

# **Minutes of the Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting**

**Held on November 15, 2012**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, November 15, 2012 at Campbell High School, 1 Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

**PRESENT:** J Harte (Chairman), B Spencer, A Cutter, C Pascucci, C Couture, D Barka (School Board Representative), J Brunelle (Board of Selectmen Representative), J Hoch (Town Administrator)

**ABSENT:** R Peeples (Vice Chairman)

Mr. Harte called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

## **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

## **2. PUBLIC INPUT**

There was no public input.

## **3. PRIOR MEETING MINUTE APPROVAL**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Cutter

*Move to approve the minutes of the Litchfield Budget Committee meeting on November 8, 2012 as written*

**SECOND:** Mrs. Couture

**VOTE:** 7-0-1, with Mr. Barka abstaining

**The motion carried.**

## **4. SCHOOL BUSINESS**

Mr. Barka reported Board met on November 14. He noted that the FY14 Requested Budget changes were recommended and approved by the Board. Dr. Cochrane will apply the budget adjustments prior to review by the Budget Committee. Mr. Barka reported that the School Board authorized use of the Special Education Reserve Fund if needed. He noted that Mr. Martin spoke to the District's auditors and legal counsel regarding a delay in drawing down the funds.

Mr. Pascucci inquired about a brief School Board discussion regarding tuitioning students from Hooksett. Mr. Barka indicated that Hooksett is leaving Manchester and researching options for high school student placement. He explained that Dr. Cochrane expressed interest in speaking with the Hooksett School Board. He noted that CHS and Hooksett's high school enrollment are similar. Mr. Barka stated that no decisions have been made and any discussion is purely an expression of interest. Mr. Barka added that he would be interested in Hooksett's NECAP scores.

Mr. Pascucci expressed the need for valid conversation on the subject between the Board and the public.

## **TOWN BUSINESS**

Mr. Brunelle reported the Board of Selectmen has not met since last week. He announced that the Town Hall roof is 99% complete.

## **BUDGET REVIEW**

### a. 4220.10 Fire

Mr. Hoch presented the 2013 Fire budget with a bottom line of \$517,942. He highlighted the following increases/decreases:

- Fire Chief Salary: \$8,310 increase
- Firefighter/EMT Salaries: \$3,462 increase based on contract
- Call Firefighter Salaries: \$2,730i increase based on 2012 anticipated call volume as well as provision for 3<sup>rd</sup> person coverage and on call officer stipend.

Mr. Hoch explained that the provision for 3<sup>rd</sup> person coverage is based on the anticipation of unexpected incidents and having a person in the station during inclement weather. He noted that the call officer stipend is to ensure we have an officer point of contact available during the week. Mr. Hoch explained that one officer will be flagged as the lead on call to respond to those calls.

Mr. Brunelle commented that the stipend was woven into the previous Chief's salary and classified as administrative. He noted that the identified stipend is to cover supervisory responsibilities.

Mr. Hoch indicated that eight hours of the previous Chief's time was blocked out as "on call" time. He explained that this time will be used by more of the officers to be on call all week instead of just one person.

Mrs. Couture asked if the call officer would respond instead of everyone responding. The Fire Chief indicated that we want to be sure there is one person that can respond to calls at all times (i.e. after hours incidents).

Mr. Spencer referred to the call volume and expenditures and asked what has been spent to date. Mr. Hoch indicated that \$43,578 has been spent.

Mr. Spencer commented that \$58,000 is not going to be spent this year and asked why the current expenditures are lower than what is being budgeted for 2013. The Fire Chief indicated that the staff have been reorganized into companies. Mr. Spencer believes that the budget request is high.

Mr. Pascucci asked for the number of calls to date and for clarification on the definition of a "call". Mr. Brunelle indicated a call is any service call. The Fire Chief commented that to date there have been approximately 525 calls. He noted that they are being tracked differently than in the past. He explained that some may be inspections and are not counted as calls. The Fire Chief indicated that we are considering bringing on additional personnel in this line, which may result in an increase in the line item.

Mr. Pascucci asked for an explanation of the “companies” the Fire Chief mentioned. The Fire Chief explained a company is a group of officers with a supervisor.

Mr. Spencer commented that this is good history and it is not clear the number will increase if you bring on more personnel. The Fire Chief indicated that companies would ensure more personnel available for calls. He explained that currently we dispatch everyone and we are looking at options for the future. He noted that this change is new and companies are barely being formed. He commented that the idea is when we get a call to send out one company instead of putting out a general call and not knowing who will be available.

- Training Wages: \$18,334 increase based on 2 trainings 2 x per month with 40 members at the standard call rate; 5 new members for training certification; miscellaneous training hours and Firefighter 2 certification. Mr. Hoch noted proposed introducing a training wage that is lower than the \$17.50 call rate.

Mr. Harte asked why the increase is so high as compared to 2012. The Fire Chief explained that it has been approximately 3 years since fire academy training. He noted that most of the newest firefighters received certification in college. The Fire Chief noted that he is looking at a conventional call firefighter who will go to training 7 days/week.

Mr. Spencer asked how the new candidates were recruited. The Fire Chief noted that there was no formal advertising for candidates. He explained that previous applicants were called regarding interest. He added that current members were asked to recruit candidates as well. The Fire Chief indicated that out of 9 candidates, 2 are certified and 1 or 2 are EMT's.

Mr. Spencer asked when the new candidates will start their training. The Fire Chief commented any training would begin at the end of the year or after the first of the year.

Mr. Spencer asked about the number of members in the fire department. The Fire Chief indicated that there are 31 members: 2 are reserves and 1 is on medical leave and not expected to be cleared to return to work.

Mr. Spencer asked why they budgeted for 40 members. Mr. Hoch indicated that the number is an estimate. He explained that the majority of call firefighters are paid at \$17.50. He noted that the number of people coming in is a moving number. Mr. Hoch indicated that he estimated 40 members at the \$17.50 call rate.

Mr. Spencer commented that his calculated 36 members with an average of approximately \$17 per hour. He asked how the increase is justified. Mr. Brunelle commented that using Mr. Spencer's number the training wages total is \$31,000, but if you add outliers and the deputies and Chief the total will be higher.

Mr. Pascucci commented that when new people are hired they are hired as volunteers and only get paid when they go on a call. The Fire Chief indicated that they are paid when there is a call and for training.

Mr. Pascucci commented that you have schedules around the call firefighters' scheduled working hours and you know who is available. The Fire Chief indicated that is not the case.

Mr. Pascucci commented that if we hire more call firefighters, it is likely that costs will increase subject to who shows up for calls. The Fire Chief commented that we have to have enough volunteers to ensure that we have what we need for the call(s). He noted that it has been his observation that availability is low and he sees the need to have a few more on call. The Fire Chief indicated that many of the call firefighters work or have family commitments and their availability is not always known. He noted that we are moving toward new technology that will help.

Mr. Pascucci asked call expenditure is based on the number of call firemen. The Fire Chief indicated that the average call rate is \$17.50; however, some firefighters are paid a higher call rate and some are paid less.

Mr. Spencer asked about the training participation rate. Mr. Hoch indicated that 80% - 90% of firefighters are available for training.

- Saturday/Sunday Coverage: \$2,625 decrease (based on 24 hours per weekend for 50 weekends)
- Inspector: \$1,760 increase based on 4 hours per week for 50 weeks

Mr. Spencer asked about the Inspector's responsibilities. The Fire Chief indicated that the Inspector conducts all inspections, review, child care and all required inspections. He added that the Inspector tracks inspections and handles fire investigations. The Fire Chief commented that we are behind on inspections as they have been sporadic and inconsistent, and the actual list has not been updated.

Mr. Spencer commented that the current expenditures for the Inspector line total \$1,900. He asked why is an increase budgeted. Mr. Hoch indicated there was one quarter during which nothing was expended. He noted that we looked at the actual payroll working 4 hours per week for 50 weeks.

Mr. Pascucci commented that you are bringing on an Inspector to get caught up. He indicated that once caught up, it will not be difficult to keep things at that level. The Fire Chief noted we will not be caught up by the end of the year.

Mr. Pascucci asked after we are caught up, will there be a need for this position. The Fire Chief indicated that the Inspector has been working 4 hours each week since I arrived. The intent is 50 weeks at 4 hours per week to get caught up. He noted that at some point the hours may decrease, but it is difficult to predict.

Mr. Spencer disagreed with the formula for the line item. He believes it is the wrong number. Mr. Brunelle indicated that it is a good value for the dollar and the BOS agreed with the Fire Chief.

- Overtime-Firefighter: \$326 increase
- Telephone: \$600 increase due to wireless lines and Aircard adjustments
- Computer Software: \$1,065 increase – upgrading software in the firehouse to offer greater accessibility; additional notification system (I Am Responding) which is plugged into the dispatch out of Hudson and allows text messages to be sent to notify officers and is programmed with a one button response.

The Fire Chief explained that Hudson will have the ability to take a call by radio, which is then converted to text and sent out to everyone. With a preprogrammed number, it will be easier to see who responds and their location. He noted that it will also show trucks that are in and out of service,.

- Contracted Secretarial Services: \$1,500 decrease due to the removal of the line
- Dispatch Service Contract: \$2,400 decrease
- Pre-Employment Screening: \$increase of \$2,400 due to the addition of 5 pre-employment physicals
- Instructor Services was the training line item and training has been separated out of the line. This line includes EMT recertification and continuing education as well as other NHFA programs
- Electricity: \$1,140 decrease
- Heating: \$2,000 decrease
- Station Repair & Maintenance: increase based on materials and supplies, septic cleaning and floor draining, exterior stairway repairs and exterior painting
- Dues/Subscriptions: increase includes membership for Fire Chief in International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), National Fire Protection Association, and membership in the NH State Fireman's Association for 35 members.

Mr. Cutter asked about the importance of the memberships. The Fire Chief commented that Border Area Mutual Aid is for assistance from other towns and hazardous materials response; IAFC provides valuable information and discounts on training and conferences; NEAFC provides training options and conferences; the State Fire Association provides some insurance coverage to firefighters injured or killed in the line of duty.

Mr. Cutter asked what would happen if we did not pay for the Border Area Mutual Aid. The Fire Chief indicated when a hazmat incident occurs, we would have to pay for the response team to answer the call and for the services they would provide.

- Community Relations: slight increase due to prevention activities
- Equipment Repair & Maintenance: decrease because the line item has been recalculated
- Fuel: we will be working on those numbers
- Vehicle Repairs: best guess
- Uniforms: increase based on \$100 per year allowance for call company
- Protective Gear: increase based on a 5 year replacement program to buy 8 sets of protective gear per year.

The Fire Chief explained that protective gear is custom fit. Older gear is recycled for secondary use. He noted that once the gear is used it needs to be cleaned, which is a 24 hour process. The Fire Chief indicated that gear is not discarded until it becomes unusable.

Mr. Pascucci asked about the life cycle of the gear. The Fire Chief indicated uniforms have an average life cycle of 10 years.

Mr. Pascucci asked if the average life is 10 years, why propose a 5 year replacement cycle. The Fire Chief indicated that we need to build up gear in the event of an incident where we cannot reuse the gear. He noted that the program has to have a definitive timeframe as the life cycle of the gear is 10 years from the manufacture date.

Mr. Cutter indicated that to date \$10,240 has been spent and asked how it was expended. The Fire Chief explained that his set of gear was purchased, as well as helmets, gloves, etc. Mr. Hoch added that much of the expenditure was for miscellaneous protective gear.

Mr. Cutter queried if the cycle will move replacements along more strategically. The Fire Chief commented that it will, but some repairs are built in as well.

Mr. Pascucci agreed with moving toward a replacement schedule, but suggested reducing the amount of sets and extending the cycle years. The Fire Chief commented that currently there is not much back up gear. He indicated that while projecting 5 years out, there could be a year when we would have to cut back or a year when all 8 sets would have to be purchased.

- Medical Supplies: \$1,950 decrease, which is based on actual spending
- Equipment Purchase: \$6,500 decrease as some numbers were adjusted down
- Seminars/Conventions: \$8,100 increase includes actual tuition for sending candidates to the training academy for Firefighter 1 certification and Firefighter 2 training for 3 existing members. It also includes National Fire Academy program and professional development for the Fire Chief.

d. 4290.10 Emergency Management

Mr. Hoch presented the 2013 Emergency Management budget with a bottom line of \$13,774. He highlighted the following increases/decreases:

- Emergency Management Director: \$1,000 stipend
- Emergency Planning: \$1,000 for tabletop simulation exercise for overhaul of emergency management plan

Mr. Spencer asked if the director is the Fire Chief. Mr. Hoch answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Harte asked if Litchfield aligns with Manchester, Londonderry, and the Airport emergency planning. The Fire Chief indicated that the Airport has its own emergency management plan and Litchfield is part of that plan. He noted that Litchfield is part of the Nashua Regional Plan for shelter and under the State plan for storm damage.

Mr Pascucci asked if there was a stipend in the past. Mr. Hoch indicated there was no stipend.

Mr. Pascucci asked how the stipend was determined. Mr. Brunelle indicated the stipend covers emergency planning, training and coordination of emergency management.

Mr. Pascucci asked why pay a stipend instead of an hourly rate. Mr. Hoch indicated that the hourly rate would be more costly. Mr. Brunelle commented that there are tasks outside of the typical role.

- Software Support: \$4,488 increase for Code Red Emergency Notification System. Mr. Hoch explained that there will be a change from Blackboard Connect because Blackboard is more of a school product. He noted that this system is less expensive and a better fit. Mr. Brunelle commented that Nixel requires residents to subscribe to the service. He noted that Code Red is more of a general notification system to reach everyone.
- HazMat District: annual dues as we have a membership in the larger Southern New Hampshire district and they maintain the core set of equipment to respond to HazMat emergencies.

Mr. Cutter referred to the director stipend and asked why it is not included in the Fire Chief's salary. Mr. Brunelle indicated that it is a separate role and may not be the Fire Chief in the future.

Mr. Hoch commented now that we have an emergency plan we need a way to implement it when needed. He noted that this will help us to move to where we should be and not wait for something to happen.

Mr. Spencer asked if there have been any questions regarding Ambulance as far as options and dealing with the RFP issue. Mr. Brunelle commented that the BOS has not fully discussed it with the Fire Chief.

Mr. Spencer asked about other options other than Hudson. The Fire Chief indicated that Litchfield could start its own ambulance, but is not ready to do so. He noted the initial cost and outlay would take approximately 10 years. He commented that Londonderry offers the same level of service as Hudson, but it requires a true analysis of response times. The Fire Chief indicated that Manchester has a private service, which would be a longer response time and distance. He suggested we consider staying with Hudson or using Londonderry's service.

#### b. 4155.10 Personnel Administration

Mr. Hoch presented the 2013 Personnel Administration budget with a bottom line of \$429,382. He noted that this budget account reflects all prevailing wages in the budget and the new rate is effective July 1 with half the increase this year and half the next year. Other items of note: we credit ourselves a percentage of unemployment and Workman's Compensation out of Detail. He indicated that we are at the end of a multi-year agreement with Primex and they are working through their successor agreements for eligible communities. Mr. Hoch indicated if the BOS decide to renew there will be a decrease. He noted we have a premium holiday based on various disagreements that pooled insurance had with the schools. Mr. Hoch commented that Primex is

crediting the town based on 2011. He noted that we do not budget for Flex Spending and we are avoiding paying taxes on those dollars.

Mr. Spencer referred to the Police budget and asked with additional detective hours, if the Committee reduced it out of the budget, would only Social Security be affected. Mr. Hoch responded that it would affect Social Security and Medicare because they are in the exempt group. He noted that the Library is not included in Personnel Administration.

Mr. Spencer suggested the Budget Committee vote on this budget tonight.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Brunelle

***Move to approve Account 4155.10, Personnel Administration, for a bottom line of \$429,382 for 2013.***

**SECOND:** by Mr. Spencer

**VOTE: 7-0-0**

**The motion carried.**

c. 4196.xx Other Insurance

Mr. Hoch presented the 2013 Other Insurance budget with a bottom line of \$59,174. He indicated that the town will receive a contribution holiday from LGC in the property and liability insurance. He noted that Insurance Deductibles are based on five incidents per year.

It was suggested the Budget Committee vote on this budget tonight.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Brunelle

***Move to approve Account 4196.xx, Other Insurance, for a bottom line of \$59,174 for 2013.***

**SECOND:** by Mr. Cutter

**VOTE: 7-0-0**

**The motion carried.**

#### **BUDGET VOTING**

a) 4210.10 Police

Mr. Spencer asked to table voting on this budget until the next meeting when there is a full Committee. Committee members agreed.

b) 4210.50 Police Support

**MOTION:** by Mr. Brunelle

***Move to approve Account 4520.50, Police Support, for a bottom line of \$141,271 for 2013.***

**SECOND:** by Mr. Pascucci

Mr. Spencer asked for clarification on the Dispatch Contract. Mr. Hoch explained that we have an agreement with the County for that coverage. He noted that they calculate their number each year and send it to us. Mr. Hoch indicated that this number is based on the number of calls for the previous year.

**VOTE: 7-0-0**

**The motion carried.**

c) 4414.10 Animal Control

**MOTION:** by Mr. Brunelle

*Move to approve Account 4414.10, Animal Control, for a bottom line of \$15,918 for 2013.*

**SECOND:** by Mr. Spencer

**VOTE: 7-0-0**

**The motion carried.**

## **5. MEMBER INPUT**

Mr. Harte outlined the meeting schedule going forward. He noted that the review and voting on School District budgets begins on November 29. The Budget Committee will meet on Tuesday and Thursday nights in December.

Mr. Brunelle mentioned that Mr. Lambert will be the Selectmen's Representative for the School District budget review.

## **6. PUBLIC INPUT**

There was no public input.

- **Upcoming meetings**

The next meeting of the Budget Committee will be held on November 29, 2012.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Cutter

*Move to adjourn.*

**SECOND:** Mr. Pascucci

**VOTE: 7-0-0**

**The motion carried unanimously.**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

**Minutes by:** *Michele E. Flynn (Recording Secretary)*

**Date approved:** **November 29, 2012**