

**TOWN OF ATKINSON
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, December 20, 2016
AMENDED**

Members Present:

Bill Smith, Chair
Wendy Barker, Vice Chair
Peter Torosian
Susan Carroll
Tom Mealey
Kay Galloway
Jason B. Grosky, Selectman Ex-Officio

Others Present:

Alan Phair, Town Administrator
Phil Consentino, Selectman
Jim Cobb, Library Trustee
Russell Wolff, Computers

Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

Agenda: Review budget, review minutes

The Budget Committee reviewed the 2017 budget.

The Budget Committee discussed raises for Town employees. Chair Smith informed the audience that the 2016 budget included \$20,140 for merit lines. The Selectmen chose to give COLA raises. The Budget Committee took out the funds for the merit raises. Then, the Budget Committee took out the funds for the COLA raises. Chair Smith stated that the appraisal system at Bell Labs had 3 components: One was COLA raises; the second was experience; and the third component was merit.

Then, Chair Smith explained that the Budget Committee received an email from the Town Clerk asking why the Committee took 2% out of the Town Clerk salary line. Chair Smith explained that the Committee took 2% out of many salary lines assuming it was a COLA increase. Ms. Cavalear informed Chair Smith in her email that she has been Town Clerk for 14 years and she should get a raise for her experience. Selectman Consentino informed the Committee that Town employees get longevity increases every five years.

It was remarked that the Town Clerk and the Assistant Town Clerk received a raise in 2016. People in the private sector did not receive any raises while the cost of insurance and taxes increased. Town employees have received a raise every year.

Selectman Grosky stated that Atkinson is a wealthy town although there are many seniors and many who are not wealthy.

The Committee discussed requests to the Town for welfare from Town residents.

Selectman Consentino stated that it is cheaper to give a raise than to hire an experienced employee or train someone.

Merit Line – Line Number 41301.110.04: \$20,140 was budgeted for 2016. Chair Smith proposed that the funds for the merit line be replaced to the merit line. Selectman Consentino agreed. Member Torosian stated that the Budget Committee is looking out for the taxpayers and would prefer that the money for Town employee raises be taken from other budget items. Member Galloway would recommend \$20,140 be put back into the merit line and request the Selectmen consider any raises as merit and/or longevity. Mr. Phair informed the Committee that only full time employees receive longevity raises. Chair Smith stated that part time employees should receive merit raises and also longevity raises. Member Galloway pointed out that there is a formal appraisal system for Atkinson Town employees and requested a briefing from the Town Administrator. Chair Smith also suggested a briefing on performance appraisals for next year. Selectman Grosky stated that he recommended COLA raises after reviewing all

employee appraisals and found that all employees were virtually all in the same range. This and the number of departments made giving merit raises difficult. Chair Smith asked Selectman Grosky if he and the Town Administrator attempting to give the raises rather than having the Department heads give the raises. Selectman Grosky stated that looking at the number of departments, take out the Town Administrator, Police Department, the Fire Department, the Road Agent and the Library. These positions are either contract or union. The Fire Department members are paid on an on call basis. This leaves the Town Clerk and the Tax Collector departments. The union contracts and the contracts with other Town employees are negotiated with the Selectmen. The Police Chief and his top two subordinates are not part of the police union contract. The Committee discussed whether the money for raises could be given to Department heads to allocate to the people in their departments.

Mr. Cobb asked if the Budget Committee would restore the funds for merit raises for Library employees, too.

Chair Smith stated that he approves of allocating funds for raises for longevity and merit. Mr. Mealey stated that the Committee voted not to allocate any funds for raises, either COLA or merit raises. The Committee voted to eliminated \$20,140 and the funds for a 2% COLA raise from the salary lines. Mr. Phair informed the Committee that the majority of Town employees received raises aside from the COLA increases. Only a small percent of employees received COLA raises. Chair Smith stated that the merit raises should go to other employees, both part time and full time.

Chair Smith made a motion to restore \$20,140 to the merit line, number 41301.110.04. Member Galloway seconded the motion to restore \$20,140 to the merit line, number 41301.110.04.

Member Mealey made a motion to change the amount for the merit line to \$10,070. Member Carroll seconded the motion.

Discussion: Member Torosian agreed and stated that the money should be found in other areas of the budget. Mr. Phair stated that there were several reductions in other areas of the budget and Mr. Mealey stated that it should be stated in the budget.

Six members voted in favor to restore \$10,070 to the merit line, number 41301.110.04 and one member abstained. Vote: 6/0/1.

Member Galloway suggested that the funds for merit increases in the Library budget be restored as well.

Member Galloway made a motion to restore \$2,406 to the Library merit line, number 45501.110.04. Selectman Grosky seconded the motion.

Discussion: Member Carroll recommended restoring \$1,203 to the Library merit line because half the amount was restored to the merit line in the Executive budget.

Member Carroll amended the motion by Member Galloway and recommended that the Atkinson Budget Committee recommend \$1,203 to the Library merit line, number 45501.110.04. Member Mealey seconded the motion. The Budget Committee voted four in favor, two against and one abstaining to recommend \$1,203 to the Library merit line, number 45501.110.04. Vote: 5/2/1.

Computers – Account Number 41506: Mr. Wolff requested to speak to the Budget Committee regarding changes to the Computer Budget.

Software Maintenance – Line Number 41506.430.00: Mr. Wolff explained that the software maintenance budget was over expended in 2016 by \$7,000 because of AVATAR and requested

an increase. \$26,250 was proposed and the Selectmen recommended \$26,250. Selectman Grosky explained that Mr. Russell tried to present the amended amounts to the Selectmen but it was too late so the Selectmen recommended that he go right to the Budget Committee. The IT Committee is now proposing \$36,445. The amount was not added to the line in 2015 and 2016. The invoice just came in so the \$6,000 has to be paid for AVATAR in 2016. Mr. Wolff would also like to add more funds for Rec Desk and software for the Town Clerk. This would make an increase of \$10,000. Planning, Town Clerk and Assessing all use AVATAR. AVATAR is used for all municipalities. Vice Chair Barker stated that Mr. Wolff is proposing another \$6,000 for AVATAR plus \$3,480 for REC DESK. The Town Clerk is requesting another card reader and Interware for \$4967.40. The total increase is \$36,445.

Member Carroll asked if Mr. Wolff also wants to add \$4,000 to the hardware maintenance line.

The total proposed 2017 Computer budget is \$87,945 and 2015 was \$76,752 for a total increase of \$11,193. The Budget Committee had recommended \$82,518 in their original vote, making the new proposed amount approximately \$5,500 more. The amount is distributed differently on the other lines.

Hardware Maintenance – Line Number 41506.430.01: The proposed amount was \$1 and \$200 is the amended proposed amount.

Software Purchase – Line Number 41506.730.00: The original proposed amount was \$2500 has not changed.

Hardware Purchase – Line Number 41506.740.00: \$10,000 was recommended by the Budget Committee and this amount remains the same.

New Projects – Line Number 41506.740.01: \$1,000 was proposed by the IT Committee, \$1,000 was recommended by the Selectmen and by the Budget Committee.

Other/New – no line number: Mr. Wolff is proposing \$1,800 for a webmaster stipend. Chair Barker stated that she has been acting webmaster since 2006 and has not asked for any payment. She feels that webmaster duties should be done pro bono. If not, an IT Department should be developed. It is \$15 per hour for 10 hours per week. Chair Smith asked who the Webmaster would be. Selectman Grosky stated that the Selectmen feel that Mr. Wolff should be getting a stipend for running the website. Mr. Wolff stated that in addition to his work as webmaster, he has been updating the Town Facebook page and making videos so he deserves a merit of \$1,800. Chair Smith polled the Committee. One member was for a webmaster stipend and five were opposed. There was no motion.

Member Torosian asked if there were a County website that Atkinson could use. Vice Chair Barker stated that most Towns the size of Atkinson have a volunteer webmaster. Most large Towns use a contract web service, Virtual Town Hall which costs about \$6,000 to design a web site and another \$2,000 to maintain it. Vice Chair Barker stated again that the webmaster position should be pro bono.

Chair Smith stated that the new proposed amount is \$87,945, less than the original total proposed amount of \$94,018, but more than the \$82,518 originally recommended by the Budget Committee.

Chair Smith asked the Committee about the other adjustments. Member Carroll pointed out that \$45,267 was originally proposed for IT/Professional Services, Line Number 41506.890.00. The Budget Committee recommended \$42,767. The new proposed amount is \$36,000.

Chair Smith summarized the changes in the Computer unit budget. The total proposed amount is \$87,945.

\$87,945 is the new proposed amount for the total computer unit. Member Galloway made a motion for the Budget Committee to recommend \$87,945 for the computer/IT Department. Selectman Grosky seconded the motion.

Discussion: Vice Chair Barker would like to reject the \$1,800 for the webmaster stipend and the webmaster stipend line and remove \$1,000 from new projects, line number

Vice Chair Barker made a motion to remove the Webmaster Stipend line and amount of \$1,800 from the Other/New line and \$1,000 from New Projects, Line Number 41506.740.01 and from the total Computer budget. Member Carroll seconded the motion. The Atkinson Budget Committee voted four in favor, two against and one abstaining. Vote: 4/2/1.

The new proposed amount for the IT/Computer unit, Account Number 41506 is \$87,945. Vice Chair Barker made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$85,145 for the total Computer unit. Member Carroll seconded the motion. The Atkinson Budget Committee voted five in favor and two opposed to recommend \$85,145 for the total Computer budget.

Discussion: Mr. Wolff requested to add \$1 for New Projects, Line Number 41506.740.01.

Chair Smith made a motion to increase the amount recommended by the Budget Committee by \$1 to \$85,146. Member Torosian seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor. Vote: 7/0/0.

HEALTH AGENCIES:

Special Purpose Programs – Account Number 44156:

\$5,450 was proposed for the Vic Geary Center, Line Number 44156.350.01. Member Mealey made a motion for the Budget Committee to recommend \$2,500 for the Vic Geary Center. Member Carroll seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Phair informed the Committee that the Vic Geary Center serves over a 1000 hot meals to Atkinson residents through the coalition program with Meals on Wheels. Vice Chair Barker stated that the Vic Geary Center is redundant to Atkinson Elder Services. Jason stated that \$2,500 is a very small amount to pay for 1000 meals a year. Mr. Phair clarified that the Vic Geary Center serves over 1000 meals at the Center. Vice Chair Barker stated that the services are redundant to the Atkinson Elder Services program. Mr. Grosky stated that \$2,500 is not much to pay for 1000 meals per year. Vice Chair Barker stated that the Town is donating \$3,600 to Meals-On-Wheels.

The Atkinson Budget Committee voted three in favor, two opposing and two abstaining to recommend \$2,500 for the Vic Geary Center. Vote: 3/2/2. The motion passes.

A Safe Place – Line Number 44156.350.04: Member Carroll asked to discuss the line. Mr. Phair informed the Committee that Sexual Assault Support Services, Line Number 44156.350.02 was combined with Line Number 44156.350.04 and recommended removing the Sexual Assault, Support Services Line and renaming Line Number 44156.04 to Haven.

The total proposed amount for Health Agencies, Account Number 44156 is \$26,227. The Board of Selectmen recommends \$26,227. Member Torosian made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend the Health Agencies unit total as amended. Member Galloway seconded the motion. The Atkinson voted five in favor and one opposed. Vote: 6/1/0. The motion passed.

RECREATION – ACCOUNT NUMBER 45201:

Sun 'n Fun Director – Line Number 45201.120.01: The Committee discussed 2% COLA increases for the Recreation Department. This would make the Director salary \$3,816. The 2% reduction was already voted. The Committee discussed whether the 2% increase is for hours, not COLA. The Budget Committee agreed to recommend \$3,937. There was no vote.

Sun 'n Fun Assistant Director – Line Number 45201.120.02: The Budget Committee agreed to recommend \$6,000. There was no vote.

The total proposed amount for Recreation, Account Number 45201 is \$80,931. The Board of Selectmen voted to recommend \$80,932. Member Torosian made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$80,932. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee voted in favor. Vote: 7/0/0.

COMMUNITY CENTER – ACCOUNT NUMBER 45208:

Senior Rec Coordinator – Line Number 45208.110.01: The Budget Committee discussed the Community Center Director Salary. It is a 5.31% increase. Mr. Phair informed the Committee that it is a longevity increase, not a COLA increase. The Budget Committee made no further recommendation.

The proposed amount for the Community Center unit total is \$70,797. The Board of Selectmen recommends \$70,797. Member Galloway made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$70,797 for the Community Center Budget. Chair Smith seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. Vote: 7/0/0.

Highway Department:

Cleaning and Maintenance – Account Number 43122:

Tree Removal – Line Number 43122.890.01: \$17,000 was the original recommended amount.

Valley Tree Service was the successful bidder. The bid was for a rate, not a total amount. There is no change.

Sealers – Line Number 43122.680.05:

The bid went to Nicom at \$17,000, which is lower than originally expected.

The proposed amount for Sealers, Line Number 42122.680.05 was \$19,000. The Board of Selectmen recommends \$19,000. Member Torosian made a motion for the Atkinson Budget Committee to recommend \$17,000 for Sealers, Line Number 43122.680.05. Member seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee voted in favor. Vote: 7/0/0.

There was no motion for the total recommended amount for Cleaning and Maintenance, Account Number 43122 or for the total highway department budget.

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE:

Professional Services/Care of Grounds – Line Number 45202.890

The proposed amount for Care of Grounds, Line Number 45202.890.00 is \$17,000. The Board of Selectmen recommends \$17,000. Chair Smith made a motion for the Budget Committee to recommend \$20,500. Selectman Grosky seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee voted in favor. Vote: 7/0/0.

Next the Committee discussed fertilization. Mr. Phair informed the Committee that Pro-Tec was the approved bidder at \$17,000.

Chair Smith made a motion to approve the total Atkinson Town Budget as amended. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee voted in favor. Vote: 7/0/0.

Minutes:

December 13, 2016:

Member Mealey made a motion to review the minutes of the December 13, 2016 meeting at the next meeting. Chair Smith seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee voted in favor. Vote: 7/0/0.

Member Galloway made a motion to adjourn the December 20, 2016 meeting of the Atkinson Budget Committee at 9:55 PM. Member Torosian seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee voted in favor. Vote: 7/0/0.

The next meeting of the Budget Committee will be January 3, 2017. The Budget Committee will vote on warrants on January 10, 2017. The public hearing will be January 17, 2017. The Deliberative Session will be February 4, 2017. The snow date is February 11, 2017.