

Municipal Budget Committee

Meeting Minutes

February 6, 2007, 7:00 P.M.

Corner Meeting House

Chairman Ron Mitchell called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Also present were committee members Albert Akerstrom, Ken Knowlton, Linda Frawley, Mark Roberts, Cherie Willoughby, David Morse and Selectmen's Representative Ronald Cormier. Others in attendance were Town Administrator K. Jeanne Beaudin, Receptionist Sharill Conley, Police Chief Vincent Baiocchetti, Donna Cilley, and Daily Sun reporter Ray Carbone (7:20).

Minutes

Albert Akerstrom moved to accept the minutes of 1/9/07 meeting as written. Linda Frawley seconded, the motion passed.

Ladder/Pumper Truck

Chairman Mitchell stated the fire study had recommended the lease/purchase of the Fire truck. Selectman Ron Cormier explained that the Board of Selectmen have decided to move forward with a 10 year lease purchase of a new fire truck, which will be paid through the revenues of the ambulance fund. Town Administrator Beaudin stated the first payment would be made in 2008, of annual installments of \$117,000. Cherie Willoughby inquired if there would be any penalties if the truck was paid off early, and Town Administrator Beaudin stated only if we return the truck at any time or don't pay it. She also explained the Budget Committee would have to appropriate the funds from Comstar each year.

Ken Knowlton stated that he believes it is time for the Town of Belmont to have a grant writer, someone who could seek out certain grants for areas of the Town and write up a request. There have been several situations in the past where a grant writer could have been used and might have been profitable for the Town.

Cherie Willoughby felt there was no logical rationale to appropriate that much money and to ask the Town to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars for a new truck, which will also put the Town in the red, when she understands there were only two huge fires in the past year and stated the money could go towards something else in the future.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote; Selectman Ron Cormier, Albert Akerstrom, Mark Roberts, Linda Frawley and Ken Knowlton in favor. Opposed were Cherie Willoughby and David Morse. The motion passed.

Pleasant Valley Project

Town Administrator Beaudin handed out a packet with additional information regarding the engineering costs and a letter from the Department of Environmental Services. She explained that the grant application had been submitted in order to meet the required deadline, but then learned on Monday the newspaper that was to run the public notice for the grant application failed to post it on the proper date. Donna Lane, who is the grant writer for the Pleasant Valley project has assured Town Administrator Beaudin the application will be put into the July round, which may be more favorable as the Town would have had to wait until the March meeting before scoring the application.

Town Administrator Beaudin explained if the project does not go forward at the Town meeting in March then the application would be pulled and nothing would be submitted. She stated the maximum grant amount is \$500,000.

Selectman Ron Cormier explained the project would cost approximately \$1.5 million. And the Board of Selectmen did speak with Underwood Engineers to try and get the price lowered, but they could not change the estimated price. Chairman Mitchell asked if the estimated price included a 20% contingency. Town Administrator Beaudin stated it is a 15% contingency.

Selectman Cormier commented the estimate was for the Pleasant Valley drainage and water replacement system and the Pine Crest Drive area. A year ago Pine Crest Drive was a separate estimate and was appropriated under the Road Management Program, but now will be included with the Pleasant Valley grant.

Linda Frawley inquired whether this was the first time we've made a grant application since the Mill. Town Administrator Beaudin stated we had received an emergency grant in 2004 through a CDBG grant for Solar Village.

David Morse inquired whether the Board of Selectmen had made a recommendation. Selectman Cormier stated they are recommending the grant, but he felt the amount was pretty steep to accept the cost the Town will have to pay. He stated he didn't want to break the bank to fix things that have to be done. Town Administrator Beaudin stated the residents of that area qualify for a CDBG grant and they would strive to get low interest loans, but the difficulty with that is the Town of Belmont does not have a lot of debt as it is.

Ken Knowlton moved budget item 01-4909-502. Albert Akerstrom seconded.

With no further discussion, Chairman Mitchell called for a vote; Selectman Ron Cormier, Albert Akerstrom, Mark Roberts, Linda Frawley and Ken Knowlton were in favor. Opposed were Cherie Willoughby and David Morse. The motion passed.

BRATT

Chairman Mitchell handed out a summary explaining new information about fencing on the new Winnepesaukee Scenic Trail. He explained when they received the original quotes 3 years ago it did not include any amount for a chain-link fence, which is what the Attorney General is requiring of them due to insurance, temporary use, etc. The chain-link fence is to protect the public from anyone straying off the trail onto the Railroad tracks because it is a useable track from April through January. He further explained that even with a 20% contingency in the original quote, it's still not enough money. So BRATT is requesting \$70,000 to be appropriated in this year's budget. The state will pick up \$56,000 leaving the Town of Belmont \$14,000 to pay. Chairman Mitchell further explained that the cost could be somewhat lower for the project as the Town will use it's own gravel from our gravel pit. He also stated if the project should come under budget from the 20% contingency amount, the money would be given back to the Town.

Linda Frawley inquired if there is any limit for the grant that can be matched regarding the amount. Chairman Mitchell explained that it doesn't matter where the money comes from.

Cherie Willoughby inquired if the trail could be moved back further so as to not need a fence or could it be installed only where absolutely needed to cut the price. Chairman Mitchell explained they are working every angle they can to bring the price down, but because there is grant money involved we have to abide with their requirements. David Morse inquired if there would be any breaks in the fence. Chairman Mitchell explained there would not be any breaks and that it would run the entire length of the trail.

David Morse commented how bad he felt for the wildlife and Cherie Willoughby agreed.

Linda Frawley moved budget item 01-4909-005. Mark Roberts seconded.

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

Police Station Project

Chairman handed out packet from Breadloaf with guaranteed maximum rate. He explained that it came in a little bit lower than their initial figures and that it does require the \$2.2 million dollar bond that the Board of Selectmen have put forward. He made mention to keep in mind that because Breadloaf did the initial design, does not necessarily mean the Town has to use them for construction.

Selectman Cormier also mentioned Rich Fournier did some leg work on recently designed police stations and their overall cost which did not include purchase of land. Many of the comparison's are on buildings that have not yet completed all phases of the project. Town Administrator Beaudin called several of the Towns to confirm Rich Fournier's information. Some have not yet responded back.

Selectman Cormier stated the Board of Selectmen believes the project deserves a vote from the Town's people and are not prepared, at this time, to change the course. If the Budget Committee decides to not recommend proposed amount and the voters decide to pass it, the appropriation would exceed the 10% allowable amount over the total budget. Town Administrator Beaudin then explained that DRA will chronologically eliminate those articles that exceed the 10%.

Chairman Mitchell inquired about the donation of the parcel of land. Selectman Cormier explained the owner is still willing to donate the land for municipal use and there is a Warrant Article set for a Town vote at the March meeting. "Should it fail, then we can always consider buying the piece next to it for \$125,000 or the piece across from it", Selectman Cormier said. Selectman Cormier stated this is the Board of Selectmen's intent and plan. We are very pleased with all the work that had been done by Town Administrator Beaudin, Police Chief Baiocchetti, myself and other committees and we feel at this point it does deserve a vote.

Chairman Mitchell explained that if the Budget Committee does not recommend it there will still be a Warrant Article and that the Board of Selectman can, at that point, only spend 10% above the amount recommended by the Budget Committee; however DRA will determine what would be disallowed..

David Morse agrees with Selectman Ron Cormier to forward a vote to the Town's people, however, believes the project has been pushed too hard and has not properly gone through due process in order to make it a favorable item. He also mentioned that he does support the free land and realizes the deficiencies of the police building and just feels that this is such a big project that didn't properly go through due process.

Cherie Willoughby inquired if there is a breakdown as to what each item will cost. She stated any project can have a lot of hidden costs and someone has

to have a line item of what these are. Chairman Cormier stated all that information will be give in a packet on Monday night to the Board of Selectmen. Town Administrator Beaudin explained that the plumbing and electrical items have a 3% contingency. Selectman Cormier stated Breadloaf subcontracts out for other work and gets the lowest bids.

Chairman Mitchell stated his disappointment in hiring outside of New Hampshire and feels that local contractor's could have done the job had the first team not negated their responsibility of having all the information in on time. Selectman Cormier stated they received numbers from previous architect of a preliminary \$2.8 million for 9,000 square feet. He explained Breadloaf has their own in-house estimators and a contingency fee of 10% was built in for the bid given.

Ken Knowlton stated his disappointment as well with the figures given. He doesn't understand the big difference being over \$100 per square foot. He also inquired what happens if the parcel of land fails and the bond passes. Selectman Cormier stated they would then have to cut the square footage.

Linda Frawley stated she agrees with David Morse and a project of this magnitude really needs to go through due process. She stated that construction is usually the smallest part of a big project and the concern falls on operation costs.

Cherie Willoughby asked Chief Baiocchetti if the present station ever lost power as she had a question regarding a line item on the proposal. Police Chief answered yes, all the time. Chairman Mitchell explained that the breakdown items are all included in the final cost whether it's something installed in the building or outside construction. Selectman Cormier mentioned that all breakdowns would be available at the public hearing next week. He also explained that it's impossible to break down every number, and that it comes up finalized when the items are looked up at ordering time.

Selectman Cormier mentioned the construction being proposed is for a steel structure which is a higher cost. Wood construction can be less cost however, steel was what is being recommended. Police Chief Baiocchetti explained that the police station is also the emergency dispatch for the Town as well as an emergency operations center, if ever needed.

Chairman Mitchell had given a breakdown of Stratham from BPS so that they could look at all the prices and compare square footage.

Linda Frawley mentioned that Gilford's police station took 2-3 years to build and cost \$2.1 million for 15,000 sq. ft. She found those numbers in public records for 2004. It was noted that Gilford's new station is not under construction.

Selectman Cormier stated the Board of Selectmen feel that the Police Station is necessary and believe they went through the process as best as possible.

Chairman Mitchell called for a vote. Selectman Cormier in favor, all others opposed. Motion failed.

Proposed Revenues – 2007

Town Administrator Beaudin handed out a draft copy of the MS 7 proposed revenues for 2007. She explained changes that were made between proposed revenue and actual revenue. She explained there was a significant increase in interest and penalties due to increase collection activity. Motor vehicle registrations were up this year. Building permit fees collected was \$47,842. Having the Dog track revenues back contributes \$8,000 a month. However this could change if new law regarding live dog racing is passed.

Town Administrator Beaudin explained the 2007 revenues are based on 2006 revenues received.

Public Hearing Date

Town Administrator Beaudin stated the public hearing is scheduled for next Tuesday, February 13, 2007 at 6:30 p.m. in the Corner Meeting House. There will be a vote on the final proposed budget by the Budget Committee Members.

Town Administrator Beaudin indicated the overall increase in budget was 3.41%. She also explained if the Budget Committee's budget passes as recommended and the warrant articles are approved, then the municipal tax rate will be 7.83 per 1,000. Presently the rate is at 9.04 per 1,000.

Chairman Mitchell inquired what the differences were in the Board of Selectman's recommendations and the Budget Committee's recommendations. Town Administrator Beaudin stated the following: Safety Committee appropriation of \$10,000 not recommended; Police Station Project of \$2.2 million not recommended. Board of Selectman did not recommend \$5,000 for Heritage Commission fund and they did not readdress the \$7,799 difference in Special Duty.

Town Administrator Beaudin explained there will be 4 bond articles as follows: \$2.2 million Police Station project, \$1.5 Pleasant Valley project, \$337,000 Water Replacement project, \$180,000 that will be combined with the \$337,000 Water Replacement project on one note. Warrant articles will be written in standard language.

Chairman Mitchell explained the Town doesn't have any debt and what debt we have will be paid off in two years. He reaffirmed that the town really doesn't have a load of debt. It's time we do a project.

Chairman Mitchell thanked everyone this year for working on the Budget Committee.

Adjournment

Chairman Mitchell reminded everyone to be at the public hearing to sign final budget. He mentioned those who would not be there and how all who could needed to be.

Town Administrator Beaudin stated Board of Selectmen would be holding Bond Hearing on Tuesday, February 20.

Albert Akerstrom moved to adjourn; Ken Knowlton seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Approved:

Chairman Ronald Mitchell

Gary Flack

Ronald Cormier, Selectman

Richard Fournier

Kenneth Knowlton

Ken Ellis

Norma Patten

Albert Akerstrom

Cherie Willoughby

Linda Frawley

David Morse

Mark Roberts

Submitted by: Sharill Conley

Date:_____