



Town of Plaistow ♦ Budget Committee

145 Main Street ♦ Plaistow ♦ NH ♦ 03865

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING

November 01, 2016

Call to Order: 6:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Dennis Heffernan, *Chair, excused*
Francine Hart, Vice Chair
Sam Cafiso
Laurie Milette
Tricia Holt
Bob Hamilton
Lisa Lambert
Dean Nifakos, *excused*
Martha Sumner
John Sherman, *Selectmen Ex-Officio*

Also Present: Sean Fitzgerald, Town Manager

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Laurie Milette

F. Hart introduced new member Bob Hamilton. She asked him to introduce himself to the Committee.

B. Hamilton introduced himself and noting himself to be a fan of statistics and charts. He spoke about his approach to budget review. Mr. Hamilton noted that he would like to have a discussion under new business about the selection process for new members. He noted that as a candidate he was confused by the process that was used. B. Hamilton expressed concerns about some of the rising costs such as trash collection and healthcare costs along with the addition of the new Police Station bond. He questioned how it all would affect the upcoming budget and hoped to better understand as the process moves forward.

F. Hart noted the fact that there were three (3) applicants as a tribute to the citizenry.

J. Sherman offered that there were actually five (5) residents interested, but two (2) didn't submit because they didn't want to take votes away from David Gerns.

S. Fitzgerald added that he has an open door policy and would be happy to speak with Mr. Hamilton or anyone who had questions.

REVIEW/APPROVAL OF MINUTES

★T. Holt moved, second by L. Lambert, to approve the minutes of the October 25, 2016 meeting.

S. Cafiso noted that during the discussion about the item originally labeled “Budget Committee Operating Procedures” it was decided to change it from “procedures” to “guidelines.” It was noted that does appear in the minutes.

There was no additional discussion on the motion. The vote was 7-0-1 (Hamilton abstaining).

BUDGET PRESENTATION

Executive Department – Sean Fitzgerald, Town Manager

S. Fitzgerald presented the Executive Department’s 2017 budget request noting the following:

Level Funded Budget Lines:

-	Town Office Salary of Selectmen	\$	15,000.00
-	Data Processing	\$	34,000.00
-	Labor Relation Consultant	\$	5,000.00
-	Training/Conference	\$	600.00
-	Office Supplies	\$	5,000.00
-	RSA Supplies	\$	750.00
-	Unanticipated	\$	2,500.00
-	Events & Activities	\$	4,000.00
-	Salary – Town Manager	\$	108,000.00
-	Mileage & Expense Reimbursement	\$	4,800.00
-	Employment Expenses	\$	400.00
-	Recycling Committee	\$	200.00

Decreased Budget Lines:

-	Contracted Consulting Services (-\$5,000.00)	\$	5,000.00
-	Dues (-\$200)	\$	800.00
-	General Supplies (-\$200)	\$	1,000.00
-	Postage (-\$2,000)	\$	2,000.00
-	Office Equipment/Maintenance (-\$1,500)	\$	4,000.00
-	Technical Supplies/Equipment (-\$1,400)	\$	4,600.00

Increased Budget Lines:

-	Professional Mapping Services (+\$1,500)	\$	5,000.00
-	Telephone Expenses (+\$2,500)	\$	8,500.00
-	Rental and Leases (+\$1,000)	\$	7,500.00
-	Overtime (+\$1,000)	\$	5,000.00
-	Permanent Positions – BOS/TM (+\$6,136)	\$	88,400.00

S, Fitzgerald noted that the bottom line Executive Department’s 2017 budget request was \$312,050,00.00 (increase of \$1,836.00).

It was noted that this was the same amount approved by the Board of Selectmen.

Discussion:

S. Fitzgerald explained each of the budget lines noting the following:

- Contracted Consulting Services decreased on actuals
- Mapping increased to fund a new Pictometry flyover
- Telephone expenses should soon level out as the new VOIP system settles in. There are no longer separate charges for long distance telephone service
- Data processing is a 4th quarter expense
- Dues is down with a conservative look at what organizations the Town belongs to
- Rentals and leases are down based on utilization
- General supplies is down based on utilization
- Postage is down based on utilization and reconciliation across departments
- There were increases in employee salary and overtime lines

M. Sumner questioned the telephone line and asked if some Board of Selectmen members were still using town-issued cell phones. She offered that she disagreed with that practice as the Selectmen all choose to run for the office. She questioned what was being paid per year in Board of Selectmen cell phone fees. She noted that when she was a Selectman her home number was posting and she was not given a cell phone.

S. Fitzgerald offered that he would get the breakdown on Board of Selectmen cell phone costs. (Parking Lot Item) He reminded that Board of Selectmen members are on call 24/7.

B. Hamilton noted a PowerPoint presentation on the TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) grant with sidewalk designs from Hoyle and Tanner and asked if monies for that came out of the Executive budget.

S. Fitzgerald noted that Hoyle and Tanner were hired as part of a competitive process to assist in a TAP grant application. Since they had also done sidewalk design, funded through a "Safe Routes To Schools" grant, it was efficient for them to continue to assist with the TAP application. It was also noted that Plaistow's TAP grant application was rated as #1 in Rockingham County.

There was discussion regarding copiers and whether or not they were all leased and had included maintenance contracts. It was noted that the newer machines were leased and had the maintenance contracts. Not all older town-owned machines are covered by a maintenance agreement. As those machines need replacing they are being leased with inclusive maintenance contracts. It was noted that it is difficult to get rid of the older town-owned machines, even as a donation, as they do not have the desired bells and whistles of newer machines.

F. Hart noted that PACE (Plaistow Area Commerce Exchange) showed up in a couple of different department budgets. It was noted that while the Town is the member, there is a cost associated with attendance at the monthly networking meetings and those costs show in the different budgets.

B. Hamilton asked who was overseeing the production of the Town Report.

S. Fitzgerald replied that all departments are involved but it was Gayle Hamel who was doing the final “scrub” in the Town Report.

J. Sherman added that there was also a Town Report Advisory Committee.

It was noted that proofreaders were always welcome for the Town Report.

There was discussion about inconsistency in the “general fund” versus “unassigned fund” references in the document. It was suggested that there be a glossary of terms to help readers understand the difference.

★M. Sumner moved, second by T. Holt, to take the 2017 Executive Department Budget in the amount of \$312,050.00 under consideration. There was no discussion on the motion. The vote was 8-0-0 U/A.

Personnel Administration – Sean Fitzgerald, Town Manager

S. Fitzgerald presented the Personnel Administration 2017 budget request noting the following:

Level Funded Budget Lines:

- Performance Management	\$ 30,000.00
- 125 Caf. Plan Pre-Tax	\$ 600.00
- Medical Services	\$ 1,000.00
- Pre-Employment Screening	\$ 1,500.00
- Notices and Publications	\$ 1,000.00
- Employee Relations	\$ 500.00

Decreased Budget Lines:

- Employee Tuition Reimbursement (-\$5,000)	\$ 5,000.00
- Unemployment Compensation (-\$1,300)	\$ 5,871.00
- Municipal Worker’s Compensation (-\$21,818)	\$ 60,856.00

Increased Budget Lines:

- Work/Health Insurance (+\$36,182)	\$1,017,613.00
- FICA (Payroll Taxes) (+\$15,647)	\$ 124,424.00
- Medicare (+\$4,825)	\$ 50,851.00
- New Hampshire Retirement (+\$127,470)	\$ 655,715.00
- Sick Leave Buy Back (+\$6,300)	\$ 26,300.00

S. Fitzgerald noted that the bottom line Personnel Administration 2017 budget request was \$1,981,230.00 (increase of \$162,306).

It was noted that this was the same amount approved by the Board of Selectmen.

Discussion:

S. Fitzgerald noted that these are the “soft costs” such as retirement and insurances related to employees. He noted that many of the requested adjustments were related to employee census and changes in rates for insurance. It was also noted that different healthcare insurance alternatives were being explored. S. Fitzgerald added that increases in the New Hampshire Retirement costs were from the State shifting costs they used to carry down to the cities and towns.

M. Sumner noted there were medical related costs in the police, fire and health budgets and questioned if some of them could be combined.

S. Fitzgerald replied that the fire and police departments have a specific which is covered by their budgets, while all others are covered in the personnel budget.

There was discussion about health insurance premium sharing. It was noted that prior to the last union contract it was a 90/10 split between the town and employees. The last union contract negotiated that to 85/15. It was reiterated that alternative health insurance plans were being reviewed for additional cost savings. It was noted that there are incentives for employees who have health insurance plans available through their spouse’s employer.

There was discussion regarding the breakdown of employees between fulltime, part-time, seasonal and other. The Committee requested a roster of employees, broken out by position and by department. (Parking Lot Item)

There was a discussion about the sick leave buyback program. It was noted that employees must “bank” a certain amount of their sick leave in order to become eligible for the buyback.

There was discussion about the Performance Management budget line. It was noted to support merit increases and stipends to employees not in the union as well as provide holiday bonuses.

There was discussion about Health Savings Accounts and other cost savings options. S. Fitzgerald noted that they were exploring many options.

★M. Sumner moved, second by B. Hamilton, to take the 2017 Personnel Administration Budget in the amount of \$1,981,230.00 under consideration. There was no discussion on the motion. The vote was 8-0-0 U/A.

Advertising/Associations – Sean Fitzgerald, Town Manager

S. Fitzgerald presented the Advertising/Associations 2017 budget request noting the following:

Decreased Budget Lines:

- Town Report Expenses (-\$500.00) \$ 11,500.00

Increased Budget Lines:

- Notices & Publications (+\$300) \$ 800.00
- Dues (+\$500) \$ 14,500.00

S. Fitzgerald noted that the bottom line Advertising/Associations 2017 budget request was \$26,800.00 (decrease of \$300.00).

It was noted that this was the same amount approved by the Board of Selectmen.

Discussion:

S. Fitzgerald offered that he questioned if this budget should be consolidated with the Executive budget.

J. Sherman noted that it was kept separate because it has a unique and separate four-digit code.

S. Fitzgerald explained that this budget supported legal public notices that must be posted for specific actions taken by the Town. He noted that it also supported the production of the Town Report as well as different municipal association dues.

B. Hamilton questioned the use of the Eagle Tribune as the paper for public notices if the Haverhill Gazette and/or Carriage Town News would be cheaper to use.

There was discussion about better ways for public noticing in the digital age. It was noted that until statutory regulations are changed public notices will continue to be published in the local newspaper. It was also discussion that it was important to get all information out to the public in a timely manner.

There was discussion about the Town Report. It was noted the previously a copy was mailed to every address in Plaistow. That process produced a great deal of waste as many of the books were just thrown away. Currently 800 books are produced and are left in strategic locations, like Town Hall and the Plaistow Public Library, for pick-up by those who wanted a copy. It was noted that changing printers has resulting in a quality project at a lower price. There was discussion on the process used for the collection of information through working with the printing company on timing.

There was discussion on what other department budgets could be consolidated, such as was done with the Animal Control Officer (consolidated with the Police Department) and the Cemetery (consolidated with Highway Department). It was noted that in some cases combining budgets made comparing historical data a challenge.

★M. Sumner moved, second by T. Holt, to take the 2017 Advertising/Associations Budget in the amount of \$26,800.00 under consideration. There was no discussion on the motion. The vote was 8-0-0 U/A.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Public Safety Building Committee (PSBC)

M. Sumner noted that they had received the last NHDOT (New Hampshire Department of Transportation) approval. She added that the drainage was being put in and the foundation was started. M. Sumner stated that, despite rumors, there was no intention of changing the name of the building. It will still be the John D. FitzGerald Safety Complex.

M. Sumner added that there will soon be a rendition of the new building on a sign that will be attached to the fence.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

F. Hart noted that she had not had any contact from Tim Moore or Greg Jones regarding the CIP.

S. Fitzgerald offered that he would make sure that she heard from one of them the following day. He added that the CIP has been approved by the Planning Board and will soon be presented to the Board of Selectmen and the Budget Committee. (The CIP presentation was noted to be scheduled for the November 15, 2016 meeting.)

J. Sherman gave an explanation of the three (3) components of the CIP, the spreadsheet, which is what is approved by the Planning Board; the text document; and the cash flow document. He noted the spreadsheet was included in the Town Report.

There was discussion about the process used by the Board of Selectmen, with the CIP, to develop Warrant Articles. It was noted that just because a capital item might be in the CIP it doesn't always end up as a Warrant Article.

There were no other committee reports

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion of Public Hearing/Deliberative Session Dates

It was decided to table this discussion to the next meeting so that the chair could be present; dates of the Timberlane Regional School District meetings could be considered, if known, and all deadline information could be provided.

B. Hamilton reiterated his suggestion that there be a discussion regarding the filling of vacancies on the Committee. He added, noting that there had been three (3) letters of interest for the open seat he filled, that there seemed to be more interest in serving on town boards. He offered that in the past the Town Manager and Board of Selectmen have played a role and suggested that the Committee develops their own process.

J. Fitzgerald stated that he had no role in the selection of appointments to the Budget Committee.

J. Sherman added that the Board of Selectmen played no role either.

M. Sumner noted that in the past, whether or not a seat was filled would often depend on where they were in the process too. She also noted that the process for filling vacancies on the Committee was already defined in the RSAs.

B. Hamilton explained that he had received a call from Gayle Hamel to come and be interviewed by the Board of Selectmen. He noted that it was confusing that the Board of Selectmen would be interviewing candidates, but not the Budget Committee.

M. Sumner suggested that was because J. Sherman votes the will of the Board of Selectmen, but the Budget Committee selects replacement members. She added that they usually just went with the letter of intent.

J. Sherman offered that he couldn't remember the last time there was more than one applicant for an open position and therefore he hasn't had to ask for direction from the Board of Selectmen.

S. Fitzgerald added that the only role his office played was to post the opening.

B. Hamilton suggested that the process could be made clearer.

J. Sherman offered if there was this much interest then perhaps it was time to consider going back to a twelve (12) member board.

M. Sumner reiterated that the process was governed by the RSAs.

OLD BUSINESS

Parking Lot

Pending Items Resolved:

- Item #14 - The voter registration list can be put on the website, but it is not recommended by the Secretary of State's Office because bad things can happen with the information
- Item #19 – There was a posting error in the Solid Waste Budget that is being reconciled and updated

New Items Added:

- Breakdown of Board of Selectmen cellphones
- Employee roster separated by department and position

B. Hamilton, noting there were ten (10) voting members on the Committee, asked what happened in the case of an even split vote.

J. Sherman responded that it would not pass.

S. Fitzgerald added that a tie would not be a positive vote.

There was no additional business before the Committee and the meeting was adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Dee Voss
Recording Secretary