

Town of Atkinson
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
November 20, 2012

Members Present:

Harold Morse, Chairman
Bill Smith Vice Chairman
John Feuer
Craig Schuster
Wendy Barker

Others Present:

Bill Innes, Town Administrator
Fred Childs, Board of Selectmen
Karl Athanasiou, Technology Committee

Vice Chairman Bill Smith called the November 20, 2012 meeting of the Atkinson Budget Committee to order at 7:00 PM. Member Sue Carroll was not present. Mr. Bill Innes, Town Administrator will be presenting the Treasury budget.

Karl Athanasiou came before the Board to present the Technology Committee 2013 Budget first. The technology committee budget has annual costs or fixed costs such as support costs for software and for the server. The technology budget has been absorbing all technology related costs for all departments in Town except the Library. As line items have dropped in other departments the technology committee budget has grown.

The largest increase is the request by Atkinson police department to upgrade their 10 year old records management system. Currently they use a package by a company called Crimestar. SGT Caggiano has requested that the server be upgraded from the older version to a new enterprise version which allows them to store more records, have better reliability and handle server needs for the next 10 years. The total package costs are \$41,600. This purchases 4 new mobile units for the cars they are ruggedized laptops that are industry standard for fire, EMS and police. The Crimestar upgrade is \$4000, the mobile communicator module is \$3,000. Licenses for the laptops cost \$2,000 each and the computer aided dispatch is \$2000 for remote dispatch. It is needed to bring them up to date. The best case scenario is to upgrade their system all at once in 2013. In case that is not feasible Karl has worked with the police department on a 2 year rollout in fiscal years 2013 and 2014. When Atkinson asked for prices for the upgrade, Crimestar gave significant discounts and will hold them over 1 to 2 years. If Atkinson purchases the equipment all at once the cost would be \$41,600 for 2013. If the cost is spread over 2 years, the cost would be \$19,100 the first year for mobile units in cars and allow them to access the Atkinson police department server. The second year the police department would add 2 more laptops and a messaging gateway to the state police data base.

Mr. Innes said that it is a safety and security issue at present; officers don't know if stops have existing warrants. The Selectmen would prefer purchasing the system in 1 year, but can purchase over two years. The advantage over purchasing over 2 years is costs are offset if the money comes in from the special fund that they have. Mr. Childs informed the committee that they have money coming to the town; it is a question of when. SGT Caggiano is also looking at grants. The police department is looking at all avenues. The police department has \$57,000 in funds of which \$12,000 is for a vehicle the town has received at no cost. \$14,000 was promised but not delivered. The selectmen have stipulated they would like to have current year and next year a salary for the person doing the work at \$35,000, they are expecting more money. The fund is at the discretion of the police department with no contingencies by the Selectmen or budget committee and the funds can be used for 10 things, equipment, and facilities. The funds cannot take the place of fiduciary responsibilities of the Town, for example rent and cleaning, the funds can only be used to buy things the Town cannot afford.

Mr. Innes asked if the committee had more questions for Mr. Athanasiou. Chairman Morse asked if the request should be a Warrant Article, and if it could be put it off, when the money comes in it will offset a warrant instead of the budget Mr. Innes explained that is why the police department has a 2 year plan. Mr. Innes remarked that he does not believe the police department will get all \$30,000 to \$40,000. A 2 year plan is good because the process will start and the town is more likely to get external grants and other funds. With a Warrant it will be

another year before they can get started if it is defeated. It is possible to do it all in 1 year or 2 years. The recommendation is one year, but if the cost is spread over two years there are more opportunities for grants and other money. Either way, the budget is the best way to do it. Karl stated that this is just a single year increase, if the purchase is spread over 2 years by the third year the budget will be back to normal. The total increase for support and fees after the system is installed is \$3,600 for the modules and software costs will go up to \$4800 per year ongoing. The cost is for each laptop is \$2250, licenses are \$2,000 the mobile communications module is a onetime cost of \$3000 with an annual support cost of \$600. The license fees are a onetime cost. Ongoing maintenance fees would increase \$3600 per year. The town is currently paying \$1200 per year, so there is a grand total of \$4800 per year for the enterprise version of Crimestar. The police department has done price comparisons between the current Crimestar, the package Plaistow uses and the package the State uses. Plaistow uses Crimetrack while the State and Salem use an IMC program, a per site customizable program that is fairly expensive.

Chairman Morse asked if there were other questions. There were none.

Bill Innes, the Town Administrator came before the Board to present the following budgets.

Executive – there is one more update to the employee merit package. The Selectmen's stipend goes to \$13,000 total, plus FICA and Medicare. This is the first increase in 12 years. Professional and technical services increases to \$12,750 – this includes costs to record deeds, engineering costs, trustee of trust fund money, and the recording clerk for selectmen. Town reports is down from \$10,000 to \$4,500, they found a lower cost printer and reduced the amount of copies from around 1000 to 200 to 300. The town reports are posted on the web, and not as many copies are being made. Miscellaneous is \$1,300 and is for various expenses of the Selectmen such as flowers and gifts. Public Notices increased from \$3,000 to \$4500 because notices in papers cost more. The Town Administrator salary is flat at \$60,000. A 1.5% increase is prorated over 9 months. FICA and Medicare are up. Telephone is down. Cell phone traffic has been consolidated. The town has a new cell phone contract with Verizon and is saving about \$1,000 per year. Postage is the same. Office supplies are up from \$4,000 to \$4,500, supplies are more expensive. Clerical is for the planning assistant, the same year over year \$16,473 to \$16,450. The Conflict of Interest Committee is flat, at \$214. The only category that is up is other new \$150 because the committee has rented a post office box which helps with security and to keep things private. The Committee Support budget is \$100. The Energy Commission budget is \$300.

Finance and Administration – flat year over year. The costs that did go up are driven by other people. Health insurance is up 9%, retirement is up, the town has no control over those expenses, and the total increase is 1.5%. Health insurance cost is \$19,000 for a two person plan for Sandra and her husband. 5 people in town are getting retirement and 5 people have health insurance. Harold Morse asked if the town can have employees pay some of the cost of insurance. Mr. Innes responded that the selectmen decided that new employees pay 20% instead of 10%.

Auditing has a \$4,000 decrease this year and is consistent with last year, \$12,850. They are budgeting \$13,000 this year. Assessing has a similar 1.5% increase, prorated health insurance for a 2 person plan at \$19,606, Fica and Medicare are adjusted, retirement is up from \$2,900 to \$3,300. Assessing costs is for the assessing contract and the cost for maps and is \$33,400. Other new is for postage. There are new rules for warrants; every time a tax card is adjusted the Town has to send a post card saying it's adjusted. Last year 25% of residents' tax cards were adjusted. Member Craig Schuster asked if the expense should go to the postage line. Mr. Innes informed him that it would next year.

Mr. Innes skipped tax collecting. It was presented previously.

Treasury - 1.5% prorated year over year. Fica and Medicare are up, all else is flat except education and conferences because the town will have a new treasurer next year.

Computers – also presented previously.

Legal Services – In 2011 the town spent \$123,000 in legal services, in 2012 the town spent \$33,000, Mr. Innes expects the line to cap out at around \$25,000, he has budgeted \$28,500 this year,

Other Professional Services - line is being reduced from \$50,000 to \$35,000 in 2013, historically the numbers have been up and down, and it is hard to predict from year to year. Mr. Childs informed the committee that this line includes the cable contract. Mr. Innes said that the last time the cable contract was renewed legal fees were over \$70,000. There are a number of towns that have new contracts and Mr. Innes stated that he intends to use the cable contract for Salem and one other town as a base line and then have it reviewed by attorneys with cable experience in order to save money writing a contract and having it reviewed. They still expect \$7000 to \$10,000 to renew the cable contract, that's why the line is \$35,000. The contract is renewed every 5 years.

Chairman Morse asked if there were any competition. Mr. Innes replied that Comcast has to have the contract. Chairman Morse invited Dave Williams, Atkinson Television, to clear up the confusion. Mr. Williams explained that most people think of a contract, it is franchise agreement, it is not exclusive, and is more like the equivalent of a license to sell and serve food; Comcast has to adhere by the standards the town, state and fed government set up. It is not exclusive, if 10 companies want to come in; the town is obligated to allow them. It is not like power and telephone where other companies can use the wires, cable companies have to string their own wires, so multiple companies are not effective. Chairman Morse asked about Verizon, it was going to set up Fios but left NH because of too many little contracts. Mr. Williams explained that one reason Verizon got rid of northern New England, is because Verizon signed a statewide contract with New Jersey with hard penalties, so it sold the rights in northern New England so they could move to New Jersey, set up network there and meet the obligations. Fairpoint bought the system but financial problems overcame them.

Defense Proceedings –part of other professional services is \$1,500, this line is not always used.

Other Insurance - Property liability and P&L deductible are given to them at \$81,000. Mr. Innes does not know why it went down.

Advertising Regional – Rockingham Planning Commission costs, our dues are \$6,269.

Health Administration – for the health inspector and is going down to \$3,500 because the assistant health inspector doesn't take money. Fica and Medicare are adjusted, everything else is flat and the budget is down by 13%.

Health Agencies –is flat for Family mediation, the Sad Café and the Child Advocacy Group and Rockingham Healthcare. It goes up \$1300 for Rockingham Community Action. The committee discussed the line for the Sad Café. They were giving \$5,000 and last year they budgeted \$2,500, the line is being held at \$2,500. Rockingham Community Action is up \$300, Community Health Services is flat. Meals on Wheels is up from \$2,400 to \$2,700, based on the number of meals they provide. Mr. Childs asked about Rockingham Visiting Nurses and Mr. Innes responded that the town has not contributed for the last 2 years; they're called something else now. The town is contributing \$7,500 to the Center for Life Management, the same as previous years. Sexual assault and the crisis center are the same. A Safe Place is up \$250, it is a place for women and families to go in case of an emergency. We have a new request for a special advocate and it will be a Warrant this year.

The general assistance budget is flat year over year. Last year it was \$14,400, and the town spent \$6855. Whenever they get a request they search for other alternatives to offset town costs, the budget does not include \$1500 donations from other entities, requests picked up last winter, and they are seeing it pick up again.

Long term debt principle - the same at \$85,000 per year, and long term debt interest is down to \$58,969 this year.

The last item is personal administration, under workers compensation it went from \$29,909 budgeted to a one time expenditure of \$33,962 up 9%. Mr. Innes would like to budget \$35,000 this year and every year.

Mr. Innes concluded his presentation and asked for questions. There were no more questions.

Chairman Morse requested the committee to work on the minutes and talk about the next schedule. Mr. Innes will stay.

Chairman Morse informed the audience that the next meeting would be November 27, 2012 and asked the committee what departments would be presenting their budgets. Vice Chairman Smith suggested that the committee use the same order as for the original presentations. The first will be the road agent. The Committee discussed whether road maintenance should be in the budget or a warrant. Mr. Innes informed the committee that the Selectmen talked about it and agreed they want to vote on it every year. The road agent budget last year was \$409,000 this year, the road agent proposed \$438,000 and the selectmen voted for \$424,500. The committee agreed to have him in and also to talk about changes, especially the generator, the generator work was taken out. Mr. Innes recommended a portable generator, but it is not optimal. Mr. Innes wants to look at using the Community Center as a warming center, the generator there is underpowered, at times the lights cannot be on when cooking. It has to be partitioned off. He is looking at upgrading the generator and all costs associated there. If that is done, the generator at the Community Center can be put in the garage. Mr. Morse has questions about the truck. Mr. Innes requested the truck lease be via warrant instead of by budget. The committee agreed to have him back in.

Mr. Morse asked about Planning and Zoning. Member Schuster asked about labor, and if revenue will increase proportionately. Mr. Innes informed him that inspectors are paid only when there is an inspection. If the town expends \$5,000, it gets \$5,000 back. Chairman Morse asked if there were more questions. There were none. Mr. Morse asked if there were questions about building inspectors. There were none.

Next Chairman Morse asked if the committee had more questions or comments about the police department, Elderly Affairs and Atkinson TV.

Mr. Innes informed the committee that the cruiser was put back on warrant, and that work to be done on 2 buildings in the cemetery will also be decided on a warrant. The cemetery line hasn't been changed yet. He has money to put to the general fund this year and is trying to mitigate spending this year and put less in general fund. The Committee agreed that those areas need to be reviewed.

Chairman Morse agreed that Highway Department and Police Department need to be reviewed and asked what else. The committee agreed to do Elderly Services with the police department and to ask specific questions. Mr. Schuster remarked there were some changes; postage is down from \$900 to \$100. Mr. Innes remarked that historically the most spent was \$23.

Mr. Morse asked about the library, government buildings, the fire department and recreation. Mr. Schuster stated he would like to talk about the Community Center and Kimball House. Mr. Smith said he has a question about Ms. Yoshida Travers' salary. Mr. Schuster said it was a 1.5% merit increase, similar to last year but not elected officials. Mr. Innes informed him that they are on salary. Mr. Childs said that some were increased because it was voted on at Town meeting, including the Tax Collector, the Road Agent, and others about 10 years ago. Mr. Innes stated the warrant article history is on the website and goes back 25 years; he would like to add 3-5 years to the website per year.

Mr. Morse suggested that the committee request that the library come back. Mr. Innes stated that the library budget has been changed, propane is down \$3,000. The selectmen made no changes to original; it was updated by the trustees to include the increase for the director.

The committee agreed that the Road Agent, the Police Department and Elderly affairs be requested back to the November 27, 2012 meeting. The following week the library director and the trustees; Mr. Innes and Mr. Weymouth, buildings, Chief Murphy, Fire Department be invited back to the meeting of December 4, 2012. Mr. Morse stated that if something comes up we can invite Mr. Innes, according to the schedule after the December 4, 2012 meeting the committee is off until January 8, 2013.

Mr. Morse requested to discuss the minutes. Mr. Innes requested to leave and to discuss the legal lines more at the next meeting.

Mr. Morse requested the committee approve the minutes of October 23, 2012 with clarification.

Next, Chairman Morse asked about the minutes for the November 7, 2012 and November 8, 2012. Mr. Schuster asked if the committee needs to know projected revenue.

Mr. Schuster asked about projected revenue. There is over \$100,000 in trash savings that should be seen in and Mr. Childs explained that it is in there.

Member Craig Schuster asked if the committee could approve the minutes for November 13, 2012. Member Craig Schuster made a Motion to accept the budget committee meeting minutes of November 13, 2012. Member Wendy Brooks seconded the motion. All members of the committee present voted in favor, with Member Sue Carroll absent and Chairman Morse abstaining. Vote: 4/0.

Mr. Morse requested the committee return to the minutes of November 7, 2012. Mr. Smith commented on the last page, the committee discussed whether the default column or last years' budget should be used to calculate percentages, it should be last year's, also now the budget committee does the default column, the percentages column and the budget committee column.

Member John Feuer said that on the last page, the every member vote should be 5/0 not 6/0, Selectman Childs does not vote and Member John Feuer was not present.

Member Craig Schuster made a motion to accept as edited changing the vote on the last page to 5/0 vote. Vice Chairman Bill Smith seconded the motion. The vote was 4/0. Member John Feuer abstained and Member Sue Carroll was not present.

Next Chairman Morse requested that the committee discuss the minutes of the November 8, 2012 budget committee meeting. Member Barker asked about the library raises and if they are cola raises. Mr. Childs explained that library employees get the same as everyone except the director; she's on a contract that the selectmen define. The committee agreed that library raises need to be clarified. The name for the technology committee member is Karl not Carlos and Rose is not Cavellarri, it is Cavalear on the 2nd paragraph on page 3 and on the front page it should be Cavalear. Mr. Morse said to make that line \$3175 in the 6th paragraph on the 3rd page, last sentence.

Vice Chairman Bill Smith motion to accept the minutes of November 8, 2012 budget committee meeting as edited. Member John Feuer seconded the motion. Vote 5/0 in favor with member Sue Carroll absent.

Member Craig Schuster made a motion to adjourn. Member John Feuer seconded the motion. Vote 5/0 in favor with member Sue Carroll absent. Chairman Harold Morse adjourned the November 20, 2012 meeting of the budget committee at 8:40 pm.