

**TOWN OF ATKINSON
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, January 15, 2019**

Members Present

Bill Smith, Chair
Wendy Barker, Vice Chair
Bob Malo
Dave Paquette
Peter Torosian
Bob Worden

Others Present

Jim Garrity, Town Moderator
Diane Heer, Library Director
Jim Cobb, Library Trustees Chair
Chris Witteveld, Library Trustee
Mike Murphy, Fire Chief
Ted Stewart, Road Agent

Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

Agenda: Warrant Articles, Public Comments, Previous Minutes

Article 2019-3 Operating Budget

Barbara Snicer, Assistant Town Administrator, had a question about Auditing (Line 41502.301.00) regarding the payment for GASB. The committee had been informed that the 5000 charge was once every five years. Assistant Snicer explained that this was the initial charge which would be costly but there would be an annual charge of 500 after that.

Chair Smith said, since the Committee was not aware of this explanation, they will re-review it.

Assistant Snicer mentioned that the Default Budget does not appear on the Index Page.

Chair Smith said that the Index Page did not get updated along with the spreadsheet, therefore, that will need to be corrected.

Chair Smith asked to note that while the Budget Committee did not vote unanimously for the Operating Budget, it still was recommended by the Committee at 6.37% over last year. The Default Budget of 1,908,103 is the same as last year but, due to contracts, it is also an increase of 2.18% from last year. So there is still a 4% difference and this gives the voters a real choice to make.

Assistant Snicer asked if the Budget Committee voted on all the line items and why aren't the votes unanimous.

Chair Smith explained that some Committee members are concerned with some of the substantial increases with a threat of taxes going up.

Article 2019-4 Police Vehicles

Member Worden made a comment that he hoped that, in the future, the Police Chief would plan out the purchasing of vehicles so that two vehicles are not bought in the same year.

Member Torosian agreed with Member Worden and he recollected that last year there was a discussion about staggering the purchasing of vehicles.

Article 2019-5 Cardiac Monitor

Fire Chief Mike Murphy commented that this is replacing a monitor, not buying another one. He hopes that the townspeople will support this warrant as this is critical equipment to have.

Member Paquette asked Chief Murphy to modify this warrant at the Deliberative Meeting to state that the monitor is a “replacement” because that was not known to the Committee.

Chief Murphy agreed to modify that at the Deliberative Meeting.

Article 2019-6 Fire Department Capital Reserve

Chief Murphy said the Reserve has been helpful for 30+ years. In 2022, the plan is to purchase a rescue pump that could cost between 500,000 and 600,000. He hopes that, by that year, the bids will be lower, but he asks the townspeople to support the warrant to keep it going.

Article 3029-7 Fire Station Repairs

Chair Smith noted that there appears to be a \$1 place holder for a price increase later and would like to see the repairs done with the money that was passed last year.

Member Torosian stated that the Committee did its due diligence and recognized the need to support it in the past. He feels there is a concerned as to what the \$1 place holder might turn into.

Chief Murphy stated that the place holder was there in case the bids come up higher. The bids won't be in until the Deliberative Session.

Assistant Snicer stated that the bids will be in before the Deliberative Session, therefore, the townspeople will know exactly what the bids will be before voting.

Town Moderator Jim Garrity asked if the money that wasn't spent is still available. When the bids come in, this money will be put towards the bid.

Chief Murphy said yes and they have to meet the deadlines of the warrant articles.

Member Malo asked Assistant Snicer how many contractors the request for bids went out to.

Assistant Snicer did not know how many contractors it went to but there were nine contractors that came for the walk-through.

Library Trustees Chair Jim Cobb asked when the contracts are supposed to be back.

Assistant Snicer thinks that it is this week.

Article 2019-8 Island Pond Road Reconstruction and Culvert

No comments

Article 2019-9 Ceiling-Array Microphones

No comments

Article 2019-10 Closed-Captioning for ACTV-20

Assistant Snicer expressed disappointment that the Committee did not support this warrant. According to the National Hearing Institute, 15% of the population has hearing problems. Also, at one point, someone used to sign (sign language) the meetings, especially the Deliberative Sessions. She does not understand why the Committee would not help the hearing impaired to participate in the government in Atkinson.

Member Torosian said that in their discussion it was noted that there is an App that, while it may not be as good as Closed Captioning, it would be helpful to the small amount of people who may need it and at the same time would not deplete the Capital Reserve Fund too quickly.

Member Malo mentioned that all these meetings have minutes and anyone who is hearing impaired would be able to easily access these minutes from the Atkinson website.

Article 2019-11 Town Hall Generator

Chief Murphy feels that the generator is vital to the town. He feels it has many uses besides workers out of the building... there could be meetings held there; it could be a warming and cooling center... it doesn't have to be just winter, it could be a summer outage. He feels it's incredible that a generator hasn't been approved yet in this day and age for such an important building in this town. It's not about people coming to work; it's about the town government still functioning.

Vice Chair Barker stated that the Budget Committee recommended it in 2013 but it was allowed to lapse which is why the Committee chose not to support it.

Assistant Snicer stated that there were FEMA funds that were going to support it as well as other conditions; we couldn't meet those conditions so it lapsed which put the 35000 into what becomes an undesignated fund balance and we are trying to re-appropriate it without conditions.

Member Malo said that because the government intervened with the utilities, there are fewer outages and utilities have improved. He feels it would be best to wait till there's a need, than to spend 35000 on a generator that may never be used.

Technology Committee Chair Russell Wolf stated that when power goes down, it messes up the computer system possibly for days. Also the town hall could be used as an emergency center for police and fire.

Member Torosian stated that the town hall is not designated as an emergency center.

Chief Murphy agreed that it is not a shelter but it could be used as a place for people to come for warmth or cooling during the day.

Member Worden stated that he feels it is a good idea and he supports it.

Station Manager David Williams stated that when there is a power outage in the town hall, he is not able to broadcast. In the past, the townspeople were very concerned about receiving broadcasts. The generator would not only provide heat and keep the town hall running, but it would also allow for continuing broadcasts, protection of the data center and, if the heat works, that would protect the asset.

Article 2019-12 Mosquito Control Expandable Trust Fund

Vice Chair Barker asked for an explanation of numbers because it's the same exact number every year.

Member Worden stated that the company agreed to a particular amount for over a 10-year period which is why the number is the same every year. He feels that the amount can be reduced and or restated for this year.

Member Malo said that this is a very broad article that needs to be defined.

Assistant Snicer said she would get a list of the expenditures.

Road Agent Ted Stewart asked that the Committee hold off its decision until receiving the list from Assistant Snicer.

Member Torosian made a motion to approve the minutes of January 8, 2019, with two changes. Vice Chair seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0

Member Paquette made a motion to approve the minutes of January 10, 2019, with one change. Member Torosian seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0

Member Torosian wanted to remind the townspeople of the Deliberative Session which will be held on Saturday, February 2, 2019, at 10:00 a.m. at the Atkinson Academy Auditorium.

Member Torosian made a motion to adjourn the January 15, 2019, Atkinson Budget Committee Meeting. Vice Chair Barker seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

The meeting closed at 8:55 p.m.