

**TOWN OF ATKINSON  
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING  
Tuesday, September 24, 2019**

**Members Present**

Bill Smith, Chair  
Wendy Barker, Vice Chair  
Ray Fournier  
Bob Malo  
Peter Torosian  
Bob Worden

**Others Present**

Bill Baldwin, Selectman  
Dave Williams, Cable  
Noriko Yoshida-Travers  
Julianna Hale

Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m.

**Agenda:** Department Presentations, Minutes, Future Agenda

DRAFT

## **Cable – Dave Williams**

### **Chair Smith invited Dave Williams, Cable administrator, to make his presentation.**

Cable Administrator Williams stated that the only item going up is his salary.

### **Vice Chair Barker asked if there were any anticipated warrant articles.**

Administrator Williams stated that the only one that he and Town Administrator Cressman are talking about is bringing forward a new warrant on closed captioning. It not only provides closed captioning for the deaf, it also gives us an opportunity for transcripts that can be ready at the end of any meeting whether there is an actual secretary or not.

### **Vice Chair Barker asked what the potential cost would be.**

Administrator Williams said that it is possible that it would be around \$50,000 as a one-time cost and no other on-going costs.

### **Vice Chair Barker asked if it require anyone with a special background.**

Administrator Williams stated that it is an automated system that has an accuracy that meets the federal requirements.

### **Member Malo asked if there is an obligation on our part to obtain this.**

Administrator Williams said that we are actually required because we are a government agency. The Town has a requirement to meet that and the fact that we aren't meeting that, we're basically dodging a bullet every day that we don't have someone coming in and saying that we want captioning/Interpreter. We are required to have ramps everywhere we go, under ADA. We're required to provide accommodations for the blind, if they ask for them. The Town has never made any accommodations for the deaf that we are aware of. The Town can be sued by anyone, not just a deaf person, for not complying.

### **Member Torosian asked what the yearly costs that would come with the closed captioning.**

Administrator Williams said there are no other costs. This is a one-time buy-out and the licensing is good for about 10 years, after which better technology would probably be preferred.

### **Vice Chair Barker asked if the \$50,000 included licensing, hardware, software, everything.**

Administrator Williams said yes and it includes the encoder which is needed to insert into the video. That's at least a \$5,000 cost. Generally, having a live transcriptionist costs about \$180 an hour.

### **Member Malo asked if there is money set aside for this purchase.**

Administrator Williams said that would come out of the Capital Reserve because it's an equipment purchase.

### **Member Torosian asked, in regards to ADA compliant, has it ever been run by the Town's legal counsel to know if there is a liability.**

Selectman Baldwin said it has not.

**Cable – Dave Williams (Cont'd)**

Administrator Williams said the federal law is pretty clear and straightforward.

**Selectman Baldwin asked if Administrator Williams could e-mail the federal statute to him.**

Administrator Williams said that he and Town Administrator Cressman will be putting together the warrant article presentation and will be giving a 30-day demo of one of the vendors' equipment, sometime in the next month.

DRAFT

## **Community Center – Noriko Yoshida-Travers**

**Noriko Yoshida-Travers, Community Center Director, said that everything is the same as last year with the exception of her salary and she would like to get the health insurance for her husband and herself.**

**Chair Smith asked how the community center was going and if revenue is coming in once in a while.**

Director Yoshida-Travers said everything is going very well. There are non-profits that set up for fundraisers, such as the Make-A-Wish Foundation that recently had a little boy in Town who has a rare disease. His wish was to see cars and trucks. So the Atkinson Fire Department vehicle was there along with a Waste Management truck and another vehicle. The little boy had a really good time.

Director Yoshida-Travers said the center is well used and there are over 40 organizations that use the facility. The revenue is at 8200 to 10000 this year.

**Vice Chair Barker asked if Director Yoshida-Travers was going to keep the fee structure the same for next year but could be considering a raise, potentially, for 2021.**

Director Yoshida-Travers said yes. The last time the fee was raised was in 2017.

**Member Torosian asked what the rental rate is.**

Director Yoshida-Travers said for the Atkinson residents it is \$150 for four hours, \$25 for each additional hour. For non-residents the fee is \$250 for four hours, \$50 for each additional hour. These rates are for non-alcohol events. If they prefer alcohol, the renter must provide insurance and contact the police department to provide police officer detail.

**Member Torosian asked if there had to be a certain number of people in order to provide a detail.**

Director Yoshida-Travers said no. The center has a capacity of 120.

**Member Worden asked if this was essentially a flat budget except for the change in health insurance and does it reflect the COLA which is showing a change of 1.51.**

Director Yoshida-Travers said it was 2% COLA included and that last year was 53 weeks.

**Member Torosian asked what the cost of health insurance is.**

Selectman Baldwin said the employees pay 20% and the Town pays 80%.

## Recreation – Noriko Yoshida-Travers

**Chair Smith stated that the total expenditure for Recreation as of August 31, 2019, was 54,361.**

Director Yoshida-Travers said the change increase is due to staff salaries which include a Sun n Fun director, two assistant directors, a counselor, FICA and Medicare.

Director Yoshida-Travers said she had an extremely difficult time hiring staff this year. She had 18 staff counselors budgeted but she only had 15 hired. She had 19 last year and 11 of them said they would come back, although they were looking for another job opportunity or internship. Only four came back. We pay the camp director \$13.75, the junior counselor is \$8. In Massachusetts, minimum wage is \$12; Market Basket baggers earn \$10.50; our counselors who are minding and providing safety for our children, including their training, are only earning \$8. After researching, surrounding towns' counselors are definitely earning more. She would like to add \$2 to each position for next year.

**Member Malo asked if the Sun n Fun fee would be increased in order to offset some of the changes.**

Director Yoshida-Travers said that the increase for all the positions would be a total of 10,678. In order to offset that increase, she is adding \$40 to the registration fee. If the same numbers register, it would cover 10,622.

**Member Worden asked how many children were turned away this year.**

Director Yoshida-Travers said she had to turn away 25 children

**Member Torosian asked that she had to turn away 25 children due to fewer staff members.**

Director Yoshida-Travers said she was hoping to get a total of 21 staff members which would be able to care for 200 children.

**Member Torosian asked how many did she have this year.**

Director Yoshida-Travers said 174 were the most for one week.

**Member Worden suggested that, in early April, we could more aggressively campaign to get better staffing.**

Director Yoshida-Travers says she usually sends an e-mail in January to the previous staff to get an idea if they will be returning.

**Member Torosian asked if the amount of campers have increased or declined in the last five years.**

Director Yoshida-Travers said she had 156 in 2018. But for three or four years before that we always had around 200.

**Member Torosian asked about the Director's notations about Sandown's Counselor-in-training (CIT) program.**

Director Yoshida-Travers said we don't charge CITs nor do we pay them.

Town Clerk – Julianna Hale

Town Clerk Hale stated, based on projections, it looks like there is a 13.17% increase. The 2018 budget was 56,920. Because she hasn't been here, she went with default which was 2019 but 2019 was an anomaly in the Town Clerk's office. She realized she should not have used that as a default because it's not an accurate reflection of what that staff is normally like when it is fully staffed as regular. If it was a regular staff and inserted the COLA from 2019, the default should have been 58444.15 which is without overtime. Therefore, the 33% should be 14%.

**Member Worden reminded that there is also 53 weeks in 2019.**

Town Clerk Hale stated that she has extra overtime in her proposed budget assuming for elections for her deputy and assistant time out of the office. Therefore, she reduced 30 hours overtime for an election year to 10 for a regular year. Instead of \$1500 for her assistant for an election year, she cut it in half because she still needs coverage if people are out. That brings the 33% down to 12% if it weren't an election year.

Town Clerk Hale said the dues subscriptions are up 278% because it's a \$45 budget. There's two JPs and they are all notaries and JPs in her office which is a requirement of what they do with the police station. Both of them are expiring next year, so that's the cost of renewing them.

The office supplies are based off the 2016 election which means it's an election number. Postage is also election related. She went high on postage because she'd rather be prepared.

Another item that is not election related is a copier/scanner/fax/printer to be placed directly in front of her desk. There are lines and this would help with the clerks working off of two machines. She can only use one with a double tray per state regulations for registrations. Also there's a signature pad tool which would increase efficiency when two or three registrations need signing. It goes on title applications, every registration. It's a one-time purchase and works for the next five to ten years. Education conferences and certification program for Town Clerks. She's not sure if it's required but it is recommended and considered an incredible learning experience. It's a three-year program and cost \$600 every year.

**Member Torosian asked when and how long is it.**

Town Clerk Hale said August of every year for one week, five days in Concord. She does not know if it would be less costly to commute or stay overnight.

**Member Torosian asked who puts this program on.**

Town Clerk Hale said it is the Town Clerk Association; it's a New Hampshire program.

**Member Worden stated that he liked seeing the modernization of the signature pad which is standard with most medical practices.** He mentioned that he had been in line on the last day of the month when the printer was being overused.

Town Clerk Hale said that the ability to process registrations from her desk would be invaluable.

**Member Worden said that the Town Clerk's office produces the highest revenue in our government.**

**Chair Smith commented the in 2018 expended was 55,000 and he did not recall why 2019 budget was only 50,000.**

Town Clerk Hale said it had to do with the change in the structure but she cannot carry that into this year with a full staff.

**Town Clerk – Julianna Hale (Cont'd)**

**Member Torosian had questions regarding election costs and he felt they went up a lot.**

Town Clerk Hale could not answer to that but felt Jim Garrity and/or Leslie Barbera could help in that area.

**Vice Chair Barker said there are five elections in 2020, not four.**

Town Clerk Hale said sometimes there are special elections and they need to be prepared for both.

**Vice Chair Barker stated the spreadsheet shows \$3100 for Ballot Clerk in 2016 and \$4500 for proposed in 2020 which is an increase of 900%.**

There was a discussion about a \$4000 increase for the Elections Moderator. A suggestion was made to ask the Town Administrator or the Elections Moderator for an answer to why the increase.

Selectman Baldwin suggested sending an e-mail to ask.

DRAFT

**Member Torosian said that Paul Wainwright, Conservation, would be willing to attend a meeting any time in October.**

**Chair Smith said October 1 would be a good day for him to meet with the Committee.**

**Chair Smith asked for comments for last week's minutes.**

Due to several questions, voting was deferred until all questions were clarified.

**Member Torosian reminded members that the Selectmen have completed certain things in their budget that have not been achieved in the Budget Committee's, one being the COLA increase.** Tonight was the first time he realized that certain department heads have already put the 2% in their budget. We have an obligation to come up with what we think that ought to be. He wanted to remind people that we have not done that yet. We may or may not agree with the Selectmen but at some point we will make a decision on that.

**Member Worden stated that one of the factors that he looks at is when they set the federal COLA rates which he feels is the most accurate.** He said that comes out in October. He said he also would like to see what other towns do as well.

**Chair Smith said that this conversation should be picked up next week.**

**Member Torosian made a motion to adjourn and Vice Chair Barker seconded the motion.** All members were in favor. Vote: 6/0/0

The Atkinson Budget Committee adjourned at 9:00 p.m.