

**TOWN OF ATKINSON
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, October 24, 2017**

Members Present:

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

Others Present:

Alan Phair, Town Administrator
Michael Murphy, Fire Chief
Russell Wolff, IT Committee

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

Agenda: Fire Department, Health Agencies, Financial Administration, IT, Long Term Debt Principal, Other Insurance, Advertising-Regional,

Minutes: October 17, 2017

Member Torosian made a motion to accept the minutes of the October 17, 2017 meeting as written, Member Worden seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

Fire Department: Chief Murphy came before the Budget Committee to present the fire department budget. The Fire Department is level funded with the exception of the 2% raise given by the Selectmen. The administrative assistant has worked to track costs for the Fire Department and the Department has been able to negotiate lower costs for maintenance contracts. As a result, the Fire Department budget was a 0.6% increase over FY17 including the 2% raise given by the Selectmen.

Education and Conference – Line Number 42201.850.00: Vice Chair Barker stated that expenditures so far for FY 17 have been \$3,000 and \$10,000 was budgeted. It was reduced but Chief Murphy explained that the Fire Department has two new members who have to be sent to the Fire Department Academy and/or EMT class. It usually costs about \$1,200 per member for each class. Chief Murphy would like to send them before the end of the year.

Hydrants/Water Contract – Line Number 42201.430.00: went up because the Town added at least 5 new hydrants.

Hydrant Maintenance – Line Number 42202.430.00: These are dry hydrants. The cost of dry hydrants is being reduced because the number of this type of hydrants is being reduced as pressurized hydrants are being added.

Uniforms – Line Number 42202.870.00: the new members are getting new gear after they finish the academy. T shirts and hats are also ordered at this time of year. Chief Murphy has uniforms for 3 members on order and the cost will be \$2,000 - \$3,000 for new gear for each new member.

Professional Services – Line Number 42207.390.00: The department has a state instructor who comes in every 3rd month for EMT instruction.

The Fire Chief is actively recruiting for members. Chief Murphy recruits at open houses and car shows. One issue discussed is members who volunteer join the Atkinson Department, get training and go on to full time, paid fire service. Another issue is fire department volunteers have to live within four miles of the Atkinson border and they have to previously been in the Atkinson Fire Department and must already

be certified. The Department is heading in the direction of hiring full time fire fighters. The Budget Committee continued to discuss recruiting.

Chair Smith asked where full time firefighters would stay while they are on duty. Chief Murphy responded that they would stay at the fire house. One solution could be to allow volunteers from other towns to stay at the fire house and pay them on a per diem basis. It would take 8 people to staff the department full time, 24/7.

Chief Murphy had a town hall meeting with the fire association and all fire department members. One area is to staff the times of day where there are problems. One shift could be 8-4 or 8-5 and for the department to have two full time members and staff the other shifts on a per diem basis. For example, the 6- midnight shift would be staffed by fire association members on a per diem basis. Then, the midnight to eight shifts would be staffed by on call personnel. It is also important to integrate the on-call members into the system. They are vital to the department. One solution would be to put crews on.

Also, in the past, the Department would put out a call, and every one would show up but only two members would go out. If the department uses crews, the two volunteers for that shift would go out and no one else would have to go.

Chief Murphy has been on the fire department for 47 years and 27 years as chief.

Member Torosian offered condolences for the loss of Butch Apitz, a fire department volunteer.

Member Carroll suggested offering residents of nearby Towns the opportunity to volunteer if they sign a contract agreeing to stay for a certain amount of time. Chief Murphy responded that non-residents would probably not stay and they can buy out of the contract. The Committee discussed buying out and what it would be worth.

Homeland Security – Account Number 42901: Mr. Phair stated that \$500 was budgeted for FY17 and \$650 was expended. Chief Murphy responded that the additional expense was for mapping.

New Equipment –Line Number 42202.740.00: Member Worden asked about a new vehicle being added for FY2018. Chief Murphy responded that he will be sending out bid specs for a new truck. The cost of a new fire pumper is \$600,000. Chief Murphy is looking at what is called a mini pumper. If the Town decides to hire full time fire personnel, they could use the mini pumper to drive for inspections and other duties. It would have about 400 gallons of water and 600 feet of hose. It would also have jaws of life. It could be used for inspections. One of the tasks of full time personnel would be inspections. A pumper would be needed because personnel would have to respond and leave the inspection if there is a call. A mini pumper would cost about \$225,000.

Fire Prevention and Inspections – Account Number 42203: The Department is mandated to inspect all businesses in Town. The Department has to follow up after inspections. The Department would make money on inspections. Oil burner and gas burners need to be inspected as sprinkler systems in the new condominium projects. One aspect of fire prevention is good code enforcement.

Computers – Account Number 41506: Russell Wolff came before the Committee to present the computer budget.

He is attempting to get everyone on Office 365 for email and for Word, Excel and other Microsoft packages. Right now, some users have Office 2007, some have Office 2010 and some have Office 365. If the server is down, the Town will still be able to access email because it is in the cloud. It would cost about \$7.50 per month per user. This would only be for the Town, not the Library. The total cost would be \$7,380. There are 5 computers still using Windows XP, some are using Windows 7 and some are using

Windows 10. Support will be easier if everyone is using the same system. If they power goes out, the Town has no emails.

Software Maintenance – Line Number 41506.430.00: increase of \$8,360.

Mr. Wolff explained the increase in the Software Maintenance Line. Member Torosian asked about the vendor, Interware Development, Inc. Mr. Wolff explained that it is the only company in the area that offers the service and the contract has gone up 2% for FY2018. It goes up 2% every year.

The dotgov domain went up to \$400, an increase of \$275.

New Projects – Line Number 41506.740.01: Member Torosian had a question on new projects. Russell explained that there would be a one-time expense to install the email service. Block 5 would be doing the installing and it is a one-time expense. It would cost \$1,700 to install the product.

Hardware Purchases – Line Number 41506.750: down from \$19,000 to \$7,000. \$10,000 was budgeted for laptops for the cruisers. It has not been spent. Two computers are going to the Police station and two to the tax collector. The Cemetery has a laptop. Maintenance is using the computer in the meeting room. A laptop from one of the cruisers would probably go to maintenance.

IT/Professional Services – Line Number 41506.890: an 11.84% increase partly due to the new contract.

Software Purchase – Line Number 41506.730.00: upgrade 4 computers to Windows 10 pro.

Mr. Wolff explained that when software and hardware is purchased, the Computer Committee gives the specs to their IT/Professional Services contractor, they put out the bid and test the product.

General Assistance - Account Number 44421: Mr. Alan Phair came before the Committee to present the General Assistance budget. This account is for assistance that the Town provides to residents. Mr. Phair explained that it varies; it has been quiet but he had 3 requests today. The Town is required to provide general assistance by law.

Other Professional Services – Line Number 44421.390.00: a \$500 decrease

Long Term Debt Principal - Line Number 47112.981.01: \$85,000 for the library,

Long Term Debt Interest – Line Number 47211.981.01: \$40,800. Chair Smith asked if there was an early payoff option.

Other Insurance – Account Number 41969:

Property and liability insurance – Line Number 41969.520.00: down 3.74%, a total expense of \$62,036.

Rockingham Advertising Regional – Account Number 41974: Rockingham Planning dues - \$6,748. The amount is based on the 2016 Office of Energy population. The dues are based on Town population.

Dispatch – Account Number 42992: contract and cost for maintaining services and for the Town portion of the communications tower. The cost is up 2% for dispatch services and 3.5% for the tower lease. The contract with Plaistow goes through 2019.

Health Agencies – Account Numbers 44151-44156: Mr. Phair explained that the requests are nearly all the same as for FY2017. The Vic Geary Center is down \$100.

Budget Committee – Account Number 41509: leave it the same.

Chair Smith made a motion to adjourn the October 24, 2017 meeting of the Atkinson Budget Committee. Member Torosian seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

The Tuesday, October 24, 2017 meeting of the Atkinson Budget Committee adjourned at 8:47 PM.