

***Town of Atkinson***  
***Budget Committee Meeting Minutes***  
***December 4, 2012***

Members Present:

Harold Morse, Chairman  
Bill Smith, Vice Chairman  
Wendy Barker  
Craig Schuster  
Sue Carroll

Others Present:

Bill Innes, Town Administrator  
Fred Childs, Board of Selectmen  
Todd Barbera, Board of Selectmen  
Allen Phair, Chairman of Board of Trustees and  
Diane Heer, Library Director  
Dave Weymouth, Town Buildings  
Karl Athanasiou, Technology Committee  
Ted Stewart, Road Agent  
Chief Murphy, Fire Department

Chairman Harold Morse called the December 4, 2012 meeting of the Atkinson Budget Committee to order at 7:10 PM. Member John Feuer was absent.

Mr. Morse informed the Committee and the audience that the Ted Stewart, Highway Department, Karl Athanasiou, Technology Committee, Chief Murphy, Fire Department, Dave Weymouth, Town Buildings and Allen Phair and Diane Heer, Kimball Library would be asked to discuss their budgets..

**Care of Grounds** - Ted Stewart was called to the board to discuss water line usage for care of grounds. Mr. Stewart is proposing \$500 less for care grounds at \$20,500. Mr. Stewart explained that water usage is up \$600 and he is requesting \$1200 for this water usage. Planting is staying the same, it goes to the Garden Club. Contract Labor is \$2,350, it covers contract labor and incidentals like striping and playground maintenance. Mr. Bill Innes says the difference is that Mr. Stewart has moved money around, basically the budget is the same as last year.

**Kimball Library** -Chairman Morse called Diane Heer and Alan Phair to address the committee regarding the library budget. The committee discussed the Other Professional Services line which is up \$1,000. Ms. Heer explained that the contract with their IT is going up \$30.00 per month and the line also covers the cost for certificates, web postings and IP's from Comcast. They are also working with a technology company called Tech Soup to put a later version of Windows on their computers. Tech Soup is a company that works with nonprofits so they can get licenses fairly inexpensively. They have 30 computers that need licenses and the remaining \$640 may not even cover all the computers. Mr. Morse asked about replacing 1-2 per year. Diane said it is possible depending but they can only put in one order to Tech Soup per year. They can also go to the Friends.

Mr. Schuster remarked that the library budget is \$15,700 over from last year. Mr. Innes says part of that is salary, part is health insurance and part is retirement. Mr. Schuster asked if there is any line that can be cut, such as conferences. Diane explained that she goes to one professional conference per year for professional development. She tries to keep expenses down for conferences by sharing rides and rooms. The line also covers the cost of training library staff by holding in house training session.

Next the committee discussed the materials of trade line. Sue Carroll suggested that the Library leave that line flat to help pay for the cost of computers. Mr. Innes explained that that the cost of books and magazines goes up year over year. Diane Heer stated that she has already expended over \$29,000 for 2012. The committee discussed if the Friends could help pay for books and magazines. Diane Heer said that the Friends fund all the museum passes and all programs, like summer reading program, the tree lighting and craft programs. Mr. Phair said that circulation is up 37% from last year, the Library usually spends around \$36,000 to \$38,000 for books and magazines and the line has stayed flat. Mr. Morse said that the Town has a basic obligation to provide a library and staff, but the Library should rely more on the Friends. Mr. Innes suggested a fund raiser, but pointed out that that money can't be depended on. Mr. Schuster said the committee is trying to find areas to cut the

Library budget 1-2% and making suggestions. Sue Carroll suggested dropping the thermostat. Sue Carroll also suggested removing \$2,000 from the materials and trade line to offset the increase in computer costs

Bill Smith asked what was counted in materials and trade and asked how many magazine subscriptions there were. Diane replied that they had about 50 magazine subscriptions and the circulation department tracks how often a magazine has gone out. Diane explained that only the most recent issue can't be checked out. The circulation department also tracks how often a magazine is read at the library. If a magazine is not being read, the subscription is dropped. Mr. Smith asked if it was possible to have 40 subscriptions instead of 50. Diane agreed that it is, also they could buy fewer copies of a book, for example 2 copies instead of 3. Bill Smith asked if they can order copies of books from another library. Diane said it is possible to borrow from other libraries but if a book is popular in the Atkinson library it is popular in others. Mr. Smith suggested that materials of trade would be a good place to cut. Mr. Phair said if it hadn't been the same for 4 years, he'd say so, and it should be higher. Mr. Morse asked Bill about the employee merit line. Mr. Innes explained that it is the 1 ½% cola merit raise for the library employees that had already been voted on. The librarian's salary is contracted. Chairman Morse asked if there were more questions. There were none.

**Financial Administration Budget – computers** – Karl Athanasiou of the technology committee came before the Board to discuss the computer budget. The Committee requested to discuss the new police software program and questioned if such an expensive system was needed. Mr. Athanasiou explained that it keeps the officers on the street longer because they don't have to back to the police department an hour earlier to fill out reports. Also if they have to enter a lot of data, the present system starts deleting old data. It is 7-8 years out of date. Atkinson is about 5 years behind Salem, Plaistow and Hampstead. The existing mobile units were funded by the State and UNH but that funding is gone. The existing laptops are 5 plus years old. The communication system that the police department uses to get records such as warrants has also lost funding, is old, is in Plaistow and Plaistow does not want to fix it. If the Town keeps it, the police department will have to call Plaistow to run the numbers. With the new system the officers would have the ability to enter a license number and get information immediately. After 5:00 PM the Town can only check local numbers and warrants and cannot access the state database. Mr. Innes brought up the safety issue and also informed the committee that he has a 10 page list of one week of police activity including an arrest on Lakeside Drive, a domestic dispute, suspicious vehicles. Atkinson police have solved several crimes including check cashing in multiple states and stealing copper pipes.

Karl checked the 3 most popular systems, Crime Track, IMC and one other. They all cost over \$100,000 each. Crime Star is giving them over \$4,000 in discounts to upgrade, included waiving the profit on the new modules mandated by the State Police. The laptops are military spec ruggedized laptops. The committee discussed linking with another town to share a system. Mr. Athanasiou said that the cost is for the licensing and in addition, Plaistow and Salem use different software and they would have to pay a 3rd party vendor to change the data at the Atkinson Police Department to the system that Plaistow uses which could cost \$100,000 or more. There are also legal ramifications. There is a database conversion to upgrade the current system. Upgrading to Crime Star would entail a one time purchase of \$41,600 and ongoing software support costs would be \$4800 per year, including 4 cars, an upgraded system inside the police department and direct communication from each car to the state police. Mr. Smith asked if that was for one year or two. Mr. Athansiou said that if the Town paid for the system over 2 years, the cost would be \$19,100 for the 1st year and \$22,500 for the 2nd year. Mr. Innes said the implementation costs are spread over two years but in the 3rd year, hardware software and implementation costs go down but maintenance goes up. The technology committee recommends that the system be implemented in one year. Sue Carroll asked how many cruisers were on the road at one time and asked if the system could be switched from one car to another. Mr. Athanasiou said they are but whenever you redock one of these systems it adds to wear and tear. Another problem is when there are more than 2 cruisers on the road and if what if it goes down. Mr. Innes says the main expense is the software package which costs the same no matter how many units there are. Mr. Morse asked if there were more questions for Mr. Athanasiou. Mr. Smith asked if the new system could be a warrant article and Mr. Morse said it was a possibility.

Member Craig Schuster left for a previous engagement.

**Fire Department** - Chief Murphy. Chief Murphy informed the committee that the budget is level funded except for the payroll line and the new gear line. The new gear is a one time purchase and explained to Chairman Morse why the department needed to purchase new gear. The department needs to replace 19 structural fire suits because the NFPA requires that the structural fire fighting gear has to be replaced every 10 years and is requesting to purchase new gear only for firefighters involved in structural fire fighting. The other line that has increased is payroll because the fire department has gone out on more calls. Chief Murphy also remarked that the Selectmen had already taken \$1000 out of the electricity line and \$6,000 out of the officers line and he expects to be overspent on both those lines.

**Homeland Security** - Chief Murphy explained that the increase was due to Code Red and because of the number of power outages. He is requesting to buy a kit that was made to house 25 people and could be used anywhere in town. Chairman Morse pointed out that the new equipment line was cut to \$500. The cost of the kit is \$2,000 and the Homeland Security budget was the best place for it. It would be stored at the Fire House and moved anywhere. The department received a \$60,000-\$70,000 grant to set up a generator at the library. The library could be used to house people in case of emergency. Sue Carroll asked about donations from the two churches in town. Chief Murphy said that donations would be good, and that the kit would fall under health and welfare. Chairman Morse asked about the \$4,000. Chief Murphy responded that it was for the Code Red system, which is a reverse 911. It gives the Town the ability to put out emergency information and the vendor already has 3000 numbers in their database. There is also a program for making safety checks and weather warnings which could be added next year. Sue Carroll informed Chief Murphy that she would approach the churches to request a donation to buy the kit.

The Committee discussed when the next meeting should be and decided to have a meeting next week, Tuesday, December 11, 2012 at 7:00 pm to adjust the budgets. It will be a workshop and budget review meeting. There will be no input but Chairman Morse said that department heads are welcome to come but there will be no input.

**Buildings - Dave Weymouth** – Mr. Weymouth stated that the selectmen had made several drafting changes, the selectmen are trying to get work done this year. He is waiting for bids to replace the water heater at the fire station. For the Town Hall, the proposed budget was \$27,450. The HVAC was put off another year and the front entryway was completed this year bringing the 2013 budget down to \$6,500. General maintenance at the town garage was taken down to \$7,025. General maintenance at the police station is down. The wall in the SGT's office that was proposed to be taken down was taken out of the budget and the budget will be \$2,200. The budget was decreased from \$8,500 last year, the sidewalk was taken out and it is \$5000 this year. Library general maintenance was \$900 this year and is \$2,100 for 2013 because of a required pad for the handicapped at the front entrance. Mr. Weymouth stated that the generator is installed and should be up and operating by next week. He asked Diane to increase her propane consumption in order to run the generator once a week.

**Kimball House** - down to \$17,061. Pointing for the basement wall was taken out. That line may change because the wall is in worse shape than they thought. The mortar between the rocks is not stable. The town has a bid from another mason, Frances Daigle. He could not give a fixed price because he is not sure how long the job will take. He wants to do one section at a time because he is afraid if he tries to scrape out all the mortar at once the wall will collapse. Also the brick wall needs to be broom swept, sealed and coated. Mr. Innes has 4 vendors to give him prices for the basement.

**Pope Road General Maintenance** – spent \$3,000 in 2012 and most of the work has been done and the budget for 2013 is \$1200.

**Hearse House Maintenance** - \$5,000 proposed to side the houses, fix some of the rotted wood and the roof.

**Community Center** – general maintenance was \$2500 last year; this year it will be \$9,830. The roof was taken out of the budget, they are trying to get one more year out of it. The \$9,300 is to refinish the floor and do structural maintenance and put in carpets.

Conservation – East Road Building – proposed \$30,280 – security lighting was taken out and the budget is now down to \$1000 for maintenance, some lights are needed inside and some netting is needed in front because it is being damaged by soccer balls. Mr. Morse asked about construction at the East Road Building and Mr. Innes explained that with the remainder of the money from the warrant article, the town is expanding and fixing the parking lot. Mr. Innes explained that the building is used for storage for the lacrosse team. Eventually, it has been proposed to put indoor plumbing in the building for some bathrooms and a storefront.

Todd Barbera requested to address the committee that some unexpected revenues from the Town Clerks office of \$55,000, which is more than was expected. The committee discussed lowering the tax rate, additional revenue and if the town would purchase fire department uniforms this year.

Chairman Morse had one comment about the DEA agent, saying that instead of paying for him out of the part time line, a separate line should be created for the DEA agent. Mr. Barbera asked if that would be instead of the over time line and Chairman Morse said both were important. The rest of the committee agreed.

Minutes – The committee reviewed the minutes for the November 27, 2012. Chairman Harold Morse requested a Motion.

**Vice Chairman Bill Smith made a motion to accept the minutes with the proposed changes: Chairman Morse called the meeting to order, Mr. Ted Stewart was present, the committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Board of Selectmen put the highway department truck lease on the ballot as a warrant, Director Consentino's payroll was \$34,731. Member Wendy Barker seconded the Motion. Vote: 4/0. Members John Feuer and Craig Schuster were not present.**

The Committee discussed how to link the various budgets to the expenses column.

**Vice Chairman Bill Smith made a motion to adjourn. Member Sue Carroll seconded the motion. Vote 4/0 in favor with Members John Feuer and Craig Schuster not present. Chairman Harold Morse adjourned the December 4, 2012 meeting of the budget committee at 8:50 pm.**