

**Minutes of the Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting
Held on November 13, 2014**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, November 13, 2014 at Campbell High School, 1 Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

PRESENT: C Couture (Chair), A Cutter (Vice Chair), W Spencer, R Peeples, C Pascucci, D Vaillancourt, K Douglas, B Bourque (School Board Representative), F Byron (Selectmen's Representative)

Absent:

Mrs. Couture called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

3. REVIEW/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

There are no additions to the agenda.

4. REVIEW/ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

• **November 6, 2014**

Mrs. Couture indicated that she distributed the minutes late and suggested that approval of the minutes be deferred until the next meeting when Budget Committee members have had the opportunity to review them.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

Mrs. Couture reported that the Budget Committee received June 30, 2014 end of year financials from the school district; update on gasoline costs from Mr. Byron; invitation for school facilities tours on November 19 and 20 from 4:00-6:00 pm.

Mr. Bourque indicated that the Budget Committee will receive the Superintendent's Executive Summary before budget reviews.

6. TOWN BUSINESS

• **Budget Review**

(Budget review items may not be taken in the order they appear.)

4196 Town Insurance

Mr. Hoch presented the 2015 Town Insurance budget to the Budget Committee. He noted that the budget reflects an increase in General Liability Insurance. He indicated the Insurance Deductibles line item is based on two instances where the town would pay the full deductible of \$1,000.

4210.1 Police Department

Mr. Hoch presented the 2015 Police Administration budget to the Budget Committee. He noted that the voters' approval of the union contract resulted in incorporating those costs into the budget, which will reflect some increases over the previous year. Mr. Hoch reported that one more officer has reached the seniority level of corporal. He commented that the budget reflects that the police department is now fully staffed. He indicated that the contract also includes education degree attainment incentives and the budget reflects anticipated attainments. Mr. Hoch reported that the shift differential was increased from \$0.50 to \$1.00 per hour. He noted there is a reduction in Line 125 for part time officers.

Mr. Spencer asked why Line 125 was reduced. Mr. Hoch indicated that we have three officers and we do not have a great prospect of filling the position for part time officer.

Mr. Spencer asked about the status of Overtime in the budget. Mr. Hoch indicated that Court Overtime is decreasing because of the efficiencies of the prosecutor.

Mr. Pascucci asked Mr. Hoch to explain how this is working now. Mr. Hoch explained that we have a contracted prosecutor so we do not have to send an officer to court all the time, which consists of much wait time. He noted that now an officer can be used at the right time.

Mr. Byron clarified that the prosecutor is running through the case and in doing so he works with the clerk, the judge, and the defense attorney. He noted that this can often result in a plea bargain, which saves time from having officer there. Chief O'Brion added that prior to this the officer would be prosecuting the case, but now the prosecutor speaks with all parties involved and reduces the officers' time.

Mr. Pascucci asked what would have to happen to make this line increase. Mr. Hoch indicated that if cases require the presence of multiple officers or the frequency of going to court. He noted that the cost also depends on the officer's classification (i.e. sergeant, corporal, patrol officer).

Mr. Cutter was concerned with the significant increase in overtime. He asked what changed to support a \$21,000 increase. Chief O'Brion indicated that coverage for vacationing officers has increased the overtime account.

Mr. Hoch reported that professional training was set aside in the default this year and was included in the 2015 budget.

Mr. Spencer believes the court overtime and training overtime has been overstated. He indicated that what is proposed here for hours is more than can actually be handled. Mr. Hoch indicated that they are trying to find the best way to capture the correct number as what was done in the past has skewed this number higher. He commented that the previous budget was based on every hour of training is overtime; however, we discounted the maximum exposure by 20%.

Mr. Cutter suggested hiring another officer to reduce overtime. Mr. Hoch commented when overtime starts approaching 1.5 or 2 times the wages of the officer, it is time to start looking to add another officer. Mr. Pascucci commented that it is less expensive to pay the overtime than to hire another officer.

Mr. Hoch reported that Line 349, Child Advocacy Center, was moved from the Health Agencies budget.

Mr. Spencer asked if there are other agencies that can be used. The Officer in attendance with Chief O'Brion commented that the Child Advocacy Center has special interviewers that ask questions in specific ways with children. He noted they are extremely good at what they do.

Mr. Hoch reported that tire purchases (Line 662) were rolled into vehicle repairs, which has decreased. He noted that Line 760, Cruiser Purchase, reflects the last payment on two vehicles purchased in 2013; a new vehicle purchase; replacing a cruiser using \$12,000 from the detail fund balance. He explained because several front line vehicles were used past the point, they cannot be used as detail vehicles. He indicated that a detail vehicle is needed and we will be repurposing a cruiser that will be replaced by a new cruiser. Mr. Hoch commented that the department will have 2 2013 vehicles, 1 2014 vehicle and 2 2015 vehicles.

Mr. Spencer commented that replacing an existing vehicle would mean the cost would be lower because you would reuse the outfitting. Chief O'Brion indicated that we are replacing the Crown Victoria so the new vehicle would have be outfitted.

Mr. Cutter asked what the Board of Selectmen are planning for the Chief and Captain's vehicles. Mr. Hoch indicated that we are not sure what we are going to do at this time. He noted that we have two administrative cars that are aging, but do not cost nearly what the other vehicles cost.

Mr. Byron commented that the Board of Selectmen have not yet made a decision. He noted that the Board of Selectmen are cognizant of the fact that there is a lot of expense in this budget and this is not the right time to add two additional cars.

Mr. Hoch reported that there is an increase to Uniforms and Accessories related to contract allowances.

Mr. Cutter asked about the difference between Line 191, Uniform Allowance, and Line 680, Uniforms and Accessories. Mr. Hoch indicated that Line 191 is what we pay to clean the uniforms and Line 680 is a stipend each officer receives to replace or update uniform items.

Mr. Hoch reported that 15 taser replacements is being budgeted as we did not purchase any this year. He noted that the tasers were last purchased in 2007 and have a life span of 5 years. The existing taser model is no longer available and cannot be repaired.

Mr. Cutter asked why 15 tasers is the right number. Chief O'Brion indicated that it is one for each officer.

Mr. Peeples asked why they are not rotated through a shift. Mr. Hoch indicated that these are weapons and are assigned to an officer. They are not exchangeable.

4210.5 Support Services

Mr. Hoch presented the 2015 Support Services budget to the Budget Committee. He reported the wage line and uniform accessories line reflect contractual changes. He noted that levels in Dispatch and Overtime are being restored to what was proposed last year. He explained that with the default budget, we stopped our extra coverage when one of the dispatchers was out and stopped the overtime. He indicated it is not a sustainable choice.

Mr. Spencer asked why it is not a sustainable choice. Mr. Hoch indicated that not providing enough service to the community is not a good situation. He commented that county dispatch covers and people want to talk to an actual officer (i.e. a person calls with a question for an officer; county does not ask what the question is, but calls an officer in to take the call). Mr. Hoch noted many times the question is not police business related.

Mr. Spencer asked how the town would provide coverage. Mr. Hoch indicated that we would provide coverage with part time officers.

4411.2 Mosquito District

Mr. Hoch presented the 2015 Mosquito District budget to the Budget Committee. He reported that there is a slight increase in contracted services and a request is included to purchase bat boxes for installation for more help in controlling mosquitos.

Mrs. Couture suggested partnering with the high school wood shop to build bat boxes. Mr. Hoch indicated they are looking at boxes of substantial size.

Mr. Vaillancourt asked about contracted services. Mr. Hoch noted that there are only a handful of certified contractors that do business in the State of NH.

Mr. Vaillancourt asked if every town performs mosquito control. Mr. Hoch commented that in this part of the state many towns do it because of the various amounts of diseases.

4414.1 Animal Control

Mr. Hoch presented the 2015 Animal Control budget to the Budget Committee. He noted the budget is basically flat.

4550.2 Library

Mr. Hoch commented that the Library budget is based on an appropriation of \$205,180, but the 2015 proposed budget is \$203,689.

Vicki Varrick, Director, gave an overview of the different services and resources the Library offers. She indicated the Library's resources include books, audio books, encyclopedias, dvd's, cd's, newspapers, computers, public wifi, copier and fax services, online downloadable books for free from NH Downloadable Books, a database that gives access to periodicals, newspapers,

magazines; online reminders when books are due; inner-library loan programs (get books from another library in the state), educational opportunities, book discussion groups, summer reading clubs, knitting groups, story times, and monthly educational programs for teens and adults.

Ms. Varrick reported that in 2013 the Library recorded 189% in resource usage and users are up 3%. She commented that the Library budget reflects an approximate decrease of \$1,500 for 2015. She noted that savings were gained from the elimination of a small amount of health/dental insurance, reductions due to the integrated Library System conversion project, the use of TechSoup for computer security, and no predicted equipment needs.

Ms. Varrick reported that savings were offset by slight increases in the cost of step increases for staff, library materials and licenses, septic tank cleaning and programs. She noted the Library offers Mango Languages online, which is a self-paced service that teaches language and ESL courses. She indicated that the language resources the Library had could only be used for three weeks. With Mango Languages, more people have access to languages at the same time. Ms. Varrick commented with NH Downloadable Books, downloads increase 33% last year.

Mrs. Couture asked if there were more downloads than people coming in to use the Library. Ms. Varrick noted there was an increase in fiction, but not in non-fiction. She explained that people would rather not read non-fiction on devices.

Ms. Varrick indicated that the increases in programming consist of a 13% increase in adult programming, growth in the Teen and Tween programming, summer reading participation for teens has increased, and a Dungeons and Dragons group began last year.

Mr. Pascucci commented that it was mentioned there are no anticipated equipment purchases. He asked what equipment is typically budgeted in that line. Ms. Varrick indicated that computers, printers, monitors and office items would normally be budgeted in that line.

Mr. Spencer asked about the cutoff for the year to date totals. Ms. Varrick indicated the year to date totals are through today.

Mr. Spencer asked about heating oil. Ms. Varrick indicated that the Library has not yet received a delivery and the vendor has changed to Dead River as we are part of the School District contract.

Mr. Spencer noted that \$1,400 has been spent through 10 months and asked why it is expected to double. Ms. Varrick commented that she used what is normally budgeted. She indicated the oil tank is getting dangerously low.

Mr. Spencer asked how she arrived at the budget number. Ms. Varrick indicated that she looked at the usage over the last five years.

Mrs. Couture asked what she used for a cost per gallon. Ms. Varrick indicated that she used \$3.14 per gallon, quoted by Dead River. Mr. Bourque commented that the district contracted with Dead River for \$3.05 per gallon and the Library would use the same price.

Mr. Spencer requested the tank capacity.

4415 Health Agencies

Mr. Hoch presented the 2015 Health Agencies budget to the Budget Committee. He noted that the zero budget reflects that all agency requests are placed on the warrant.

Mr. Byron explained that we put a warrant article forward in the past so the citizens would say what the right number may be for the different agencies.

Mrs. Douglas asked why one was picked to move to the police budget. She believed that all agencies should be listed in one place.

Mr. Hoch indicated that the Child Advocacy Center is more of a service that we use than a charitable donation. He noted the police department asks for their assistance.

- **Budget Voting**

4152.1 Revaluation of Property

There were no motions.

4155 Personnel Administration

MOTION: Mr. Cutter

Move to reduce Line 250, Unemployment Tax, to \$4,481

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

Mr. Cutter indicated that the reduction is based on the actual number provided by Mr. Hoch.

VOTE: 9-0-0

The motion passed.

MOTION: Mr. Cutter

Move to increase Line 260, Workers Compensation Insurance, by \$4,935

SECOND: by Mr. Byron

Mr. Cutter indicated that the increase is based on the actual number provided by Mr. Hoch.

VOTE: 9-0-0

The motion passed.

4311.1 Road Agent's Office

MOTION: Mr. Cutter

Move to reduce Line 310, Consulting Engineer Services, to \$13,000

SECOND: by Mr. Pascucci

Mr. Cutter indicated that \$13,000 is the right number.

VOTE: 7-2-0, with Mr. Byron and Mr. Bourque opposing

The motion passed.

MOTION: Mr. Vaillancourt

Move to reduce Line 411, Propane Gas, to \$5,000

SECOND: by Mr. Spencer

Mr. Vaillancourt indicated that the reduction is based on what has been spent this year.

VOTE: 5-3-0

The motion passed.

4312.1 Highways and Streets

There were no motions.

4520.1 Parks and Recreation

MOTION: Mr. Peeples

Move to defer voting on the Parks and Recreation budget

SECOND: by Mr. Byron

VOTE: 8-1-0, with Mr. Spencer opposing

The motion passed.

- **Review of Expenditures**

7. MEMBER INPUT/NEW BUSINESS

- **Schedule for School District Budget Review**

Mrs. Couture provided a budget review schedule for the FY16 School District budget to the Budget Committee. She indicated that the Budget Committee is expected to receive the budget November 20, 2014 and the Superintendent's Executive Summary of Strategic Priorities on November 18, 2014. The schedule reflects that budget meetings are planned for Tuesdays and Thursdays beginning December 2. The Budget Committee will be reviewing budgets starting December 2 and voting on those budgets December 4, following a similar schedule throughout December.

Mr. Spencer questioned why there is not a week between reviewing budgets and voting. Mrs. Couture indicated that the process is different this year. She noted the Town will be presenting warrants on December 11.

Mr. Pascucci commented on the 2015 Town budget. He referred to the reduction of \$12,000 for the IT Manager stipend and indicated that he asked about the number necessary to cover contracted computer services. He wanted to know the direction of the Board of Selectmen regarding that budget item.

Mrs. Couture commented that is the decision of the Board of Selectmen. She indicated if they decide to place it on the warrant, they will bring it forward on December 11.

Mr. Pascucci commented that he is not sure what the correct number would be for contracted computer services as there are many different numbers.

Mrs. Couture indicated that is why we are delaying the vote on the bottom line. She noted that Committee members can discuss that issue when the town brings forward their warrant articles.

Mr. Spencer clarified that the Committee voted that the stipend did not belong in the budget and should go before the voters. He indicated that the Board of Selectmen can bring the article and discuss the correct number with the Committee.

The Committee agreed that \$12,000 was appropriate, but for a variety of reasons why.

Mr. Pascucci commented that he would like to fund that item properly whether it is a warrant article or the correct number in contracted computer services.

Mr. Peeples commented there is no way to get to that number unless there is a detailed plan.

Mr. Pascucci commented that he is hopeful a plan is provided in order to determine the correct cost.

Mrs. Couture indicated that voting on all accounts for the Town will be January 6 and January 8 for the School District.

Mr. Spencer asked that the estimate of town valuation be forwarded.

Mr. Cutter indicated that the Budget Committee has made \$35,354.12 in reductions to the 2015 Town budget.

Mr. Pascucci commented there was good discussion this evening and the Committee works well with the district and town representatives. He indicated that Mr. Byron does a very good job describing what happens at Budget Committee meetings at the meetings of the Board of Selectmen. He expressed concern with statements made by Selectman Lemire.

Mr. Byron clarified that this discussion is inappropriate and outside the scope of the Budget Committee.

Mr. Pascucci commented that Mr. Lemire made statements that he is ashamed of the Committee.

Mrs. Couture commented if these are public statements it is not inappropriate. Mr. Byron indicated that it is hearsay as Mr. Lemire is not a member of this Committee. He noted that commenting on potential discussion at other board meetings is inappropriate.

Mr. Pascucci indicated he would like to invite Mr. Lemire to a Budget Committee meeting.

Mrs. Couture commented if someone has comments about this Committee, this Committee should be aware. She indicated if Mr. Pascucci has concerns about Mr. Lemire's statements, he should address it at the Board of Selectmen meeting. She thanked Mr. Pascucci for bringing the issue to the Budget Committee's attention.

Mr. Byron agreed that addressing concerns regarding member(s) of the Board of Selectmen at one of their meetings is appropriate.

Mr. Peeples encouraged Committee members to watch the trending on the cost of gasoline. He indicated that information in Business Insider forecasts that oil will be \$70/barrel by the end of 2016.

Mrs. Couture commented that the information from Mr. Byron indicated the new estimate on gasoline is \$2.94 per gallon. Mr. Byron indicated that he feels comfortable using that average.

Mr. Byron mentioned he will not be able to attend the December 16 meeting. He noted the Board of Selectmen will send a representative.

8. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

• Upcoming meetings

The next meeting of the Budget Committee is scheduled on November 20, 2014.

MOTION: by Mr. Bourque

Move to adjourn.

SECOND: Mr. Peeples

VOTE: 9-0-0

The motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

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

Date approved: **November 20, 2014**