

Town of Atkinson
Budget Committee
October 25, 2005

Attending: Mark Acciard, Chairman, Fred Thompson, Dave Paquette, Marsha Bassi, Jim Blackadar, Paul Tracey

Mr. Acciard called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm

Fred Thompson raised some questions from the minutes with regard to the budget figures of the Highway Department and Care of Grounds.

Mark Acciard motioned to amend the minutes of October 18, 2005 as follows:

#4312 Highway Department Fred Thompson
The 2006 highway department proposed budget in the amount of \$518, 552.00
a decrease of \$1799.00 was accepted for preliminary consideration.

#4520 Care of Grounds Fred Thompson
The 2006 care of grounds proposed budget in the amount of \$23, 195.00 a
Decrease of \$1000.00 was accepted for preliminary consideration.

#4316 Street Lighting Fred Thompson
Street lighting remains the same in the amount of \$27,000.00

#4324 Recycling Fred Thompson
Recycling remains the same in the amount of \$45,314.00

Mark Acciard motioned to accept the minutes of October 18, 2005 as amended, Fred Thompson seconded, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Acciard begins the meeting by addressing some comments made at the selectman's meeting of October 24, 2005 regarding the preparation of budgets and the proposed changes of the Town Administrator. Highlights are as follows:

- Some changes have great merit to them with respect to housekeeping, the alignment of budgets together, although somewhat misleading up front, when you get the feel of it, each budget is contained within those groupings and they have not been materially changed at this point. Some will cause issues.
- We can and regularly do look back over the successive years to track budgetary expenditures, we have in hand a 10 year budget that shows each department, we have 4 year expenditures that show line item expenditures and each department head receives budgetary worksheets each year that show the current year, past year and the upcoming year that the departments have to budget for. This provides easy tracking of expenditures from year to year.
- At this time any department head can readily open up past town reports or their own budget worksheet to readily see what has been budgeted in years past.

- Mr. Acciard would like to thank Selectman Childs and the Chief, for recognizing and expressing the fact that it is the budget committee that has authority over the budget and should have been consulted on any proposed budget changes.
- The reason the budgets are in their current format; broken up by the departments and having those line items in each budgets is because that is the format DRA has set up their chart of accounts.
- Our budgetary system conforms to the MS7 form that we have to file with DRA, at the end of each year...
- The prevailing goal of the budget committee for the last ten years has been to make the town budgets as transparent and accountable for the average voter who may request this information.
- The basic philosophy is: if a voter walks into the selectman's office and wants to know what it cost to run the highway department; they should be able to open the highway budget and have this information at hand.
- The budget committee prepares budgets for the voters in town in order for the voters to see how their monies are spent.
- There are questions on who has the authority to move line items in and out of a budget and Mr. Acciard would like to defer with our Town Administrator.
- It is the budget committee is charged with the responsibility to prepare and present to the voters. The budget committee prepares the budget that the voters ultimately will vote upon.
- There can be a selectman's recommended budget and a budget recommended however, the voters actually vote on the budget committee's budget.
- Under state law the budget committee has sole authority to prepare the budget. The selectman, department heads and some committee chairman have input with regards to certain budgets, but have no authority over the budget until the voters have ratified it at which time it goes to the selectman and they are charged with managing and spending it over the next year.
- ~~Mr. Thompson adds that with the new accounting software that Sandra is using; it would make sense to me that whatever allocations and breakdowns we use should be in sink with our bookkeeper. Changes should be shared with the budget committee prior to the changes and that Sandy has the ability to spit this information out. If she can't, it seems like less transparency and more clouding.~~
- Mr. Thompson believes this to be a real concern with the Town Administrator and this is the reason he has been asked to be present at this meeting. It would be a great forum for us sooner than later to have this discussion with him earlier in the budget season not later to be working on the same stop.
- Mr. Acciard explains his reasoning for bringing these particular items up was because there were questions asked about the budget and town administrators proposed changes. How these changes would be enacted on or if there were a difference of opinion, who would have the authority. Mr. Acciard did not want there to be any misleading because the information provided was incorrect.

The following budgets were slated on the agenda:

Community Service **Officer** Officer who drives around town in the summer giving trinkets to the young folks.

Cruiser Maintenance

4210.9.635.00

Cruiser Gas increase of \$15,220.00

Last year gas was based on \$1.95 a gallon, this year gas is based on \$3.50 a gallon. The police department averages 10,000 gallons of gas a year.

This operating budget is subject to the Union contract being accepted by the town. Only those not in the union will receive a 3% cola raise despite the union contract.

Total Police Department \$744,729.00

No motion made at this time.

#4215

Elderly Affairs

Jim Blackadar

Proposed 2006 budget of \$16,237.00 an increase of \$984.00

Officer Anderson elaborated on the activities provided by the elder affairs budget. Mr. Acciard asks how many transports the organization has done through the end of September and how many town residents use the service. Last years transports totaled 640 and 661 this year with two months to go. The programs are varied such as the Flu clinic, Big Band Concerts, Seminars, Medical Aids at the disposal of the seniors, Alzheimer's information, Bracelets for a program called Safe Return, AARP, assist seniors with low income for medicines free, repair and distribute a contractors list, Shoveling is available. The Elderly Affairs maintain a data base of over 1200 seniors. Some organizations that they work with are: wheels on meals, Service Link, Greater Derry and Salem transportation, Center for Life Management, Family Mediation, Salem Caregivers, and Senior Living. We also belong to the Better Business Bureau. At this time we are maintaining the same service level yet spreading it out among more people.

Total Elderly Affairs \$16,237.00

No motion made at this time.

The budget committee graciously thanks the Police Department and Elderly Affairs for coming in this evening. Mr. Acciard confirms with Chief Consentino that Mr. McAllister will not be attending tonight. Thank you's across the board.

The Committee continues to review the over and under expended line items on this evening's budgets. Mr. Thompson would like to obtain the September statements for the Police Department in order to monitor under expenditures. They also reviewed the potential changes in the budgets made by Mr. McAllister without any approval. A town administrator has no authority unless the board votes to give it to him. The budget committee request to meet with Mr. McAllister to attain a common goal regarding line items in each department and are conducive to Sandra's ability to spit out our budgets with clarity.

Mr. Acciard handed out a packet with information regarding recycling issues, the budget law was mainly to show who ever had any questions what the law actually states, and the MS7 is just to make you aware of the format we have to submit.

The November 1 meeting will entertain budgets from Recreation, Memorial Day, Community Center and Cemeteries.

Mr. Paquette points out that this year's budget is Russ's format. Mr. Acciard has no problem with the format, however, the moving line items presents some concerns.

There is motion to adjourn on the table, seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Acciard adjoined the meeting at 10:15 pm

Respectfully submitted,
daj