

Municipal Budget Committee

Meeting Minutes

January 22, 2008 at 6:00 P.M.

Corner Meeting House

Chairman Ron Mitchell called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m. Also present were committee members Albert Akerstrom, Norma Patten, Glenda Hill, David Morse, Gary Flack, Linda Frawley, Mark Roberts (6:40 p.m.) and Selectmen's Representative Ronald Cormier. Others in attendance were Town Administrator K. Jeanne Beaudin, Receptionist Sharill Conley, Fire Chief Jim Davis, Deputy Fire Chief Sean McCarty, Public Works Director Jim Fortin, Building Inspector Steven Dalton, Town Planner Candace Daigle, Water Department Manager Dave McLelland and Lori with the Citizen. Donna Cilley was also present.

Minutes

Chairman Ron Mitchell moved to accept the minutes of January 3, 2008 meeting as written. Albert Akerstrom made the motion, David Morse seconded and the motion passed. Gary Flack abstained.

Chairman Mitchell addressed the committee explaining how he had, at the last budget meeting, asked the Board of Selectmen to go back and seek to reduce the budget again through the help of the Department Heads. Chairman Mitchell commended the Department Heads and the Board of Selectman for doing a fine job in reducing their budgets to bring to the Town Meeting. Selectman Ron Cormier also commended the Department Heads stating that the initial cuts were just under \$500,000 but that because of these cuts they will have to readdress some of the issues next year one at a time. Although the Board of Selectmen have not yet voted on it they gave Selectman Cormier permission to bring additional cuts before the Budget Committee and feels this is the best they could do. They have also managed to keep 98% of the monies for the roadwork too. Chairman Mitchell again stated his appreciation for the work the Board of Selectmen and Department Heads have done. Linda Frawley mentioned an appreciation for the other committees and commissions on their cut backs as well and that all were to be thanked.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4155-320 from \$105,600 to \$101,456. Albert Akerstrom seconded.

Town Administrator Jeanne Beaudin explained the Police Department share of this budget line is 11.42% and the Fire Department is 15.92%. David Morse asked if both were a retirement program why did the Fire Department have such a higher rate. Selectman Cormier explained the State regulates these numbers and

is set by how many members participate. These rates are set until June 30, 2009. The Town of Belmont will be participating in litigation proposed by the Local Government Center.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote; the vote was unanimous in favor, the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4194-980 to \$1,000. Albert Akerstrom seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote; the vote was unanimous in favor, the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4191-275 to \$4,000. Albert Akerstrom seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote; the vote was unanimous in favor, the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4220-115 to \$29,432. Norma Patten seconded.

At this time, David Morse expressed his concern in bringing before the people a new position for a Fire Inspector. Even though this year may be shortened at 39 weeks, the following years will substantiate the salary at around \$60,000 plus benefits. He also expressed that he felt the Fire Department did not adequately show enough information to prove the need for this new position and believed they should have proposed an adequate fee schedule for inspections as well and have not. He expressed that in light of new positions the Budget Committee should not be so quick to approve and recommended that this position not be considered for this coming budget year.

Chief Davis once again defended the position to the committee, stating that there had been a 28% increase in services over the past year, resulting in the Fire Department falling behind in inspections of local businesses. He stated that life safety and public education is the Fire Department's number one goal and that he understood where David was coming from but felt the position was still needed and that whomever would be hired would be very busy not lacking any work. Because of the calls that come in for each shift there has been an inconsistency of keeping up with the inspections which then holds up the contractor's.

Glenda Hill inquired what the surrounding town offered. Chief Davis explained that Tilton/Northfield had a full-time Fire Inspector and that Gilford had a part-time person, and that other towns had more because of their size. David Morse inquired if Tilton/Northfield or Gilford had implemented any fee schedules. Chief Davis stated that Tilton/Northfield did not but that Gilford is working on a fee schedule. Deputy Fire Chief Sean McCarty explained that it wouldn't be fair at this

time to set a fee schedule because half the time we have to cancel scheduled inspections and it would not be right to charge for inconveniencing the business owners. However, they are trying to set a fee schedule and were planning to leave the logistics to the new Fire Inspector and he/she would know best what is expected and needed.

Chairman Mitchell mentioned at this time that although he changed his vote at the last meeting due to a tie vote, he is very nervous about the budgetary process in general. He said because of the mood of the people from the recent Town Meeting, the economy, the stock market, that he would prefer holding off on this item until next year. Linda Frawley wanted clarification on whether or not this was the only new position being added to the budget this year, and Selectman Cormier explained that there were 2 part-time summer positions; one in Parks & Recreation, and the other position in Public Works (seasonal only).

Chairman Mitchell called for a vote; the vote failed due to a tie.

Donna Cilley addressed the budget committee explaining she and some others had gone to the school board asking them not to add any new positions to their budget. They were going to bring 8 new positions and now have cut back to 3. She also stated she understood it to be a great loss to the Fire Department and to the Town but that this one position should not jeopardize the rest of the employees of the Town. Albert Akerstrom stated there is never a good year to add more positions, but we have to do it for the growth of the Town. Glenda Hill also spoke up stating since she has been a resident in Belmont these past six years; she was still learning how things worked in Town. But she said she could not understand why residents would not want to save some buildings and lives. "I'm amazed how people vote here," bringing up also the rejection of "free" land.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4220-115 to \$0. Norma Patten seconded.

Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The motion failed due to a tie (4 to 4) allowing the budget line item to stay at \$39,242.

David Morse moved to reconsider budget line item 01-4220-115. Norma Patten seconded.

Chairman Mitchell called for a vote to reconsider; the motion passed 7 to 2.

Linda Frawley questioned her colleagues as to whether it was because of the expense or the lack of a need they saw in not voting for this position. Mark Roberts stated that with any new position it always costs more than we anticipate by adding benefits and future raises, etc. He also stated he feels the Fire Department can save money by contracting this position out when needed. Deputy Fire Chief McCarty explained they looked into that but couldn't find anyone local. The closest was from Massachusetts and by contracting them out they would not

be able to fulfill the job on a day to day basis for business owners. Then there was the expense of their travel. Mark Roberts stated he knew someone in Laconia who would fit the position if the Fire Department chose to go that route.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4220-115 to \$0. Norma Patten seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The motion was in favor 5 to 4. The motion passed zeroing budget line item 01-4220-115.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4220-175 to \$15,000. Mark Roberts seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4220-303 to \$11,000. Norma Patten seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4220-309 to \$1,200. Norma Patten seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4220-505 to \$4,500. Albert Akerstrom seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4220-707 \$30,000. Norma Patten seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4210-309 to \$2,000. Norma Patten seconded.

Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

Linda Frawley moved to amend budget line item 01-4210-125 to \$75,000.

Selectman Ron Cormier explained that this line item was an account which is an in and out; the monies are reimbursed through billing. Town Administrator explained that as the officers work extra hours for special projects, which they are only limited to 20 hours, (done on officer's days off) they are paid from that account and then whoever requires the extra work repays the Town. She also mentioned that even though the papers spoke of the Route 140/Route 106 project being pushed to the end of the 10 year plan of the State, she learned this afternoon that bids for that project were actually going out in March and anticipated work will begin in July or August. There was also the Route 3 project continuing through 2008.

There was no second; motion died.

Selectman Cormier explained that Building Inspector Steven Dalton sent a memo requesting line item increases, but that the Board of Selectmen has not yet had opportunity to address. Building Inspector Dalton is requesting budget line item 01-4240-707 be increased to \$1,000 and budget line item 01-4240-715 be increased to \$800.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4240-707 to \$1,000. Albert Akerstrom seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4240-715 to \$800. Albert Akerstrom seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4521-305 to \$0. Norma Patten seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4723-001 to \$10,000. Albert Akerstrom seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4902-210 to \$0. Norma Patten seconded.

Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

Town Administrator Beaudin explained the "draft" copy of the warrant stating there were some items repeated by necessity due to the RSA regulations. She further mentioned that the Town's attorney has reviewed the warrant articles and there were no changes or corrections necessary and did not recommend any changes or corrections. David Morse expressed his concern on how the articles were written and felt they should be more clarifying to the people. Linda Frawley agreed by stating that if the articles were worded differently it would be easier for the people to understand. David Morse stated he had a problem with the language of articles 5 & 6. Selectman Cormier explained that if articles 5 & 6 pass there would be no need for articles 10, 11, & 12.

Town Administrator Beaudin explained articles 7, 8 & 9. She stated also if article 6 is approved as written than 7, 8, & 9 are not needed. However, if article 6 is amended than you need articles 7, 8 & 9 in order to expend from the Special Revenue fund.

David Morse expressed his concern that the Board of Selectmen spend money without the people's knowledge and that there is no accountability for where the money is spent. Selectman Cormier explained that every year they have to set up capital reserve funds to spend as needed and that the people are aware of the amounts that are in those funds and for what they are for. And, if the people do not appropriate any money then there isn't any money for Board of Selectmen to spend. That's why we put such large items on the warrant articles. The people vote on the appropriations and this allows the Board of Selectmen to spend it as needed. He further explained that it is not up to the Board of Selectmen to put money into those accounts, it is appropriated from the town's people and then the Board of Selectmen are able to spend what the people want spent. David Morse also stated that article 6 could fail and that would save money off the tax rate.

Chairman Mitchell mentioned why the Board of Selectmen don't just cap off the amount. As each year figure out what is actually needed instead of always bringing large amounts to set up in those accounts. Selectmen Cormier stated that capping off an account is certainly an option but if an emergency were to arise and we needed something immediately there wouldn't be any money in the accounts to buy it (i.e. an ambulance needing to be replaced or a cruiser, etc.).

Town Administrator Beaudin explained again that if article 5 fails then the Comstar fund would stay as it is and there would be no vote on article 6. David Morse expressed his concern with capital acquisition and that the Fire department has more capital, stating that if the people don't want a ladder truck than that money should be put back into the Town for lesser taxes.

With no further discussion, Town Administrator stated that based on the need of the warrant articles a motion needed to be made for the three additional items (articles 10, 11, & 12).

David Morse moved budget line item 01-4902-703 for \$200,000. Albert Akerstrom seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was in favor; the motion passed. David Morse opposed.

David Morse moved budget line item 01-4902-704 for \$150,000. Albert Akerstrom seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved budget line item 01-4902-705 for \$65,000. Norma Patten seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4915-001 to \$25,000. Norma Patten seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4915-004 to \$0. Norma Patten seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4915-008 to \$7,000. Albert Akerstrom seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was in favor; the motion passed. Norma Patten abstained.

Selectman Ron Cormier moved to amend budget line item 01- 4915-011 to \$50,000. David Morse seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

Selectman Ron Cormier moved budget line item 01-4915-030 in the amount of \$530,000. Mark Roberts seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was in favor; the motion passed. David Morse opposed.

BRATT

Chairman Mitchell addressed the budget committee regarding an update on the BRATT project. He met with engineers in Concord to deal with the dilemma that has come up with Phase I of the project. They raised approximately \$353,000 to complete Phase I, however, a recent estimate came in at around \$600,000. Now we have a trail that goes only half way, he said. The other scenario is that we take funding we've been approved for, which is approximately \$450,000. Or, we can take funding from phase II to pay for phase I, which means we would have to gross appropriate another \$380,000 for phase I. Last year we added about \$70,000 and the amount came to \$140,000. He said, seeing what we've gone through tonight with the budget and asking the school to cut their budget, it would be hypocritical to say that I want to appropriate that money; however, I wanted you folks to understand what's happening with this project. If we don't fund the project they could hold the money for another year. Next we would have to come back and ask to make up the money to \$600,000. So, basically, the project is in limbo and we can't over expend \$350,000 and I'm not going to stand up to ask the people for \$300,000 even though we have the funds to match it. We still have the \$20,000 for phase 2 and we are going to come back next year to advocate the monies and will ask the state again if they have monies to put into the project.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4915-050 to \$25,000. Norma Patten seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4915-200 to \$15,000. Norma Patten seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

Selectman Cormier moved to amend budget line item 01-4915-201 to \$25,000. David Morse seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4915-300 to \$25,000. Albert Akerstrom seconded.

Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

Selectman Cormier moved to amend budget line item 01-4915-205 to \$752,358. David Morse seconded.

Town Administrator mentioned that bid opening on the projects is set for February 28th.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4915-320 to \$4,500. Albert Akerstrom seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4915-501 to \$10,000. Norma Patten seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved budget line item 01-4915-600 for \$20,000. Mark Roberts seconded.

Linda Frawley asked if the capital reserve fund articles can be redefined at Town Meeting. Town Administrator explained that in order to redefine the purpose of a capital reserve fund article there has to be a 2/3 majority vote, however, to create or remove a capital reserve fund there only has to be a simple majority vote.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4915-601 to \$58,500. Albert Akerstrom seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

David Morse moved to amend budget line item 01-4903-303 to \$28,000. Albert Akerstrom seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

Albert Akerstrom moved to amend budget line item 01-4909-302. Gary Flack seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

Town Administrator explained the estimated tax rate will go down by 8 cents as the results of what the budget committee approved here tonight.

Town Administrator brought before the budget committee the Sunray Shores budget.

Linda Frawley asked if there had been any significant changes in the breakdown of smaller revenue (i.e. cable TV franchise, greyhound racing, etc.) Town Administrator Beaudin stated there had been no change. Revenues had actually increased since the track reopened. \$300 during the week and \$450 on Sunday's is projected for 2008.

Albert Akerstrom moved to accept Sunray Shores budget. Mark Roberts seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor; the motion passed.

Town Administrator Beaudin mentioned that the bottom number from changes, exclusive of all contingencies, equals \$10,301,192. \$1.5 million goes to Pleasant Valley. She explained that she will have handouts at Town Meeting on the Pleasant Valley project.

Town Administrator estimates tax rate at \$6.10 Linda Frawley inquired if the new county tax rate had been set. Town Administrator stated no; however, the county's budget is projected to go up and is typically set sometime in June.

Chairman Mitchell reminded those whose terms were expiring that they have from January 23rd to February 1st to see the Town Clerk for an appointment form.

Chairman Mitchell thanked the Budget Committee for all their hard work and looking out for the people's best interest through such a tough year. He also encouraged each committee member to be present at the public hearing to sign the MS7.

Town Administrator Beaudin mentioned the Board of Selectmen will be holding a public hearing for a bond on the Pleasant Valley project and petition ballot for SB2 on February 19, 2008.

Chairman Mitchell also mentioned that school board has reduced their budget by \$500,000. They originally budgeted for 8 teacher positions and are now only creating 3 (two of which are special education positions & a school psychologist). The school's projected bottom line proposed is a 34 cent increase for Belmont. Others mentioned they, too, had spoken to the school board and were told they do not plan to adjust anymore of their budget. And that according to their minutes, there is no change to their operating budget.

Public Hearing Date

The Budget Committee will hold a Public Hearing on Tuesday, February 5, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. at the Corner Meeting House.

Adjournment

Chairman Mitchell moved to adjourn seconded by Albert Akerstrom. The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Approved:

Chairman Ronald Mitchell

Gary Flack

Ronald Cormier, Selectman

Ken Ellis

Kenneth Knowlton

Norma Patten

Linda Frawley

Albert Akerstrom

David Morse

Mark Roberts

Glenda Hill

Submitted by: Sharill Conley

Date:_____