

**TOWN OF ATKINSON  
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING  
Tuesday, November 22, 2016**

Members Present:

Bill Smith, Chair  
Wendy Barker, Vice Chair  
Peter Torosian  
Kate Galloway  
Susan Carroll  
Tom Mealey

Others Present:

Chief Brackett, Police Department  
Don Roberts  
Diane Heer, Library Director  
Ted Stewart, Road Agent

Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.

**Agenda:** Review Budget, review minutes

The Budget Committee reviewed the 2017 budget.

**Police Department**

Hardware Purchases – Line Number 41506.740.00: The big item is the laptops for the patrol units. They are 5 years old and are scheduled for replacement. The old units cost \$1800 each. They are Dura books. The Department is requesting an upgrade to 5 patrol tablets, one for each patrol car. They will cost about \$4,000 each. The State has tested the workbooks and is using them currently. The State is also urging Towns to considering buying them for their police departments.

Mr. Roberts explained that the laptops in the cruisers now are mounted on a tray over the radios. In order for the officer to use it, he has to look down. The biggest advantage is, the tablets mount on the dashboard at eye level. In case of an accident, the keyboard will swing away and can be removed for the officer to type on the steering wheel. It does not have voice recognition. The cell cards and GPS receivers are built in. There is also a 2D bar code scanner and a touch screen.

Highway Safety has grant money available and would do a 50% match. The total cost of the tablets would be \$20,000 and with the Highway Safety grant the cost would be \$10,000. The Police Department can apply for a matching grant when the proposed tablets are approved.

Chief Brackett informed the Committee that he could write a grant for both laptops and tablets.

Ms. Barker suggested that Mr. Roberts write a warrant article for the tablets making it contingent on a \$10,000 grant from the State.

The tablets have been in the market for a couple of years and are made by a company called Gamma.

Software Purchases – Line Number 41506.730.00: Mr. Roberts stated that the Department would like to purchase some software called Easy Street Draw that will diagram an accident to attach to the accident report. Now, the officer draws a diagram of the accident and scans it into the computer. The units are \$219 each. Ms. Barker stated that the proposed budget figure was \$1,320 for six licenses.

Ms. Carroll asked about voice recognition and Mr. Roberts stated that the State does not use it.

For comparison, a safe figure for the laptops is \$2,000 including the power cord and GPS antenna. Mr. Torosian asked if it would be better to get laptops with GPS built in. The officers like the touch screen.

The Police Department cannot apply for the grant early. Mr. Roberts has spoken to people at the Highway Department and is fairly sure that the grant money is available.

Chief Brackett requested to review other budget items.

Police Admin – Account Number 42101: Chief Brackett informed the Committee that he is requesting to promote one sergeant to lieutenant.

Education/Training – Account Number 42104: Chief Brackett informed Committee that the Department ordered new guns in May but has not gotten an answer about when they will come in. They have been waiting for the new guns to come in before training. The money will be spent by the end of November. The four hour fire arms class will be conducted as well as other training. Next year, the Department will train on the new guns as soon as they come in, so the training budget will be spent early.

Support Services – Account Number 42105:

New Equipment – Line Number 42105.7410.00: The proposed amount of \$13,115 is for one new base radio station at \$4,335, 2 portable radios at \$6,400 and to lease the copier machine at \$2,380.

Cruiser Maintenance – Account Number 42109: The two new cruisers will not reduce the cost of cruiser maintenance. Four of the cars retained have over 50,000 miles and will need not only regularly scheduled maintenance but also there is the possibility of unexpected breakdowns. Chief Brackett is requesting \$13,400.

The Police Department uses about 10,000 gallons of gas per year. The average for the last three years is \$27,000. Chief Brackett is budgeting \$2.50 per gallon, which comes to \$25,000.

Member Torosian asked Chief Brackett if it were possible to stagger cruiser purchases so the Department does not buy two per year. Chief Brackett agreed.

## **Library**

Library Admin – Account Number 45501: Ms. Heer gave the Budget Committee members a line by line spreadsheet of proposed 2017 expenditures.

Library Director – Line Number 45501.110.01: Mr. Barker asked about the Library Director contract. Ms. Heer informed her that the contract and benefits for the Library Director have been approved by the Trustees. It will be \$71,160 for the Library Director salary. The Board of Trustees did an analysis of Library Director salaries in comparable towns to arrive at the figure for the Library Director salary. The contract is reviewed every two years.

Benefits dropped 3.42%.

IT went up for 2017 but it is contractual. Other things that are contractual are heat and electricity.

Assistant Library Director – Line Number 45501.110.02: The Trustees have also approved the Assistant Library position as an exempt position, so the salary will have to be the minimum amount for an exempt position mandated by the Federal Government.

The State RSA states that the Library Board of Trustees governs the library.

Heat- Line Number 45501.411.00: Next, the Committee asked about heating costs. Mr. Phair informed the Committee that the bids will be awarded on Monday. Ms. Heer informed Mr. Torosian that she will adjust the amount if the bid is lower. 9200 gallons is the average amount of fuel that the library uses. Ms. Heer controls the heat through a computer. When the meeting room is not being used, the heat is turned down. The rest of the library is on one control.

The other issue is the controls unit for the heat. The IT vendor wants the XP unit that controls the heat off the network because it is a security risk. The present unit is 8 years old. Ms. Heer informed the Committee that the vendor can log in remotely if there is an issue. Chair Smith questioned why the heating system at the library has to be connected to the unit or the internet. Ms. Heer explained that there is no thermostat for the building; all the heat controls are on the computer. Everything is web based. A new unit will cost \$4,500.

### **Highway Department**

Administration – Account Number 43111:

Road Agent – Line Number 43111.130.01: Mr. Stewart informed the Committee that the Selectmen recommended the salary for the Road Agent at \$57,200 for 2017. It was \$52,000 for 2016.

Mr. Torosian stated that the salary for the Road Agent should go to warrant because it is an elected position.

The Road Agent explained that when he was elected the first time, the Selectmen cut his salary by 20% after he was elected even though the voters approved it. Mr. Stewart went to the Attorney General and was informed that the Selectmen have complete discretion over the salary for the position.

Mr. Stewart explained that the Town Administrator did a comparison of 11 Towns in New Hampshire with the same population and the Road Agent salary in Atkinson was the lowest. The increase will make him the second lowest.

Mr. Stewart stated that he is comfortable with the Road Agent salary going to warrant.

Ms. Carroll stated that it should not matter what other towns pay.

The Selectmen asked Mr. Stewart if he would like to continue with the election process or would rather have it be an appointed position.

Mr. Stewart explained that in 2015 he was a part-time employee whose salary was weather dependent. In 2016 the position changed to full time. Mr. Phair explained that the Road Agent position is one of the higher positions in the Town.

Mr. Stewart explained that in 2014, he was part time and renting all equipment to the Town. Now, the department has been capitalized, Mr. Stewart is no longer renting equipment to the Town with the exception of his pickup truck and he has an annual salary. It is a conflict of interest for him to rent equipment to the Town.

Ms. Barker asked about the pickup truck that Mr. Stewart rents to the Town. Mr. Stewart explained that the Town has not yet purchased a pick up. There will be a warrant article to purchase a truck to replace the 2008 truck that did not get funded in 2016. A pickup truck for the Road Agent is in the long range plans to be purchased by the Town but not for 2017. Mr. Stewart charges the Town \$32 a day for the use of his pickup truck. The total amount is \$7,200 yearly. The truck is also compensated under the contract labor line \$53.75 hourly when it is used for plowing. The Road Agent will be paid \$32.00 per day for his truck except on days when he is plowing and he will receive the contract rate for plowing. The Road Agent plows with the new Town truck and puts a driver in his truck to plow.

The 2% COLA increase will not be included in the proposed rate for the Road Agent.

Assistant Road Agent – Line Number 43111.110.00: Ms. Barker asked about the 17% increase for the Assistant Road Agent. Mr. Stewart explained that the Town just hired a new Assistant Road Agent. He will not be taking Town insurance. His hourly rate will be higher, but he will not

take the Town insurance. Mr. Phair explained that the Assistant Road Agent has a three year agreement. He is required to sign a waiver every year for health insurance. The wages for the Assistant Road Agent are \$57,000.

Overtime for the Assistant Road Agent is \$3,000.

Custodial – Line Number 43234.120.00: The previous custodian found a job for Continental Paving. The increase is because the custodian is being replaced with a higher paid employee. The Road Agent is attempting to hire a new custodian.

Tree Removal – Line Number 43122.890.01: Mr. Stewart explained that there is still a lot of tree work, removing dead trees and trees in the right of way. There are still a lot of trees in the right of way. Mr. Torosian has spoken to Unitel, and they will take out any tree that is a threat to the line. Mr. Stewart informed the Committee that he calls Unitel about trees that are a threat to the power lines. Mr. Stewart explains that he also cuts trees that block sight distance.

Equipment Repairs – Line Number 43122.430.00: This line had a negative balance of \$2,631. The warrant article for the truck did not pass. There was a warrant article on a separate line for truck repairs. Mr. Stewart is not sure how the bookkeeper is accounting for the equipment repair expense line and the money in the warrant article.

Recycling – Account Number 43234:

Contract Labor – Line Number 43234.890.00: It has gone from \$3,000 to \$10,000. The proposed amount is for brush grinding. The company will not take the chips anymore.

Signs and Line Paintings – Line Number – 43122.875.00: Mr. Stewart is requesting to increase the line so that he can paint sidewalk lines starting at Maple Avenue to the Fire Station for an evacuation route from the school to the fire house. The Town paid to have the road widened from Maple Avenue. Academy Avenue, Main Street and Sawyer are State owned, but maintenance is shared by the Town. Typically, the Town does the winter maintenance and the State does the summer maintenance. This year, the Selectmen gave approval to cut brush on the State roads.

Chair Smith asked Mr. Phair for the new budget numbers for the Highway Department. \$7200 for the Road Agent truck is in the contract labor line. Overtime for the Assistant Road Agent is \$3,000. The Road Agent is salaried and receives no overtime.

Snow and Ice Control – Account Number 43125: The Budget Committee discussed contract labor and salt/winter. The hourly rate is \$53.75 for contract labor. Mr. Phair informed the Committee that this is the standard rate.

**Minutes:** November 10, 2016, November 15, 2016

November 10, 2016

**Member Torosian made a motion to approve the November 10, 2016 minutes of the Atkinson Budget Committee as amended. Member Carroll seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor. Vote: 5/0/0.**

November 15, 2016

**Vice Chair Barker made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 15, 2016 meeting of the Atkinson Budget Committee as amended. Member Torosian seconded the motion. All members present with Member Carroll abstaining voted in favor. Vote: 4/0/1.**

**Member Torosian made a motion to adjourn the November 22, 2016 meeting of the Atkinson Budget Committee at 9:35 PM. Member Carroll seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Vote: 5/0/0.**

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