

**TOWN OF ATKINSON  
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING  
Thursday, November 19, 2015**

**Members Present:**

Bill Smith, Chair  
Wendy Barker, Vice Chair  
Sue Carroll  
Peter Torosian  
Tom Mealey  
Kay Galloway

**Others Present:**

Bill Innes, Town Administrator  
Robert Clark, Rockingham Planning Commission  
Jean LoPizzo, Elder Services Director  
Diane Heer, Library Director

Chair Bill Smith called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Agenda: Review minutes, review budget

**General Discussion:**

The current draft budget shows a 3.38% increase which is higher than the target.

Ms. LoPizzo requested to discuss the gas line which was reduced from to \$11,000 to \$8,256. She believes \$8,256 is too low. Year to date Elder Services has spent \$8,138. If Elder Services runs 70,000 miles a year. In 2014 Elder Services ran 60,000 and year to date they have run 62,000. Ms. LoPizzo projects 68,000 miles for 2015. The average miles per gallon is 17, at 70,000 miles per year, that makes 4118 gallons. Taking that number at 2.059 for gas, Elder Services is already over budget for gas. Looking at the median number and the savings on gas, \$10,000 would be the least amount that Elder Services would need for gas.

**The proposed amount for Elder Services Gas - Line Number 42151.635 was \$10,000. The Board of Selectmen recommended \$10,000. Chair Smith made a motion for the Budget Committee to recommend \$10,000. Member Kay Galloway seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.**

Discussion: Elder Services is going to the Selectmen with a recommendation for a new vehicle.

Member Carroll pointed out that in Line Numbers 42151.650 and 42151.660 in the Elder Services budget the numbers are reversed.

**Advertising Regional - Account Number 41974:** Mr. Robert Clark came before the Committee to briefly explain the mission of the Rockingham Planning Commission ("RPC"). He asked if it were true that the Budget Committee does not want to fund the RPC. Chair Smith explained that members of the Budget Committee are concerned about interference from the Federal level with property rights and Federal mandates. Ms. Carroll pointed out that there are some examples in New Jersey and New York where the Federal government has usurped property rights. Ms. Carroll explained that she is concerned that the end goal is eradicating private property. Mr. Clark explained that he believes that Ms. Carroll is concerned about HUD. The RPC receives no funds from HUD. There was one grant that RPC requested from HUD and participation was state wide. At present there are a couple of programs, one is examining all the culverts. Chair Smith asked if this were a Federal mandate. Mr. Clark responded that it was not mandatory. They will look at the physical characteristics and structural soundness, where water comes in and at the washout areas.

Next is the MSO, that is the water mandate. If Atkinson is not part of the RPC, the cost to Atkinson could be four times as much. The RPC will assist with the paperwork. Ms. Carroll stated that there are 28 states that filed a lawsuit to block the storm water mandate and perhaps a new governor will join the

lawsuit. It was pointed out that RPC also conducts training. Mr. Clark got involved because of the proposed train layover yard and he believes that if Atkinson were not a member of the RPC, the layover yard may have been put in Atkinson. Chair Smith asked if the RPC pays dues to the Federal government. He is concerned that some of the money is going to subsidize federal programs. As one example, for years Chair Smith would not subscribe to Cable TV because he did not like the programming. Mr. Clark stated he would check. Mr. Mealey asked about the EPA and if the Town has any guarantee that the Federal government will take over like they did with the EPA. Mr. Clark assured the Committee that he would be the first to inform them if problems arose. Ms. Galloway reiterated that the Town has the right to accept or reject the RPC recommendations. The Committee discussed how often the Town agreed with the RPC recommendations and some of their reports. Mr. Clark will get back to the Committee regarding contributions by the RPC to the Federal government.

**Library Admin - Account Number 45501**: Diane Heer appeared before the Board. There was a discrepancy in the Library FICA and Medicare accounts of \$180. Chair Smith corrected the Budget Committee amounts.

**Dispatch - Account Number 42992**: There have been no decisions on dispatch.

**Cemetery - Account Number 41951**: Vice Chair Barker reported about appropriation of funds for Perpetual Care. She explained that it is for care of plots that belong to people who pay for Perpetual Care. Flowers and shrubs that the owners plant are trimmed and flowers are placed on the graves on Memorial Day. Mr. Mealey stated that it is not what he believes Perpetual Care should be. Vice Chair Barker read RSA 289, Section 9 - Use of Trust Funds which explains the use of trust funds for cemetery plots. Vice Chair Barker explained that the Cemetery Trustees have been placing flowers on the graves on Memorial Day for over 50 years. Mr. Mealey insisted that they are spending the money on things that are not necessary such as flowers. The Committee discussed if Perpetual Care should be mandatory and the definition of Perpetual Care. Ms. Galloway informed the Committee that there are nine cemetery trust funds.

**Highway Department Tree Removal - Line Number 43122.890.01**: Mr. Torosian has a call into Unitil to see if they are willing to pay for tree cutting near power lines. Chair Smith would like a plan of what trees are going to be cut and when.

**Cemetery - Account Number 41951**: The increase is due to an added 10 hours in wages for grounds maintenance workers. The cemetery works are paid \$13.00 an hour, one employee works 30 hours and one works 10 hours.

**Police Department, Juvenile Officer -Line Number 42108.110**: the money is in the wrong line. Mr. Innes will have the Police Chief put the money where it belongs.

**Fire Department Electricity- Line Number 42201.410**: The Committee reviewed the electricity line for the fire department. It is a 30% instead of 21% increase. Mr. Innes explained that the \$13,000 proposed is based on 21% increase of \$10,666 which is \$12,917, rounded to \$13,000. For the propane line, the actual number is \$7,635 rounded to \$7,800. The Committee agreed not to change the lines. There was no vote.

**Fire Administration - Line Number 42201.430**: Mr. Mealey asked about the hydrants water contract. It is for hydrant maintenance. It covers all maintenance on all hydrants. Six hydrants are being added. Line Number 42202.430, hydrant maintenance in the Fire Fighting account at \$3,000 is to maintain the dry hydrants. It is to maintain fences and paint.

**Highway Department- Engineering, Other Professional Services - Line Number 43112.390:** \$10,000 was added to fund the storm water management study. The Budget Committee looked at the line again. Member Torosian suggested cutting the line for 2015 and revisiting the issue in a year.

**\$15,500 was proposed for Line Number 43112.390 - Highway Department, Other Professional Services - Engineer. Member Torosian made a motion for the Budget Committee to recommend \$10,500 for Other Professional Services - Engineer- Line Number 43112.390. Chair Smith seconded the motion. All members of the Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.**

**Library Admin - Account Number 45501:** The Budget Committee adjusted Library FICA, Line Number 45501.220, the correct total is \$14,456. Library Admin, Medicare - Line Number 45501.225.00 was also adjusted. The merit line does not change.

The increase in Other Professional Services, Line Number 45502.390.00 is due to back up charges for the second server which totals \$840. Mr. Innes explained that the IT contract is going out to bid for 2016 but the current contractor will probably be low bidder.

Next, the Budget Committee discussed Materials of Trade, Line Number 45501.670.00. Member Torosian asked if that line could be reduced from \$35,000 to \$33,000. Ms. Heer informed the Committee that the increase was put on the floor in the Deliberative Session in 2014, and it was put back in.

Chair Smith asked if it were possible for the Library to cut another .025%. Ms. Heer responded that as long as the other Departments were asked, she would try to find something. It was pointed out that the Library budget had only 1.93% increase.

**Highway Department:** The Committee discussed if any lines in the Highway Department budget could be reduced. The Committee discussed tree removal and if there is any coordination between the Highway Department and Unitil. Next, the Committee discussed snow removal. Mr. Innes explained that 2 contractors were taken out of the Contract Labor/Winter budget. The current amount proposed is less than the expenditures for the past two years. There is an increase in the line because the Road Agent is projecting more severe winters.

**\$140,000 was proposed for Line Number 43125.890, Highway Department, Contract Labor/Winter. The Board of Selectmen recommended \$120,000. Member Torosian made a motion for the Budget Committee to recommend \$110,000 for Highway Department, Contract Labor/Winter - Line Number 43125.890.00. Chair Smith seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.**

Vice Chair Barker asked about Signs and Line Painting at \$12,000. Sealing was also discussed.

The Committee returned to a discussion of asking the department heads to cut a certain percentage from their budgets.

**General Assistance - Account Number 44421:** The Budget Committee reviewed General Assistance. Mr. Innes stated that Line Number 44421.440 - General Assistance, Rent could be reduced.

**\$10,000 was proposed for Line Number 44421.440 - General Assistance, Rent. The Board of Selectmen recommended \$10,000. Chair Smith made a motion for the Budget Committee to recommend \$8,000 for Line Number 44421.440 - General Assistance, Rent. Vice Chair Barker seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.**

**Recreation - Account Number 45201:**

**\$2,000 was proposed for Line Number 45201.430.00 - Community Center, Equipment Maintenance. The Board of Selectmen recommended \$2,000. Member Sue Carroll made a motion for the Budget**

**Committee to recommend \$1,000. Member Torosian seconded the motion. All members of the Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.**

Discussion: The Committee agreed to ask the Recreation Director and come back to this line.

**Cable Operations - Account Number 45892:** The Committee discussed the fund for cable operations which currently has around \$180,000 and if the money could be used for other purposes. Vice Chair Barker agreed to look into it. Vice Chair Barker also asked about the salary lines. With the robotic cameras, the camera operators are no longer needed. Mr. Innes explained that the money is being used for producers.

The Committee returned to a discussion of requesting the department heads to look for reductions in their budgets.

**Street Lighting - Line Number 43163.410:** A 21% increase is \$51,512.

**\$52,703 was proposed for Street Lighting, Line Number 43163.410.00. The Board of Selectmen recommended \$52,703. Chair Smith made a motion for the Budget Committee to recommend \$51,512. Member Galloway seconded the motion. All members of the Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.**

**Recycling - Custodial Line Number 43234.120:** The Committee discussed the number of hours.

**Bookkeeper - Line Number 41501.110.00:** The Committee discussed the Bookkeeper salary. Vice Chair Barker explained that the overtime was because she has to work longer hours because she is on a learning curve.

**\$48,236 was proposed for Line Number 41501.110.00. The Board of Selectmen recommended \$48,236.00 Member Torosian made a motion for the Budget Committee to recommend \$46,236. Member Sue Carroll seconded the motion. The Budget Committee voted four in favor, one opposed and one abstaining. Vote: 4/1/1.**

The Committee agreed to ask all departments to try to reduce their budgets by 1%. Mr. Innes agreed, however, he stated that a letter would have to go out soon and it would have to be the same memo to all departments. Vice Chair Barker pointed out that many departments had already cut below a 2% reduction. The Committee continued to discuss areas where the budget could be reduced.

Mr. Innes pointed out that Atkinson was one of the wealthiest communities in New Hampshire. Chair Smith pointed out that holding down the tax rate increases the value of the homes in Atkinson.

Chair Smith will draft a memo requesting help from all departments to reduce their budgets by 1% and send it out this evening.

**Minutes: deferred**

**Member Galloway made a motion to adjourn the November 19, 2015 meeting of the Atkinson Budget Committee. Chair Smith seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.**

The next meeting will be Tuesday, November 24, 2015.