

Town of Atkinson
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
December 18, 2012

Members Present:

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

Others Present:

Bill Innes, Town Administrator
Fred Childs, Board of Selectmen
Todd Barbera, Board of Selectmen
Chief Murphy, Fire Department

Chairman Harold Morse called the December 18, 2012 meeting of the Atkinson Budget Committee to order at 7:02 PM.

The committee reviewed the minutes for the December 11, 2012 meeting. Member John Feuer noted that on Executive section first page, voted against the selectmen's raise, should have been Member Craig Schuster voted against the selectmen's raise.

Member John Feuer made a motion to approve the amended minutes of the December 11, 2012 meeting of the budget committee. Member Sue Carroll seconded the motion. Vote: 6/0 in favor.

Fire Department

Chairman Harold Morse read through the lines of the Fire Department budget. Telephone proposed budget is \$5,250, down from last year. The Selectmen recommended \$4,500. The committee agreed with the recommendations of the selectmen.

Chairman Harold Morse continued to read through the fire department budget. Member Sue Carroll asked to discuss the education and conferences line. The committee discussed the line. There are new firefighters coming into the department. The committee agreed with the amount for the education and conferences line.

Uniforms - was originally budgeted at \$30,000 for new uniforms. Mr. Innes stated that the selectmen voted to move \$17,000 of the new equipment line to this year's budget so it can be dropped down to \$13,000. Mr. Barbera stated he thought it could be dropped to \$10,000. Chief Murphy explained why he still needs \$13,000 to complete the process of obtaining new uniforms for the department. The committee agreed with \$13,000. Vice Chairman asked about the line. There was no motion.

Chief Murphy requested to discuss salaries for officers and other personnel. It was overspent for 2012 at \$113,000 and the \$110,000 recommended by the selectmen will not be enough for 2013 because his payroll has increased with 3 new personnel. There are 39 members in the fire department. Fire department personnel get paid per call and for training nights, with the exception of the chief and the officers. Some of the money is reimbursed by FEMA, but, the department has to pay the members for their time during storms and other emergencies first. The average pay is \$1,500 to \$2,000 per member. Member Sue Carroll agreed with Chief Murphy's request.

Chairman Morse requested a motion. Member John Feuer made a motion to recommend adjusting the fire department officers/other personnel salary line to \$116,294, as proposed by Chief Murphy. Member Wendy Barker seconded it. Vote: 6/0 in favor.

The unit total fire department budget is adjusted to \$289,203. Changed lines were officers

Building Inspections - Chairman Morse read through the building inspections budget. The committee discussed the increase in the code officer salary is up \$5,000 to \$10,000. Selectman Barbera explained that the selectmen were planning on a bigger role for the code officer and they are looking for a replacement.

Homeland Security - The committee discussed the dues/subscriptions/memberships line is up from \$100 to \$4,000 in budgeted for 2013. This line is for Code Red which is a reverse 911 calling system and can also be used for notifications. Chief Murphy explained the benefits of a reverse 911 system. This is a yearly contract. Sue Carroll objected to the line. Member Craig Schuster pointed out that the school has a reverse 911 system. It has been used for weather in the past. The committee agreed to discuss the reverse 911 line at another meeting.

Mr. Innes informed the Board that the dispatch line should be increased to \$39,467 due to an increase in the contract. The committee agreed with the recommended change.

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Chief Murphy requested to discuss the new equipment line in homeland security which was changed from the \$2,500 proposed to \$500 and informed the committee that the fire association will be picking up the balance for the emergency kits.

Highway Department

The committee read through the highway department budget.

Member Craig Schuster requested to discuss the education line under engineering which increased from \$310 spent in 2012 to \$800 proposed for 2013.

Member Craig Schuster voted to recommend changing the education line, line 43112.850.00, under engineering change to \$600. Member Sue Carroll seconded the motion. Vote: 6/0 with all in favor.

Next the committee discussed the legal notices line. Member Barker informed the committee that the town has to comply with state rules regarding legal notices and they have to be published even if they go on the web site. Vice chairman Bill Smith pointed out that newspapers are archived and asked if notices on the web site are. Member Wendy Barker replied that some of them are.

Truck lease - \$13,000 was proposed. The committee already voted to reduce it to \$0. The selectmen recommended \$0, too.

Chairman Morse requested to discuss the sealer line No. 43122/680.05 and was in favor of \$15,000.

Member Sue Carroll requested to discuss the culverts line. The proposed amount is \$3,000.

Member Sue Carroll made a motion to reduce the culvert line to \$2,000. Member Craig Schuster seconded the motion. Vote: 5 in favor, one opposed. Member John Feuer opposed.

The committee returned to discussing the sealer line. The committee agreed with the proposed line and the recommendation of the selectmen.

The committee discussed the contract labor/equipment/summer line which has a \$1,000 increase. The committee agreed to go back to that line.

Tree removal at \$15,000. Member Sue Carroll asked why it was so high. Mr. Innes explained that there is a significant amount of trees that still need to be removed because of the storms.

Snow and Ice Control – the committee discussed and agreed.

The group total for highway budget committee recommended \$423,358, a decrease from the proposed budget of \$438,311. With highways and street lighting a total of 461,858 is a decrease from the proposed budget of \$476,611.

Recycling – Member Craig Schuster had a question on the custodial line and asked why the recycling center is manned 18 hours, and why it is open on Wednesday. Mr. Innes said he would ask the Road Agent how much the recycling center was used on Wednesdays.

Member Sue Carroll requested to discuss contract labor. Mr. Innes explained that it is the company that comes in to turn the piles and chip the wood. Chairman Harold Morse asked about the other professional services line. Mr. Innes explained that it is for hosting the hazardous waste turn in.

Member Sue Carroll asked if contract labor could be dropped to \$11,000. The committee agreed to come back to that line.

Solid Waste Disposal - Disposal contract is \$470,134. The committee discussed the new disposal contract and recycling.

Group Total Sanitation - \$505,958.

Health and Welfare – Member Sue Carroll asked to discuss charities, saying that charity should be a personal thing. Mr. Innes informed the committee that most of the charities have been approved through warrant article. Many of the charities provide a service back to the Town such as Community Health Services, Inc. and Rockingham Community Action. Member Craig Schuster asked how the Town determines how much to give to each charity. Mr. Innes explained that it depends how much the charity asks for. The American Red Cross asked for \$300 this year, in past years they asked for \$500. Chairman Morse pointed out that the amount of money given to each charity has changed. Member Barker asked if the committee could obtain the warrant articles or letters. Mr. Innes informed the committee that many of the letters were on the website. The committee discussed whether they could cut the amounts given to the charities. Mr. Innes pointed out again that many of the charities provide services to the Town such as Rockingham Community Action and Meals on Wheels. Chairman Morse said he had many letters from various entities if anyone wanted to look at them and asked how the committee wished to proceed. The committee agreed not to make changes at present and look into the issue later.

Animal Control – the committee read through the animal control budget. The committee did not recommend any changes.

General Assistance - Next the committee read through the general assistance budget. Chairman Morse asked why the line for rent increased \$2,000. Mr. Innes explained that the money is primarily used to help people with rent and food and he moved the money from the food line.

Recreation – the committee read through the recreation budget. Chairman Morse asked to return to General Assistance budget.

Grounds Maintenance – the committee discussed the increase in line 45202.730.00 – plantings: care of grounds: Mr. Innes explained it is primarily water costs. The selectmen took \$4000 out of professional services/care of grounds and added \$4,200 to plantings: care of grounds. They got rid of the water line.

The committee returned to the selectmen's budget, community center. Member Barbera asked if the increase was due to cleaning the grease traps. Mr. Innes explained that the increase is to increase the number of times the grease traps are cleaned from twice yearly to quarterly. Chairman Morse asked if the Town received any revenue. Mr. Innes informed him that the community center brings in around \$17,000 a year and Sun and Fun brings in around \$30,000 to \$40,000 to the town. The committee continued to read through the recreation budget.

Member Craig Schuster requested a group total for culture recreation. It is \$591,313, the same as the selectmen's recommendations.

Mr. Innes requested to return to care of grounds and informed the committee that he wanted to talk to Mr. Stewart about the changes in the care of grounds lines.

Conservation – a \$500 increase is for a recording clerk. The increase in the other professional services line is for more deed work because they have been buying more land. New equipment and maintenance line is up \$750 to buy equipment to maintain trails.

Long term debt principal – the same and interest is down.

The committee returned to the Executive Budget. The cost of printing town reports, line number 41301.550. The town printed 300 reports in 2012 and the Town ran out. Mr. Innes recommends printing 400 reports. The cost of printing an extra 100 reports is \$398. Member Sue Carroll asked if the town could print 350 reports. The cost for 400 reports would be \$4,898 instead of \$4,500. Printing 350 reports would cost \$4,799. Mr. Innes informed the committee that the people who request reports are mostly seniors. He is also reviewing using larger print and going to more pages. Chairman Morse asked if the town reports could be posted on line. Vice Chairman Smith stated he would change the proposed column and the Selectmen's column to \$4,898.

Member John Feuer made a motion in favor of printing 350 town reports. Vote: Members Craig Schuster, Sue Carroll, Member John Feuer and Vice Chairman Bill Smith in favor. Member Wendy Barker abstained. The budget committee recommendation will be \$4,799 for 350 reports.

Mr. Barbera returned to the committee and recommended that care of grounds should be left at the proposed amount; the change was due to an increase in the bid process and recommended the committee go with the proposed amounts. Mr. Innes said he would check and get back to the committee.

The committee returned to the Executive Budget - Town Administrator – line 41302.620 – office supplies is \$4,500. Mr. Innes explained that the town is now storing documents in plastic containers, there is not enough room for cabinets. They are planning on moving the two cabinets belonging to the planning committee to the planning office and buying two new cabinets. Mr. Innes would like to increase that line by \$2,880 to purchase the cabinets. Mr. Morse asked what type of file cabinet it was. Mr. Innes explained that it is a Hahn six drawer cabinet. Member Barker asked if any of the documents could be thrown away. Mr. Innes explained that many of them were permanent documents that have to be kept by New Hampshire law. Mr. Barbera is working on going to a document management system for digital archiving. Mr. Innes is meeting with a document management company to develop a strategy for moving away from paper to electronic filing. Vice Chairman Smith said that the proposed column would change to \$7,380. The selectmen's column would remain at \$4,500. Mr. Innes has not gone before the selectmen. Mr. Morse asked about used office supplies. Mr. Innes said he would try to find something used. Chairman Morse recommended putting half in.

The committee recommended putting in half the requested amount or \$1,440 for one filing cabinet. The budget committee column would change to \$5,940. There was no vote.

Member Sue Carroll requested to discuss line 41974855 – advertising, regional which is the money for Rockingham Planning Commission. Member Sue Carroll is concerned that property rights will be overstepped by regional planning boards. They are a gateway to sustainable communities and smart growth. She is opposed and wants it put on the record. Vice Chairman Smith shares her concerns. The committee discussed whether Rockingham Planning Commission had anything to do with the railroad yard. The committee discussed regional and federal oversight. Member Sue Carroll recommended that revenue for Rockingham Planning Commission be a ballot initiative. Selectman Barbera explained that the money is for a professional planner to assist the planning board and provide them with legal advice and have no legal authority over the planning board. Any recommendations the planning board makes has to be put to ballot. Chairman Morse pointed out that

Rockingham Planning helps write the state RSA's and are the best source of advice. Member Sue Carroll is in favor of removing the money from the budget for a number of reasons.

Operating Budget total, line 083 – Vice Chairman Smith has \$4,059,544 a 1.50% increase. Member Schuster has \$4,057, not far off. It is \$61,000 over the 2012 budget. Member Sue Carroll pointed out that a lot of the expenses for 2013 were shifted to 2012. 2013 estimated revenue will be up \$150,000 to \$200,000. Member Craig Schuster would like to bring the \$61,000 increase in the 2013 budget down to \$0. The budget committee number is \$40,000 less than the selectmen's number and the selectmen's number is \$170,000 less than the proposed. Some of the expenses were moved to the 2012 budget.

The committee discussed the next meeting dates. The workshop meeting is the January 8, 2012, the warrants meeting is January 10, 2012 and the public hearing is January 15, 2012. The Selectmen are voting on the warrants on January 7, 2012. The committee may have a workshop to deal with warrants beforehand. Mr. Innes stated that so far there are 82 warrants.

Member Craig Schuster made a motion to adjourn. Member Sue Carroll seconded the motion. Vote 6/0 in favor. Chairman Harold Morse adjourned the December 18, 2012 meeting of the budget committee at 9:00 pm.