

TOWN OF ATKINSON
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, October 01, 2019

Members Present

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

Others Present

David Cressman
Sue Coppeta
Paul Wainwright

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

Agenda: Department Presentations, Minutes

Planning – Sue Coppeta

Chair Smith invited Sue Coppeta, Chairperson of the Planning Board, to make her presentation.

Chairperson Coppeta stated that the only item that is changed is the recording clerk's salary. The previous recording clerk left at the end of 2018. A temp agency was hired and the payment for temp services is under Other Professional Services. The new recording clerk started in August 2019. At the end of the year, the Other Professional Services will be over because of the amount paid for the temp recording clerk.

The budget for 2020 will not be like this or past years for recording clerk because this is a new employee. The previous recording clerk was a contractor. This new employee will require budgeting FICA and Medicare. She will be budgeted at her actual rate basing it on her experience and the experience of temp. Chairperson Coppeta does not think it is fair to expect the new employee to be as efficient as the previous recording clerk who had done it for so many years. The budgeted amount for 2020 for recording clerk is 1863, along with FICA and Medicare. These are the only increases in the budget.

Member Torosian asked how the recording clerk was being paid.

Chairperson Coppeta said per hour at \$18.

Member Torosian asked what the rate for last year's recording clerk was, just for comparison.

Chairperson Coppeta said it was \$15 and the temp agency was \$24.

Member Torosian asked Administrator Cressman if a contract employee can be paid under a certain dollar amount.

Administrator Cressman stated that he is only aware of the IRS standards. If an employee is directed on how to carry out their position and the employee does not do it in an extremely independent manner, then the IRS can fine the community. He said that in the past 20 years he has had to face situations where he had to switch employees from 1099s to W2s. Doing it this way has held off the IRS. When a person is directed or supervised on where to work, he is considered an employee. If a person is given an assignment to work at their own pace, this is considered a contract.

Member Torosian asked how many hours were anticipated in 2020 for the recording clerk to work.

Chairperson Coppeta said she has a total of 102 hours for the Planning Board recording clerk.

Member Malo asked why we don't have an hourly standard rate for recording clerks.

Chairperson Coppeta stated that the fear of burning out should be considered. Many of the Board Meetings are different, such as topics, etc. The Planning Board Meeting can generate 20-page minutes. Administrator Cressman added that the recording clerk for the Planning Board also records for the Zoning Committee. The recording clerk for the Selectmen is also recording for the Conservation Commission. Administrator Cressman plans of getting to a standard rate of \$18/ hour. Chairperson Coppeta suggested that having a couple of recording clerks for each board would be helpful if one cannot attend, there would be a backup.

Zoning – Sue Coppeta

Chairperson Coppeta stated that the only change is the recording clerk's salary. In previous years, the recording clerk was paid a flat monthly fee which was a long standing agreement with the contractor. This is budgeted at 12 meetings, 10 hours a month. Historically, the Zoning Board does not have 12 meetings a month (year) but they could have 12 meetings which they are on par to do this year. Therefore, it is budgeted for a full year of monthly meetings.

Building Inspectors – Sue Coppeta

Due to a couple of retirees this year, there has been personnel turnover. New employees are reflecting what they were hired at. The building inspector is paid by inspection. The plan is to keep the budget similar to this year's actual activity which is down from what was budgeted last year.

Regarding building activity, Page Farm is halfway done. Therefore, next year's activity is expected to be the same as this year's.

A few houses have popped up and there's a new seven-lot subdivision on Main Street that will be starting at the end of this year. There are also a couple of one-lot subdivisions that have been approved for the Planning Board. Chairperson Coppeta feels that things are slowing down from two years ago but on par with this year. The big thing that is still hanging out there and what was budgeted to happen this year was the condo project at the Country Club. In August 2018 they were ready but it never happened. The input she received was one foundation this year, hopefully two next year... that's 32 units in a building. This was the same forecast they gave a year ago.

While aware of keeping the budget low, Chairperson Coppeta doesn't want to go too low in case the condo project comes in and she will need to issue permits and do inspections.

Member Torosian asked if Chairperson Coppeta saw anything else new on the horizon.

Chairperson Coppeta said nothing big because it takes time to go through the Planning Board. There are no surprises with a 60-unit project.

Member Torosian asked if Page got approved for an increase.

Member Worden said seven more.

Chairperson Coppeta said it has been hung up because the State did not approve it.

Member Worden said Greentree has seven and another.

Chairperson Coppeta said there is seven lots on Main Street, one lot divided into two on Stage Road and one lot divided into two on Academy. Subdivisions have been approved but the houses haven't.

Chairperson Coppeta said for the Health Inspector she wanted to drop it down to the current rate that what was forecasted for last year.

Member Torosian asked who the new Building Inspector was.

Chairperson Coppeta said it is Scott Sullivan.

Member Torosian asked who is the new code enforcement officer.

Chairperson Coppeta said it is Steve Nassar.

Conservation – Paul Wainwright

Chair Wainwright said the first change is the recording clerk who has been transcribing for the past two months for the Conservation Commission along with recording for the Selectmen.

Chair Smith said the only change is 1680 for recording clerk along with FICA and Medicare.

Chair Wainwright also stated that money was moved from Care of Grounds to Printing and Binding. The reason being they have done a lot of trail work with GPS and GPS maps, having all the software worked out. They now want to do, on a trial basis, some actual paper maps.

In regards to grant money, Chair Wainwright secured \$750 from the Grassroots Environmental Fund which will supplement the annual budget for the first phase of the land conservation plan. One of the things they did with the \$750 was to write a Moose Plate grant request which requests a match of \$6,379.23 with an equal amount out of the conservation fund to do the land conservation plan which will be done mostly next year. This will not require a warrant article.

Chair Wainwright expressed a concern for the Bittersweet plant problem along with other invasive plants in Town. He said they have asked Charlie Marino, consulting forester, to come up with a plan for what to do with the Sawyer Town Forest in terms of invasives. From what he learned recently, trying to rid the forest of the problem would be like trying to bail out the ocean. The best solution is to keep it contained and out of the forest.

Chair Wainwright said that whatever they propose with the consulting forester will come out of the Forest Maintenance Fund which has approximately \$31,000. This will require a warrant article.

Member Torosian asked how much was in the conservation fund.

Chair Wainwright said there is about \$500,000 which sounds like a lot but it's not a lot; it could buy a couple of building lots.

Chair Wainwright stated that in the past two years the budgeted money was totally committed by August 1. He tries to do an over-expenditure request to move money between lines but this year it looks like he will have to donate some equipment and time and mileage on his car that he cannot budget. So his plea is "if you need to cut budgets, please don't nickel and dime us."

Chair Smith asked about two lines that were moved around.

Chair Wainwright said Care of Grounds used to be budgeted at 3000 last year; this year it is budgeted at 2500.

Member Worden commended Chair Wainwright for his "spectacular" work on the Commission.

He also stated that in terms of "nickel and diming", last year the Budget Committee felt an extraordinary amount of pressure to get the budget to a reasonable level of expansion.

Member Torosian asked if the Commission is under-extended on mowing.

Chair Wainwright said they will do another budget assessment in December.

Conservation – Paul Wainwright (Cont'd)

Vice Chair Barker stated that there is no money expended for education and conferences.

Chair Wainwright said he has six people going to conferences in the next month and it will be spent on that.

Member Torosian asked how long and how much was the conference.

Chair Wainwright said it was a one-day conference for \$60 in Pembroke.

Chair Smith said one letter came in from Community Health Services requesting \$1200.

Chair Smith presented the September 17, 2019, minutes for review. Some of the revisions were made but additional comments are needed.

There was still some concern (Page 5) about what was said and Vice Chair Barker has offered to watch the video to resolve the problem. The committee will hold off approval of September 17, 2019 minutes until the next meeting.

Vice Chair Barker asked if Dave Williams ever e-mailed the federal statutes as requested.

Administrator Cressman said he had just printed out the statutes today.

Vice Chair Barker asked if the committee could have a copy of it.

Administrator Cressman said yes and made copies.

Member Torosian made a motion to approve the September 24, 2019, minutes as amended.

Chair Smith seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Vote: 6/0/0

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

The Atkinson Budget Committee adjourned at 8:24 p.m.