

**TOWN OF ATKINSON
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, October 20, 2015**

Members Present:

Bill Smith, Chair
Wendy Barker, Vice Chair
Sue Carroll
Peter Torosian
Tom Mealey
Harold Morse, Selectman Liaison

Others Present:

Barbara Snicer, Asst. Town Administrator

Chair Bill Smith called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Agenda: Review minutes, review budget

General Discussion: The Selectmen are in negotiations on health insurance. The "Cadillac tax" will be applied to the health insurance policies. It was mentioned that the taxpayers would pay half of the fine. The Committee discussed whether the taxpayers should pay the tax. It was suggested that the employees pay the fine or accept another health insurance plan. Ms. Snicer informed the Committee that the "Cadillac tax" is not a given, it is one of the options of the Affordable Care Act. Selectman Morse stated that there is a paragraph in the Police Union contract stating that if the tax is applied, the contract would have to be renegotiated.

The number of employees in Atkinson was also discussed. The Town now has 47 employees. There is concern that the Town will lose its small group status if there are more than 50 employees. Ms. Snicer explained that the number of employees is arrived at by first taking the number of full time employees, then adding all the part time hours and dividing by 40 and the Town is nowhere near approaching 50 employees. The Committee agreed to look at it.

Chair Smith asked what the goal for the budget should be for this year. A 0% increase was brought up.

Another issue is the Cemetery budget. The cost of a plot was discussed. Atkinson only charges \$300.00 for a plot and \$75.00 to open a grave. This is far less than other cemeteries. Mr. Pertuto Patuto is an active member of the Board of Trustees who volunteered many hours for many years and can no longer do the labor. This is why they are asking to hire another person for 10 hours per week. Also, they are asking to open up more land for the cemetery. The Town is required to bury its residents, but several members of the Budget Committee feel that the cost is too little. Ms. Snicer pointed out that the charges have doubled. The Committee discussed having plot owners pay the cost of maintenance. The Town does have a few perpetual care accounts. The former Cemetery Trustees stopped perpetual care because it was difficult to keep it straight. The new Trustees may initiate it again. Chair Smith suggested discussing this further when the Committee discusses the cemetery budget and asking the Cemetery Trustees come back. The perpetual care money is held in trust funds and only the interest can be used. It is used and is not part of the Town budget. The Cemetery is not open in the winter, however some people go into the Cemetery in the winter, and some people go every day.

The Committee returned to discussing a 0% increase for a goal. The proposed amount is a 7.9% increase. The Selectmen have voted for a 4% increase. These numbers are much lower than the initial numbers last year. Chair Smith suggested a 0-2% increase.

Mr. Mealey stated that the grand total does not take into account the grants from the Federal government. The grants are paid for by the taxpayers and totaled \$180,000. That number should be added to the bottom line. It would make the actual amount spent higher. Ms. Barker stated that it is Federal money. It was suggested that those numbers could be put in the budget for informational purposes.

Ms. Snicer reminded the Committee that it signed a request for an emergency appropriation of \$100,000. The emergency appropriation brings the 2015 operating budget total to over 4%. It was approved and goes into the tax rate calculation. If the money is not spent, it stays in the undesignated fund balance. The Committee

discussed the request for an emergency appropriation. Chair Smith stated that the Town Administrator informed the Committee that he was absolutely confident that the money would not be needed.

Chair Smith is in favor of an increase in a range of 0% to 2% in the 2016 Atkinson Budget. There was no increase for Social Security this year and there are many seniors in Town who are paying taxes. Pension recipients generally do not get increases and seniors with bank accounts are getting near zero interest, therefore it is hard to justify a big increase in the Town budget. Ms. Barker disagreed, there is an increase in too many set expenses such as FICA and health insurances. She is in favor of a 2% increase. She stated that a more logical approach would be to go through the budget line by line and see what the Committee comes up with. Ms. Carroll stated that there are a lot of costs the Town has no control over, and there is also a lot that can be cut. One is heat, the temperature in Town Hall could be lowered. The departments can be prioritized.

Mr. Mealey asked if the Town has changed to LED lights and Ms. Snicer replied **informed him** that as many as possible have been changed.

Mr. Mealey read aloud the letter requesting permission to expend \$105,870 in emergency funds. The request states that the money is to come from the undesignated fund balance which has \$1.450 million dollars and will not increase the tax rate.

Ms. Barker is concerned about the pay raises and the adjustments in pay. Last year, the Town gave a lot of raises and the Committee was told that the Town would start paying for performance in 2016. This year, the Committee was informed that everyone is getting a 2% COLA raise and some employees are also getting 1% merit increases. A mandated 2% raise does not give anyone an incentive to perform.

Another concern is the Library. The Trustees give the library a lot of money, but none of it is used to spend on budgeted items. It was suggested again that the Library close one day a week. Also, the Library could rely more on donations. Elder Services raises a lot of funds.

Mr. Torosian has a proposal from the Derry Fire Department that may save the Town money. He would like to go over it.

Minutes: - October 6, 2015, October 13, 2015, September 29, 2015 - deferred

October 6, 2015

- Correct to Sue Coppeta, Diane Heer, universal check
- Page 2 to Mealey not Mealy, universal check

Chair Bill Smith made a motion to accept the minutes of the October 6, 2015 meeting of the Town of Atkinson Budget Committee as amended. Member Peter Torosian seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

October 13, 2015

- Page 1 - Town Garage - take out "the majority of the increase was to replace the 2nd floor flooring" in the 3rd sentence and replace with, " the majority of the increase is under the general maintenance line for \$8,400. It is for waterproof lights; to paint, clean and pressure wash; and also to install a generator and switch."

Discussion: September 29, 2015 minutes have not been reviewed.

Member Sue Carroll made a motion to accept the minutes of the October 13, 2015 Atkinson Budget Committee as amended. Chair Bill Smith seconded the motion. All members of the Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Discussion of the Town of Atkinson 2016 Budget: The Atkinson Budget Committee discussed in what order the budget should be reviewed and reviewed the following lines. Ms. Barbara Snicer asked to clarify that the emergency funds requested from the undesignated funds will not raise taxes. The undesignated funds account cannot be reduced to less than \$1 million.

Chair Smith suggested reviewing lines that are not or do not need to be changed first, then starting at the top next week. The Committee will try to get through pages 1 through 6 next week.

Conflict of Interest Committee - Account Number 41305: The Atkinson Budget Committee decided to take \$100 from the Other/New Line in the of Conflict of Interest account.

Chair Bill Smith made a motion to remove \$100 from the Other/New Line of the Conflict of Interest Account Number 41305. Member Peter Torosian seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

The Committee discussed FICA and Medicare in the Conflict of Interest Committee budget.

Chair Bill Smith made a motion to correct lines 41305.220 - FICA and 41305.225 - Medicare in the Conflict of Interest Committee budget and reduce to \$6.20 .062% and \$1.45 .0145% respectively. Member Peter Torosian seconded the motion. All members of the Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

The new total for the Conflict of Interest Committee Account is \$211.00.

Moderator - Account Number 41402: The proposed amount for the 2016 Moderator Budget was \$13,951. The Selectmen recommended \$13,951.

Chair Bill Smith made a motion for the Budget Committee to recommend \$13,951 for the 2016 Moderator budget, Account Number 41402, the same amount as the Selectmen. Member Sue Carroll seconded the motion. All members of the Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Election Administration - Account Number 41403: There are several elections this year. The proposed amount for the 2016 Election Administration budget was \$5,081. The Selectmen recommended \$5,081.

Chair Bill Smith made a motion to recommend \$5,081 for the 2016 Election Administration budget, Account Number 41403, the same amount as the Selectmen. Member Sue Carroll seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Committee Support - Safety Committee - Account Number 41306.740: The proposed amount for the Committee Support 2016 budget was \$1.00. The Selectmen recommended \$1.00.

Chair Bill Smith made a motion for the Budget Committee to recommend \$1.00 for the 2016 Safety Committee budget, Account Number 41306.740 budget, the same as the Selectmen. Vice Chair Wendy Barker seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Energy Commission - Account Number 41307: The proposed amount for the 2016 Energy Commission budget is \$50.00. The Selectmen recommended \$50.00.

Chair Bill Smith made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$50.00 for the 2016 Energy Commission budget, Account Number 41307, the same as the Selectmen. Wendy Barker seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Auditing - Account Number 41502: This is a contract.

The proposed amount for the 2106 Auditing budget is \$13,200. The Selectmen are recommending \$13,200.

Chair Bill Smith made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$13,200 for the 2016 Auditing budget, Account Number 41502, the same as the Selectmen. Vice Chair Wendy Barker seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Assessing - Account Number 41503: Ms. Snicer explained that a statistical update has to be done every five years and is due in 2016. 3,000 property record cards need to be mailed out. These are contracted prices. The contract is in the Other Professional Services line and the Postage will be \$.50 per card.

The proposed amount for the 2016 Assessing budget is \$54,984. The Selectmen are recommending \$54,984.

Chair Bill Smith made a motion to for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$54,984 for the 2016 Assessing budget, Account Number 41503, the same as the Selectmen. Member Peter Torosian seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Budget Committee - Account Number 41509: The Committee discussed attending conferences. The cost is \$80.00 per person.

The proposed amount for the 2016 Budget Committee budget is \$862.00. The Selectmen recommended \$862.00.

Chair Bill Smith made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$862.00 for the 2016 Budget Committee budget, Account Number 41509, the same as the Selectmen. Member Peter Torosian seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Legal Services - Account Number 41531: Ms. Snicer informed the Committee that there are two issues, the telephone company suit and a Social Security issue. The line may be over expended in 2015. The Committee discussed the retainer. There was no vote.

Personnel Admin - Account Number 41552: Ms. Snicer informed the Committee that Workers Comp and Unemployment Compensation are out to bid. There was no vote.

Planning and Development Control- Account Number 41911: The proposed amount for the 2016 Planning and Development Control budget is \$16,852.00. The Selectmen recommended \$16,852.00.

Member Sue Carroll made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$16,852.00 for the 2016 Planning and Development Control budget, Account Number 41911, the same as the Selectmen. Chair Bill Smith seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Discussion: The Committee discussed the other professional services line. It is for Engineering and the consultant from Rockingham Planning Commission. Printing and Binding is for the Master Plan. Public Notices are requirements.

Zoning Appeals - Account Number 41913: The proposed amount for the 2016 Zoning Appeals budget is \$22,153. The Selectmen recommended \$22,153.

Chair Bill Smith made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$22,153.00 for the 2016 Zoning Appeals budget, Account Number 41913, the same as the Selectmen. Member Sue Carroll seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Member Tom Mealey made a motion to revisit the Zoning Appeals vote. Discussion: Mr. Mealey pointed out that only \$11,000 of the proposed 2015 budgeted amount of \$22,000 was spent, and suggested cutting the amount. Mr. Morse pointed out that more zoning appeals may be coming in 2016. Also, this account also generates revenue that goes into the General Fund.

The Committee decided to let the previous vote stand.

Ambulance - Account Number 42152: The proposed amount for the 2016 Ambulance budget is \$1. The Selectmen recommended \$1.

Chair Bill Smith made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$1 for the 2016 Ambulance budget, Account Number 42152. Member Tom Mealey seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Homeland Security - Account Number 42901: The proposed amount for the 2016 Homeland Security budget is \$650.00. The Selectmen recommended \$650.00.

Chair Smith made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$650.00 for the 2016 Homeland Security budget, Account Number 42901, the same as the Selectmen. Vice Chair Barker seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Street Lighting - Account Number 43163: The Committee had questions about the street lighting account. There is a \$10,000 increase. Selectman Morse informed the Committee that the Town pays a sum each month for each light. There is a fee for each light. The Committee requested that Ms. Snicer get more information. Going over to LED will save money in the long run. There was no vote.

Solid Waste Disposal - Account Number 43241: The proposed amount for the 2016 Solid Waste Disposal budget is \$425,502. The Selectmen are recommending \$425,502.

Member Sue Carroll made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$425,502 for the 2016 Solid Waste Disposal budget, Account Number 43241, the same as the Selectmen. Chair Bill Smith seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Recycling - Account Number 43234: The Committee agreed to discuss the Recycling budget after the 2% COLA raises were discussed.

Health Agencies - Account Number 44151: The Committee discussed reducing contributions to health agencies. The Sad Cafe was taken out. The Committee discussed Rockingham Community Action. There were objections to the Director's salary. Ms. Snicer informed the Committee that fuel assistance requests have increased and it is paid by Rockingham Community Action. The Committee agreed to discuss the health agencies budget at the next meeting. Selectman Morse pointed out that the Selectmen had already recommended some changes. The recommended Center for Life Management contribution was reduced to \$1.00 by the Selectmen. Selectman Morse pointed out that they were funded by the State and other agencies. There was no vote.

General Assistance - Account Number 44421: The proposed amount for the Town of Atkinson 2016 General Assistance Budget is \$18,500. The Selectmen are recommending \$18,500.

Chair Bill Smith made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$18,500 for the 2016 General Assistance budget, Account Number 44421. Vice Chair Barker seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Patriotic Purposes - Account Number 45831: The proposed amount for the Town of Atkinson 2016 Patriotic Purposes budget is \$1,430. The Selectmen are recommending \$1,430.

Member Sue Carroll made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$1,430 for the 2016 Patriotic Purposes budget, Account Number 45831, the same as the Selectmen. Chair Bill Smith seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Flags - Account Number 45832: The proposed amount for the Town of Atkinson Flags budget is \$3,300. The Selectmen are recommending \$3,300.

Chair Bill Smith made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$3,300 for the 2016 Flags budget, Account Number 45832, the same as the Selectmen. Vice Chair Wendy Barker seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Member Sue Carroll made a motion to adjourn the October 20, 2015 meeting of the Atkinson Budget Committee at 9:00 PM. Member Peter Torosian seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.