

**.TOWN OF ATKINSON
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, October 7, 2014**

Members Present:

Chairman Bill Smith
Wendy Barker, Vice Chairman
Craig Schuster
Sue Carroll
Tom Mealey
Kay Galloway

Others Present:

Bill Innes, Town Administrator
Chief Brackett, Atkinson Police Dept.
Phil Consentino, Selectman
Ted Houlihan, Elder Services
Dave Williams, Station Manager

Chairman Bill Smith opened the meeting at 7:00 PM, Tuesday, October 7, 2014.

Police Department - Chief Brackett presented the Police Department budget.

Chief Brackett met with Sue Carroll to go over proposed increases in the budget. He asked if the Committee would like to go over the budget line by line or just the changes. The Committee agreed with just changes.

Chiefs Salary, Line Number 42101.110.01 is an increase. \$69,888 is the proposed salary per the contract.

Full Time Officers Pay (hourly), Line Number 42101.110.02 A decrease from \$262,370 budgeted last year to \$207,215 because an officer has been promoted to Sergeant. This brings the full time officer line down \$55,155.

Sergeant, Line Number 42101.110.06 \$68,005 was budgeted last year and will be \$125,604 this year due to the promotion of one full time officer to sergeant. The Police Department now has two sergeants.

Sergeants' Overtime, Line Number 42101.110.08 the budget request changed from \$4,568 to \$16,868, the increase of \$12,300 is for 2 sergeants. The sergeants are not just supervisors, they fill shifts and do investigations. There have been significant investigations over the last few months. The sergeants are the most experienced officers in the police department.

Ms. Barker asked how many full time officers were in the Police Department and Chief Brackett replied that there were the same number as last year.

Insurance, Line Number 42101.210.00 \$128,814 was budgeted last year. Chief is budgeting \$78,052. Only \$53,677 has been spent to date. The Police Department uses Teamsters Insurance, and they have a new insurance company with much lower rates.

Education/Training (supplies), Line Number 42194.850 the budget request increased \$300 due to absorbing the Animal Control Department.

Telephone, Line Number 42105.341.00 \$ 7,000 was requested last year but \$10,970 will be requested this year. The Police Department telephone system was not replaced with the rest of Town and is about 16 old. The auto attendant and voice mail do not work. Because the system is so outdated and technology has changed so much Chief Brackett went to Bayring and got a quote to change the system. The Selectmen approved the rate which went from \$232 a month to \$368 per month for the new phone system. The hardware is included. A trustee from the jail wired the building for them. The money for the hardware and rewiring came from the maintenance budget. The Chief's phone is included in the budget \$64 per month for a smart phone.

Physicals, Line Number 42105.350.00 has doubled from \$600 to \$1,200. It includes the cost of psychological testing and polygraphs.

Office Supplies, Line Number 42105.620 has increased \$200 due to transfer from the Animal Control budget.

Postage, Line Number 42105.625 has increased \$50 from \$1,000 to \$1,050 because of the transfer from the Animal Control budget.

Ms. Barker questioned the amount spent for postage. Chief replied that the Police Department gets petty cash every month or two months, including food for the trustee, 5 days a week. Postage stamps also come out of that fund. Almost all the money in the food account was used for other things.

New Equipment, Line Number 42105.740.00 went from \$5,000 to \$21,000. Chief is adding a \$16,000 radar display due to complaints of speeding vehicles. The Highway Safety Committee proposed that Chief get a bid for a radar display. It can collect data to show times that people are speeding. It does not take pictures of license plates. It has a solar panel. Chief went to two companies. Ms Barker informed Chief that because it's over \$5,000, he will have to get a bid. A Warrant Article might be better than requesting it from the budget unless there is a safety issue. Bill Innes responded that speeding is a big concern for the Highway Safety Committee. They will go to bid and would prefer for it to be in the budget. Ms. Barker replied that she would prefer it go to the taxpayers.

Cruiser Maintenance, Account Number 42109 The other new line at \$10,000 is for emergency equipment to equip a police vehicle. The detail account is used to purchase police vehicles. There is enough in the detail account to purchase a new cruiser, but not enough for the equipment to go with it.

Ms. Galloway asked Chief about the age of the cruisers. Chief responded that the department has two 2010 sedans with 125,000 miles on them. One 2012 explorer that he drives, one other 2012 explorer and one 2013 explorer..

Ms. Barker asked if all 4 vehicles have a laptop. Chief replied that the department will transfer one laptop to the new cruiser. A spare vehicle will go to Elder Services. Two cruisers went to auction. There are two Elder Services vehicles, one with 160,000 miles and one with 130,000 miles and depending on the condition of the cruiser, the department will transfer it to Elder Services and auction off one Elder Services or auction off the old cruiser. There will be no more than 5 vehicles in Elder Services

Cruiser Gas, Line Number 42109.635 Mr. Schuster asked about the gas vendor. Chief replied that the Police Department gets its gas from the Mobile Station on 125 in Haverhill. The department does not get tax back but gets a discount. The Selectmen are looking at gas vendors. A depot is opening in Kingston, too. Mr. Consentino mentioned that a Cumberland Farms account would save ten cents a gallon. Ms. Galloway mentioned that Plaistow is already getting gas from Cumberland Farms. Each officer would have his own pin tied to the cruiser and gas expense for each cruiser would be tracked. A separate account would need to be set up. Chief Brackett informed the Committee that they get plenty of detail from the Mobile Station.

Chairman Smith asked if there were any other questions. Mr. Schuster pointed out that there is a proposed total increase of \$30,000. There is a separate section in the Police Department budget for Animal Control. Some similar expenses like office supplies were moved from Animal Control to the Police Department budget. Salaries were left in the Animal Control section.

Sue Carroll pointed out that the cruiser lease line gone. Phil Consentino suggested leaving the line at a \$1 although there are no present plans to lease a cruiser.

Animal Control, Account Number 44191.110 - page 15 Chief Brackett presented the Animal Control budget. The Committee agreed to go over the changes. Some lines were moved.

Uniforms, Line Number 44191.870 went up \$400. Animal Control Officers are getting new uniforms so they can be identified.

Other changes have already been discussed. The total Animal Control budget went down .75 percent. It is .2 percent of the Police budget. The Committee pointed out that there is \$500 in the gas line. Chief informed them they would take it out. The lines for office supplies, gas, ammo, and training for firearms were merged into the Police Department budget.

Minor Equipment, Line Number 44191.630 Sue Carroll asked if the line which is budgeted at \$3,000 was taken out. Kay Galloway asked where dog registration fees go. Mr. Innes responded that they go into the General Fund. At one time they went to the Animal Control Officer. The \$3,000 budget is for a snare pole, Have-A-Heart traps and a chip reader. This year, he proposed to keep the minor equipment line the same. The 3 year average is \$2,100. Chief Brackett is

requesting to replace a rifle and a shotgun. He just got a chip reader and a snare pole the other day so have not shown up in budget.

Chairman Smith asked if there were anything else.

Legal Services, Line Number 42101.320.00 in the Police Department budget. Chief anticipates a decrease in legal expenses. He is working with Rockingham County and other police departments to share prosecution costs. They had a discussion, and all agreed Kingston and Atkinson pay too much. The Police Department can still have a contract for the same amount of money although Newton withdrew, there should be a decrease in that line. Towns in the agreement are Danville, Plaistow, Atkinson, Hampstead, Kingston.

Chief Brackett concluded his presentation.

Elder Services, Account Number 42151 Ted Houlihan came before the Committee to present the Elder Services Budget. The Committee requested Mr. Houlihan go through the budget line by line.

Mr. Houlihan would like to start with the rides. Mr. Houlihan anticipates a total of 1900 rides for 2014. In addition to the rides, Elder Services delivers and sets up medical equipment and delivers pharmaceuticals. Elder Services does not anticipate increasing the number of cars or drivers. Currently they have 5 cars. Elder Services defers all other appointments to medical appointments. The Committee discussed the number of days that rides are fully booked. Elder Services works with clients to find another time if no ride is available. They frequently double up, especially to Boston. They do not cap distance, but they have not gone farther than Portsmouth, Boston, Manchester, Concord and Leahy Burlington, Mass. They do not go to Portland.

A 2011 Ford Crown Vic came into service in May. Ms. Barker asked if Elder Services got another vehicle and which vehicle would they dispose of. Mr. Houlihan responded that #58 would probably be disposed of, but he is not sure. Bob Neal takes care of and logs everything for the vehicles. It would be one of the 2007 Crown Victoria vehicles. The Committee continued discussing a fifth car, and increases in vehicle costs. A fifth car and a dispatcher were never mentioned during budget season, they were added midyear.

Sue Carroll asked about the Atkinson Charitable Fund. Mr. Innes explained that it is for seniors in need. Mr. Innes gave some examples. One woman got a new burner. The cost was split between the Atkinson Charitable Fund, a private donor and the Lions Club. If someone sends in a check to Elder Services, if it is designated for the Trust, it goes into the Trust. It can only come out with approval from the Selectmen. It depends on how the person designates the donations. Some can go to the general fund depending on what the money is designated for. The Town no longer has a 501.3(c) account. They now have a separate bank account for Elder Services. They ask that the donor designate on the check that the money go to Elder Services. Although it is a free service, people frequently volunteer funds. Ms. Barker pointed out that the pamphlet should clarify that money donated to Elder Services goes to the Charitable Fund and then to seniors in need. It does not go to help keep the Elder Services Program going. The taxpayers fund the Elder Services Program. Mr. Innes agreed that people should be allowed to designate their money to how they want it spent, for example, vehicle maintenance, gas, salaries, etc.; or to the Atkinson Charitable Fund.

One idea was to put a sticker on the dashboard requesting donations. Mr. Houlihan does not want the drivers taking donations in the car, not even a cup of coffee. Mr. Innes suggested that they put an envelope in a car for donations. Mr. Houlihan pointed out that at one time there were two funds, the Town Fund and the Chief's fund. The Committee discussed how to channel funds donated to Elder Services to operable expenses rather than all going to the Atkinson Charitable Fund.

Elder Services gets its gas from the same place as the Police Department. Mr. Schuster asked how they define what vehicle they use. Cost per vehicle for gas is dramatically different. Gas for the Subaru Forester is much less than the 2011 Crown Vic. Mr. Houlihan replied that gas cost is not always factored in. He uses the Crown Vic for certain clients because it is easier for them to get in and out of it. The van is used for wheel chair clients.

Ms. Carroll pointed out the line for vehicle gas and maintenance shows 4 vehicles and the proposed budget is for 5 vehicles. Ms. Barker pointed out that the vehicles have government plates. Mr. Innes explained that government plates are significantly cheaper, the vehicles are owned by the Town and they do Town business. Insurance is also much cheaper and there is no charge for the tolls. 2010 census shows 26.4% senior population. The next census should be

around 33 to 34 percent. The Atkinson population is aging and people are living longer. Ms. Galloway asked if there was a rise in elderly seeking welfare services. Mr. Consentino explained that if a senior is in need, the funds are taken out of the Atkinson Charitable Fund. 20% of the seniors in Town use Elder Services but only 10% use the cars. The percentage is based on the number of seniors in Town. Ms. Barker asked if this were a service restricted to elderly or also for other disabled. Mr. Houlihan responded that other disabled people can use the services.

Mr. Schuster asked if the numbers should be 18%. The 120 number is up to date, the figure is about 45 per quarter or 180 per year. Mr. Houlihan gave the Committee members the latest copy of his budget proposal for 2015.

Elder Services is requesting a 35% increase over last year. Mr. Smith asked if Elder Services is planning a 35% increase for next year. Mr. Innes explained that the Selectmen made the decision to increase the number of vehicles in the middle of the year. The Board of Selectmen for this year probably will not. The Committee discussed why the Selectmen increased the number of cars and added a dispatcher and requested the money after the fact in 2014 and asked if Elder Services planned on adding more vehicles for 2015.

Mr. Innes agreed that Elder Services will allow drivers to accept donations and put brochures in the cars. Mr. Mealy remarked that he made a comment about stickers in the dashboards on a few occasions and they should be in the minutes. He also remarked that he is concerned that the money is not going where he wants it to. Mr. Consentino also agreed. Elder Services has received about 250 donations in the last few months, but the money will go to the Atkinson Charitable Fund, not to Elder Services. The Committee agreed that there should be a way for donors to designate funds to go to Elder Services.

Cable Operations, Account Number 45892: Dave Williams, Station Manager, came before the Committee and passed out his proposed budget. There is a significant increase to the budget. Most of the increase is in the salary lines. The other increase is in dues, subscriptions and memberships. Mr. Williams has two memberships.

Mr. Schuster asked if the salary increases are based on the number of tapings. Mr. Williams responded that the biggest increase is for pay raises approved by the Selectmen on September 10th. The other is for extra staffing because of the increase in the size of the Board of Selectmen. Because of the layout of the Board and the room, another camera is necessary. Equipment repair is used for anything that has to be sent out for repair. Mr. Consentino asked if the station has enough cameras. Mr. Williams that he may request a warrant article for another camera and fire suppression equipment. He is requesting robotic cameras and also more staff.

Traditionally, cable profits have gone into the general fund. At one time the money was earmarked for cable, but this is not true for any current agreements with Adelphia or Comcast. Money comes back from Comcast to the Town. At present, 100% of the money goes to the general fund. In order for the money go to Atkinson TV, there would have to be a warrant article. The Committee continued to discuss cable fees and how they are designated and spent. Mr. Consentino suggested that Mr. Williams bring up another warrant article that would designate the funds from Comcast to Atkinson Television. Three out of four warrant articles that Mr. Williams is presenting will come from the Capital Reserve Fund of Atkinson Television. The warrant article for new equipment will not.

Mr. Williams concluded his presentation.

Next week the Committee will review the Elections, Town Clerk, Highway Department, Recycling, Solid Waste, Recreation and Community Center, and Government Buildings budgets.

Minutes - deferred.

The next regular meeting of the Budget Committee will be Tuesday, October 14, 2014 at 7:00 PM.

Member Craig Schuster made a motion to adjourn the Tuesday, October 7, 2014 meeting of the Town of Atkinson Budget Committee at 9:10 PM. Member Sue Carroll seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0.