

TOWN OF ATKINSON
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, September 19, 2017

Members Present:

Bill Smith, Chair
Wendy Barker, Vice Chair
Sue Carroll
Bob Malo
Bob Worden
Peter Torosian

Others Present:

Alan Phair, Town Administrator
Chief Brackett, Police Department and
Animal Control
Lt. Fiset, Police Department
Noriko Yoshida-Travers, Community Ctr.
Dave Williams, APTV

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

Agenda: Elder Services, Police Department, Animal Control, Recreation, Community Center and Atkinson Television Budget Review

Police Department: Chief Brackett came before the Budget Committee to present the Police Department budget and gave the Committee a list of all the line items that were changed for the FY 2018 budget.

Police Administration - Account Number 42101: All increases are in the Police Administration budget.

Part-time Chief's Salary - Line Number 42110.110.01: An increase of \$2,292, a 3% pay increase per agreement with the Board of Selectmen

Part Time Officers – Line Number 42110.110.02: There is a \$12,212 increase, or 14.29%. This is the result of an agreement with the Selectmen in June to increase the DEA analyst pay from \$18.36 per hour to \$25.00 per hour. Chief Brackett explained that he was contacted by the Massachusetts State Police regarding hiring the DEA analyst at a much higher salary. He was hired in 2012 at \$16 per hour, 32 hours per week, 2 weeks vacation no benefits. In 2012, the Selectmen agreed to reclassify the position based on anticipated results. In 2012, the Selectmen agreed to reclassify the position based on results. The salary was originally to be paid from asset forfeiture but it is a conflict. Chief Brackett proposed a \$25 per hour pay increase which would allow him to stay within the budget. The position is very valuable to the Police Department and the Town. If the position is lost, we may lose the slot at DEA. The analysts' skills and knowledge are invaluable. His skills are responsible for the seizure of millions of dollars from drug traffickers. The improvements at the Police Department came from asset forfeiture. Asset forfeiture also paid for training and for equipment.

Full Time Officers - Line Number - 42110.110.03: An increase of \$20,067. Chief Brackett is asking for a new, full time police officer. There are currently 6 full time officers and 10 part time officers. There is one officer in the academy, and one has just been hired. There are only 4 full time officers to fill shifts, the rest are filled with part time officers, most of whom have other jobs and are not always available to cover shifts. Hopefully, the Department will have six full time officers by next year. The Town should consider a full time police department. Chief Brackett would like to add one full time police officer to start. There should be 2 police officers for every 1000 people in a community. The average for New Hampshire is 2.1 police officers per 1000 residents. The average is 2.8 police officers per 1000 residents in New England. Atkinson has 0.8 police officers per 1000. Surrounding towns have more than 2 officers per 1000 people.

The increase for a full time officer is not as great as it could be because the department lost higher paying officers. The new officers are starting at a lower rate so the total increase for full time officers now will be \$20,067.

Member Worden is concerned about officers working without back up. Chief Brackett agreed. Recently, an officer stopped a car and the passengers had warrants and weapons. Lt. Fiset informed the Committee that there have been 2 gun arrests this month. There were also 2 domestic arrests.

Member Torosian asked how many officers live in Atkinson. Lt. Fiset responded that he believes there are three. Chief Brackett agreed that the part time officers do a good job, but it is difficult to get all shifts covered because they are not always available. Chief Brackett explained that the department has been at the same strength for awhile. He has found success hiring retired, former full time police officers that can work 32 hours a week. The department has lost 3 full time officers to Salem in the last 4 years.

Dispatch - Line Number 42110.110.04: An increase of \$3,240, a collective bargaining increase plus step increase.

School Crossing Guard – Line Number 42110.110.05: - not discussed

Sergeant – Line Number 42110.110.06: Chief Brackett requested to change the line name to supervisors because there is a sergeant and a lieutenant. There is an increase of 6.53% also due to collective bargaining and step increases.

Another issue is full time officers can be forced to work overtime while part time officers cannot. Many younger people do not want to work overtime. Also, two new officers who are not available for overtime because they cannot work on their own. Another issue is details, officers would rather work details because they pay more. Details should be secondary.

Sergeant's Over Time – Line Number 42110.110.08: \$1,000 increase due to an increase in rates of pay. change line name to Supervisors overtime

Also, about overtime, much of it is paid through highway safety grants. The department received \$20,000 in highway safety funds.

Insurance – Line Number 42101.210.00: \$10,697 decrease – 3 new employees who do not want health insurance.

Medicare – Line Number 42101.225.00: an increase of \$636

FICA – Line Number 42101.220.00: an increase of \$959

New Hampshire Retirement – Line Number 42101.230.00: A \$6,370 increase if a new full time officer is hired.

Legal Services – Line Number 42101.320.00: The department is part of a legal prosecution group consisting of five towns. The department was getting overcharged, the rate went down but the number of cases went up. The County decided to increase the rate. At present, the prosecution contract with the County includes the pay for the prosecutor and her assistant. The County wants to add another 3%. The Chief Brackett is looking for other prosecutors. Chief has already started the negotiation process. It is a yearly contract and it is up December 31st. If the Chief decides not to continue the prosecution contract with the County, he will seek other prosecutors. One source could be lawyers working for other police departments. There are some attorneys willing to take on prosecution work for police departments. Some departments also use police officers.

There will also be a decrease in case level due to the new marijuana law and changes in felony prosecution.

New Equipment Line Number 42105.740.00: A significant decrease because only one cruiser is being replaced for FY2018 and the cost will be put into a warrant article. Two cruisers were replaced last year, one through the detail account. The equipment was funded through the budget. Chief Brackett
There is a total increase of \$34,000 or 3.40% for the FY 2018 Atkinson Police Department budget.

Animal Control - Account Number 44191:

There was one individual who was getting a monthly stipend plus a per diem. The former animal control officer had another full time job and was not available at all times. Chief Brackett did a study of surrounding Towns and found that the average salary for an Animal Control Officer is \$16.00 per hour. Chief decided that the best solution was to hire two animal control officers at \$16.00 per hour and pay them per call. Also, get rid of the assistant animal control officer position.

All the other line items are the same. The former Animal Control officers were not spending the money for necessary equipment.

Previously, police officers were answering a large share of the animal control calls because no one was available during the day. Now that two new people have been hired, the police officers are not answering animal control officers. One of the new animal control officers is available 24 hours. It is a two hour call when they go out.

Money for dog licenses now goes to the general fund.

Community Center – Account Number 45208: Ms. Yoshida-Travers presented the Community Center budget. Three line items will be changed.

Electricity – Line Number 45208.410.00: Electricity will be going over in 2017, so she would like to increase it \$600. Mr. Phair informed the Committee the rate will be the same. Ms. Yoshida-Travers is also proposing a new cooling system because the old one is not energy efficient. Mr. Phair stated the Energy Commission will analyze the costs and if it is economical, a new cooling system will be requested through a warrant or through the budget.

Heating – Line Number 45208.411.00 converted to gas two years ago. Ms. Yoshida-Travers is requesting a decrease from \$4,815 to \$4,000.

Custodial supplies – Line Number 45208.640.00: increase \$200 because of usage at the center.

Ms. Yoshida-Travers is requesting a total Community Center budget of \$71,447, a .02% decrease.

Recreation – Account Number 45201:

S&F Director Line Number 45201.120.01: an increase to \$13.75

S&F Assistant Director Line Number 45201.120.02: Increases to \$12.31 and \$11.75.

S&F Counselors Line Number 45201.120.03: The pay rate is currently \$7.25 for a junior counselor, the national and state minimum wage. Most Towns pay junior counselors more. The counselors do an excellent job, they watch the children and communicate with parents, grandparents and babysitters. Ms. Yoshida Travers had a hard time hiring counselors. She had to hire one counselor from Danville, but she would prefer to hire counselors from Atkinson. Last year, she had 5 college students but his year only two came back.

Ms. Yoshida would like to raise the rate \$.75 for every position. Junior counselors would be paid \$8.00, counselors would be raised from \$7.75 to \$8.50 and senior counselors pay would be raised from \$8.25 to \$9.00. There are two assistant director positions. One assistant director salary would be raised from \$11.00 to \$11.75 and the other would be raised to \$12.31.

This would be a total increase of \$3,812 with FICA and Medicare.

This year, Sun and Fun income was \$14,356. The program charges \$250 for one child, \$390 for two children per family and \$325 for three children per family. Ms. Yoshida Travers has asked the parents to wish list. Some of the parents would like weekly registration. With her new computer program, it would be easy to implement. In order to get families to sign up for six weeks so she is offering an early bird special if families register before May 31, 2017. Weekly registration would allow families to register for Sun n Fun who would not be able to participate in a six week program. There are currently 50-60 children registering for the six week program. Weekly registration would increase registration by another 50-60 children to about 100 children.

She is also considering working with the YMCA for before and after programs. Ms. Barker agreed that using a bus to transport children back and forth to the YMCA would be a big benefit because it would attract more participants. Atkinson currently does not have before and after or Saturday programs. This would require an increase in staff due to longer shifts. Ms. Yoshida-Travers explained that some of the counselors offer before and after services to some of the families but not through the Town.

Weekly registration would attract around 50 more campers and would result in about \$50,620 for both weekly and six week programs, a \$9,264 increase in registration fees. There would be a \$3,812 salary for the staff to be more competitive.

There is a total of 22 staff, one director, two assistant directors and 19 staff. Resumes are accepted until the end of March and staff is hired in April. There were 23 or 24 resumes, a few people were hired but some declined.

Mr. Phair stated that Ms. Yoshida Travers had suggested a fee increase, but the Selectmen felt that it could be why enrollment was lower.

Ms. Barker agreed that a weekly registration would increase fees. Also, the counselors are not being paid compensable salaries. Directors have to be 16 years of age. Mr. Worden stated that the counselors are important and agrees that they should be compensated more.

Cable - Account Number 45892: David Williams came before the Committee

Staff Salary – Line Number 45892.110.00: This line will go down and the total budget will have a 3.51% reduction. The director pay will go up 2%. He is changing the pay structure for the show directors and crew. He finally has a pay survey showing what surrounding towns are paying. With the addition of the robotic cameras, the director rate will need to go up. He is proposing \$50.00 per 4 hour shift, a reduction of \$2,200. Mr. Williams will be hiring in the fall.

There was a brief discussion about which employees are covered under which salary lines. Mr. Williams pointed out that the Assistant Coordinator (a position created only a couple of years ago) is actually covered under the Staff Salary (45892.110.0) line along with the other employees and the line listed as Salaries (45892.110.01) is solely for the director as PEG Access Studio Coordinator. He believes much of the confusion over this is because his line item in the Budget Committee worksheets is named vaguely. Chair Smith agreed to change the line name (for 45892.110.01) to Coordinator's Salary in the spreadsheet.

Mr. Williams stated that the other budget lines are about the same. A few lines are unexpended because the bills do not come in until the end of the year. Mr. Williams is waiting to purchase a few minor equipment items from Amazon so the \$2,000 in that line will be expended.

Minutes: September 5, 2017

Chair Smith read the minutes for the audience. Member Carroll asked if the vote for the \$26,000 expenditure was withdrawn. The motion for \$88,000 for fire house repairs was withdrawn. It was agreed that the Town Manager would hire an architect for a report on the damage and the cost of repair. The Committee agreed that the motion to expend \$26,000 was passed. Mr. Phair stated that this amount would start the process.

Member Sue Carroll made a motion to accept the minutes of the September 5, 2017 meeting of the Atkinson Budget Committee as corrected. Member Torosian seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee voted in favor with Chair Smith abstaining. Vote: 5/0/1.

Emergency Expenditure Requests:

Mr. Phair and Mr. Weymouth have met with two architects, Robert Hannon, and David Douglas, Envelope Architect and Consulting to review the Fire House damage. Both architects have worked together and came on site to inspect the damage. They were recommended by the structural engineer who did the floor at the Community Center, John Longchamp.

During the walk through, they discussed everything that the Committee was looking for. The architects feel that there are some obvious things of concern, such as the duct work. The building has been compromised, but will not know to what extent until it is taken apart. They have submitted a proposal. It is not compromised from a structural or safety standpoint, just from moisture. The Selectmen have authorized Mr. Phair to enter an agreement. The Town should have a report by October 2, 2017 which should answer the Committees' questions. Mr. Douglas pointed out that there have been situations, if there is neglect from a building perspective, the Town can seek damages. The report will not give an itemized list of damaged material, it will give the cause, the reasons and possible remedies. The architects will look at the entire building to assess the extent of the damage. They will go through the whole building and also look at internal systems, as well. Another issue is that building codes have changed since the building was built 20 years ago. The costs could come to more than the original \$88,000 request. Vice Chair Barker asked if the code and building inspectors should accompany the consultants during the inspection. Mr. Phair will ask. Ms. Barker is also concerned that the building may be unsafe. If it is and the building inspector is present, then the process of condemning that part of the building can start right away. Mr. Phair stated that the architect did not believe that the building is unsafe.

The Committee discussed if the entire building would have to be repaired to current building codes. Also, if the report would point out architectural or structural defects sufficient to send out to competitive bids. Mr. Phair replied that it would. The attic spaces were not checked. Another concern is if the Town can seek compensation from the builder. The consultants were recommended by John Longchamp, the structural engineer who went through it the first time with Mr. Phair. Mr. Torosian suggested Hampstead Construction as a possible alternative because he is a licensed architect and a structural engineer. The report needs to be done in a timely fashion. Mr. Phair stated that he went through the inside and the outside of the building with the consultants. The report should cost \$12,000 and includes the consultants and the contractor. The Committee agreed that it was a worthwhile expenditure. Mr. Phair hopes that the money will come from the Town Administrators budget. Mr. Phair will have the plan at the next budget hearing.

Member Sue Carroll made a motion to adjourn the September 19, 2017 meeting of the Atkinson Budget Committee. Member Worden seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.