commented that she based the figure on how many gallons had been used previously at the current price that the Town was paying and on the usage of the building. Mr. Hatch asked about switching to propane and AA Lacaillade commented it takes money to convert. TM English stated that he felt the way to go could be biofuel, but he needed professional advice on how to proceed. Dan Brady asked about repairs and maintenance going from \$29,000 to \$14,000. TM English stated that there were many repairs done at the building last year and there were not any major repairs being done this year. Darwin Clogston had questions about the costs associated with the Robert E. Clifford Memorial Building since it was purchased. Howard Hatch did a brief history of how the Building came into the Town's possession. There were questions as to whether the building should be

closed because of the costs associated with keeping it open. Lynn Wheeler commented that she was on the Committee that purchased the building. The purpose of buying the building was to have various functions there with the hope of cutting down on some of the costs. It would be very hard to sell the building at this time, considering the real estate market. TM English commented that he was against taking the building in the first place because it would cost the Town money. He stated that the building could be shut down and save the operating costs with the hope that the real estate market improves. This would be a Selectboard decision. Laraine King made a motion to table this budget item, seconded by Dick Fabrizio and all approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Minutes transcribed by Karen Hyde