

**BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING  
December 03, 2013**

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Kristin Lewis-Savage, Chair  
Martha Sumner, Vice Chair  
Tricia Holt  
Ben Sadewicz  
David Gerns  
Gayle Hamel  
Darrell Britton  
Dennis Heffernan  
Barry Weymouth, *Excused*  
John Sherman, Selectmen Ex-Officio

Also Present: Sean Fitzgerald, Town Manager

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Kristin Lewis-Savage

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

***M. Sumner moved, second by D. Heffernan, to approve the minutes of the October 29, 2013 meeting. There was no discussion on the motion. The vote was 9-0-0 U/A.***

***G. Hamel moved, second by T. Holt, to approve the minutes of the November 05, 2013 meeting. There was no discussion on the motion. The vote was 8-0-1 (Sumner abstaining).***

**BUDGET REVIEW:**

S. Fitzgerald noted that the Budget Committee and the Board of Selectmen were in sync with the budget. He added there would be some changes as the year of the year gets closer. S. Fitzgerald offered there could be changes to the utilities, gas, mileage reimbursement and personal lines in the budgets once Federal energy numbers and rate changes are received and personnel evaluations have been completed.

It was noted that figures should be available for the meeting in two weeks.

**REVIEW OF DRAFT WARRANT ARTICLES**

The Committee reviewed \_\_\_\_\_ Warrant Articles that the Board of Selectmen had made changes to since the last review.

**Replacement of police department Automated External Defibrillators (AED's)**

***Article P-14-12: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate ~~\$13,200~~ \$9,900, by withdrawing that exact amount from the Unexpended Fund Balance. These funds will purchase six new AED's for the Police Department, replacing 6 AEDs that are obsolete.***

**(Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0-0) and Budget Committee (8-0-0); and this funding is included in the 2014-2019 Capital Improvement Program as approved by the Planning Board.)**

Appropriation	<del>\$13,200</del>	\$9,900
Amount from Unexpended Fund Balance	<del>-\$13,200</del>	-\$9,900
Amount to be Raised by 2014 Taxes		\$0

[Intent: An automated external defibrillator (AED) is a [portable electronic device](#) that can save your life during a cardiac event. Four (4) new AED's are for replacement of existing AED's currently kept in four (4) of the Police Department Marked Cruisers, and two (2) of the new AED's

will be placed in two (2) of the Police Department Unmarked Vehicles.]

Discussion:

S. Fitzgerald noted that the original request was based on the purchase of eight (8) AEDs. After discussions with the Police Chief it was determined that six (6) units would meet the need and each unit was priced at \$1,650.00.

***M. Sumner moved, second by T. Holt, to recommend Article P-14-12, as amended, in the amount of \$9,900.00 for the replacement of the Police Department AED units. There was no discussion on the motion. The vote was 9-0-0 U/A.***

**BUILDING SYSTEMS CAPITAL RESERVE FUND DEPOSIT (BOS WILL REVIEW IN DECEMBER)  
Article P-14-18: Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 to be added to the existing Building Systems Reserve Fund?**

(Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (3-2-0) and Budget Committee (7-1-0); and this funding is included in the 2014-2019 Capital Improvement Program as approved by the Planning Board.)

[Intent: To replace funds spent in 2013 for emergency maintenance or repairs to Town-owned buildings and to continue to set aside money for future repairs of building systems in Town owned properties. Buildings are one of the Town's largest capital assets and these funds are used to maintain and repair systems such as heating and ventilation, electrical and plumbing. Monies from this fund would be used for repairs that are unanticipated prior to Town Meeting and that cannot wait until a future meeting. This money can only be spent with the approval of the Board of Selectmen. The money in this Capital Reserve Account is invested in an interest bearing account.]

**Balance of the Building Systems Capital Reserve Fund is \_\_\_\_\_ as of December 31, 2013.**

Discussion:

S. Fitzgerald updated for the Committee that the list of 2013 unanticipated repairs will be given to the Board of Selectmen at their next meeting and the final number for this Article will be determined at that time.

**ENGINEERING ACTIVITIES FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF THE FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEM FIRE PUMP AND PUMP HOUSE**

**Article P-14-19:~ Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$7,500, by withdrawing that exact amount, from the Unexpended Fund Balance. These funds will be used to begin engineering activities to review existing system and propose design options for the system and building necessary for the planned replacement of the underground fire suppression system's pumps and pump house.**

Appropriation	\$7,500
Withdrawal from Unexpended Fund Balance	-\$7,500
Amount to be raised by 2014 Taxes	\$0

(Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0-0) and Budget Committee (8-0-0) and this funding is included in the 2014-2019 Capital Improvement Program as approved by the Planning Board.)

[Intent:~ The information and recommendations from this study will be used to determine the most cost effective strategies to replace the pump and pump house. These funds will be withdrawn from the ~~Capital Reserve Fund~~ *Unexpended Fund Balance* established in 2011 for the replacement of these critical public safety components.~ This is considered Phase 1 of a 3 Phase project to eventually replace these key components of the Town's Fire Suppression infrastructure. Phase 1 involves site/system review and preparation of realistic cost estimates for this project, Phase 2 involves engineering and site designs for the Pump and Pump House and Phase 3 is the actual construction and replacement process.] Update with Water Superintendent McArdle.

**Balance of the Water System User Account is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ as of December 31, 2013.**

Discussion:

S. Fitzgerald noted that the wording of the intent was updated for the funds being requested from the Unexpended Fund Balance rather than the Capital Reserve Account.

J. Sherman suggested that language be added to reference to the 2007 SFC Engineering report that noted that pump would need to be replaced.

S. Fitzgerald added that the pump was reaching the end of its life expectancy and would need to be replaced to ensure public safety.

D. Britton asked if there was already an engineering report.

It was noted there was a report that evaluated the need for a new pump but didn't do the actual engineering for the pump or pump house. This Article will need to be reviewed again with the amended language.

**replacement of the Water Department Truck**

**Article P-14-21:** Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate ~~\$25,000~~, **\$50,000** for the replacement of the Water Department Truck, with ~~\$25,000~~ **\$50,000** being withdrawn from the Water User Fee?

(Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (3-2-0) and Budget Committee (0-0-0); and this funding is included in the 2014-2019 Capital Improvement Program as approved by the Planning Board.)

Appropriation	<b>\$25,000</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>
Withdrawal from Water User Fee Account	<del>-\$25,000</del>	<del>-\$50,000</del>
Amount to be Raised by 2014 Taxes	\$0	\$0

**[Intent: The Water Superintendent has indicated that the 1998 Water Department Utility Truck was taken out of service in April 2013 due to its demise earlier than anticipated. A Water Department Truck will be a specialized vehicle designed for the specific maintenance needs of Plaistow's Fire Protection/Water System. The Truck will be used in maintenance of fire suppression waterline projects and activities. Currently, members of the Water Department are using personal vehicles for basic maintenance activities and are being reimbursed for their mileage. The estimated cost for the replacement Water Department Truck is ~~\$25,000~~ **\$50,000**]**

**The balance in the Waterline User Fee Account is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ as of December 31, 2013.**

Discussion:

S. Fitzgerald offered that the Fire Chief met with the Board of Selectmen and there was a PowerPoint presentation on the pros and cons of buying new versus pre-owned.

J. Sherman noted they also talked about adding a plow to the truck.

There was discussion as to the degree the Water Department Truck would be used to plow. It was noted that the main reason to ass a plow would be to plow out hydrants and the pump house.

D. Heffernan asked if the Water Department was added to the Highway Department to create a Department of Public Works would the water truck go to that department.

S. Fitzgerald noted there have been discussions regarding the consolidation of these departments and the truck would still be dedicated to the water department.

J. Sherman added that the Highway Supervisor has been involved with the discussion.

D. Heffernan asked what the life expectancy of the truck would be.

S. Fitzgerald explained that the truck was expected to last around ten (10) years. He added that the truck would not be used on a daily basis.

There was discussion about the type of truck that would be purchased. It was noted that it would most likely be a box truck and then would need to be outfitted to meet the needs of the Water Department.

***G. Hamel moved, second by T. Holt, to recommend Article P-14-21, in the amount of \$50,000 to purchase a truck for the Water Department. There was no discussion on the motion. The vote was 9-0-0 U/A.***

#### **Replace/REPAIR Fence and Sign at the Town Cemetery**

**Article P-14-23:** Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$30,000 for the replacement **and repair** of the wrought iron fence along Elm Street in front of the Town Cemetery and the replacement of the Cemetery Sign?

(Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (4-0-0) and Budget Committee (8-0-0); and this funding is included in the 2014-2019 Capital Improvement Program as approved by the Planning Board.)

**[Intent: To replace and/or repair the existing fence and sign located at the Town Cemetery due to age and severe deterioration.]**

#### Discussion:

J. Sherman noted that the Board of Selectmen were still looking to flush out a better intent statement for this Article.

T. Holt offered that the current intent was clear.

There was discussion regarding what information had been gathered to arrive at the amount listed in the proposed Article. It was noted that three (3) quotes had been received but they all proposed very different remedies to the problem so it was difficult to compare them on an apples-to-apples basis. There was discussion that it was important to maintain the same historic character as the existing fence while ensuring safety and considering costs for not only the repair and/or replacement, but the maintenance of the fence. It was noted that no one wanted to see \$30,000 spent and have a "mish-mash" of fencing.

S. Fitzgerald reminded that the Town had recently acquired additional land for the cemetery by a land swap with Plaistow resident Alden Palmer.

It was noted that there is currently no signage for the cemetery.

S. Fitzgerald added that should the Warrant Article pass the project would go out to RFP (Request for Proposals) with some specific requirements listed.

It was consensus that the intent of this Article should read repair and/or replace to allow for consideration of either possibility.

There was an Article noted in the members' packets regarding designating and including some town-owned parcels in the Town Forest. It was noted that since this was not a financial Article the Budget Committee didn't need to review it.

#### **TAX RATE - Presentation by Town Manager**

S. Fitzgerald noted charts that had been included in the members' packets. He added that the 2013 tax rate had been set and was level funded. S. Fitzgerald explained that the tax rate was made up of four (4) components: the Local Town Rate; the State Educational Rate; the Rockingham County Rate; and the Timberlane School District Rate. He noted that the Town tax rate has dropped by \$0.58/per thousand over the last four (4) years, while the school's portion has increased by \$1.13 in the same time period.

S. Fitzgerald attributed the reduction in the Town's portion to restructuring of the solid waste collection

and department's efforts to tighten their budgets.

There was discussion of the Unexpended Fund Balance and its growth from around \$1M in 2007 to approximately \$3.9M in 2011. It was noted that a small amount has been spent to offset the tax rate and was estimated to be at \$2.9M for 2013. It was noted that the Town weathered national economic setbacks by being fiscally conservative and responsible.

D. Britton asked where the money was kept.

S. Fitzgerald replied that it was kept in an interest bearing account.

It was questioned why the money was not put into an investment account. It was explained that the Unexpended Fund Balance was part of the Town's cash flow so liquidity was important, if needed, such as right before tax bills go out.

D. Britton asked what was considered to be a comfortable level for the Unexpended Fund Balance.

S. Fitzgerald responded that anywhere between 7%-18% of the total tax commitment. He noted that Plaistow was at %12. S. Fitzgerald added that having a healthy Unexpended Fund Balance was helpful if the Town ever had the need to secure a bond.

S. Fitzgerald noted that the Town was currently in need of a Highway Garage and Salt Shed, added that he had concerns that the Town may get an (EPA) Administrative Order to move the Highway Garage due to health concerns at the site. He added that Police Station was abysmally too small and lacking modern technologies to address the broader community policing needs.

There was discussion regarding changes in property assessment values, including the Beede Superfund Site. It was noted there were still legal possibilities being explored with reference to the assessment of that site.

#### **DISCUSSION OF UPCOMING MEETINGS/SCHEDULES AND HANDOUTS**

There was discussion as to when to schedule the public hearing on the Budget. It was decided that the Public Hearing would be scheduled for January 14, 2014, with a snow date of January 21, 2014.

J. Sherman noted that Deliberative Session would be on February 1, 2014, with a snow date of February 8, 2014.

D. Heffernan added that the School's Budget Public Hearing was scheduled for January 16, 2014.

#### **Committee Reports**

There were no committee reports at this meeting.

#### **Old Business**

There was no old business discussed at this meeting.

#### **New Business**

There was no new business brought forth at this meeting.

K. Lewis-Savage adjourned the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Dee Voss  
Recording Secretary

