

**TOWN OF ATKINSON  
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING  
Tuesday, November 19, 2019**

**Members Present**

Bill Smith, Chair  
Ray Fournier  
Peter Torosian  
Bob Malo  
Bob Worden

**Others Present**

Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

**Agenda:** Various Departments; Minutes

## Town Administration

**Chair Smith said the Selectmen are in agreement of the proposed with the exception of the Assistant Town Administrator's health insurance. They will not know the result of this until the Administrator begins employment in January 2020.**

Member Torosian said the Town Administrator was hoping to know in December.

**Chair Smith said since this is the first pass, the committee can adjust the budget as needed.**

Member Torosian made a motion to approve through Clerical, including the Safety Committee.

**Member Malo asked what is the Energy Commission.**

Member Torosian said they were the group led by the Town Moderator, Jim Garrity.

**Member Malo said he has been looking around town at the street lights in the evening. Most of the lights are all on, at night, which appears that a lot of electricity is being wasted.**

Chair Smith said that not all the lights are owned by the town; some may be owned by the residents.

**Member Malo asked if anyone knew how many street lights and where they are in town.**

Member Torosian said that the Road Agent would know or it's at least under his area.

**Chair Smith said this topic is for the Selectmen and/or the Safety Committee and/or the Energy Commission. There is a Street Lighting section in the spreadsheet for \$40,000.**

Member Malo said that, for example, he doesn't feel that all the lights in the Library parking lot need to be on. Since they're already renovating the parking lot, it would be a good time for the mechanism to be adjusted to allow a couple of lights, rather than all, to be on for safety and it would save quite a bit of money.

**Chair Smith said that he has noticed that many of the street lights in town are old with various vapors. He noticed that, in a lot of big cities, they have extremely harsh street lights. He understands that they were expensive and have reliability problems. The blue lights were bothersome to some people and animals. He also noticed that Hampstead has yellow lights that are easy on the eyes. He prefers those lights and understands that they are coming down in price.**

Member Malo would like to see someone assigned to this task that would correct the present situation and identify areas in town where there should be lights. He feels that probably 50% of the lights would be eliminated. He feels that some lights are just haphazardly placed.

**Chair Smith thinks that some homeowners may have requested the lights and are paying for the service. He asked who would like to research the project and speak with the Town Administrator or Selectmen.**

Member Malo offered to speak with Ted Stewart, Road Agent, or the Energy Commission.

Chair Smith seconded the motion to approve **Lines 41301.110.01 through 41304.230.00 plus Line 41306.740.00**. All members were in favor. **Vote: 5/0/0**

**Financial Administration (Accounting & Financial, Treasury)**

Chair Smith made a motion to approve from **Line 41501.110.00 through Line 41503.625.00** and from **Line 41505.110.00 through Line 41505.850.00** as proposed. Member Worden seconded the motion. All members were in favor. **Vote: 5/0/0**

## Financial Administration (Computers)

**Chair Smith relayed a message from Dave Cressman stating that the Selectmen approved the Computer Section for \$150,000 which is \$31,000 less than proposed. The reduction of \$31,000 was for the software purchase line. This would bring the software purchase line proposed amount from \$52,100 to approximately \$20,000.**

Member Worden stated that, in regards to software purchases, he did some extensive research within the town and he tends to lean towards the document system. He received an amount from the Town Administrator for a total cost for all the departments, excluding the Tax Collector's office, of \$46,086. He suggests dividing it into a three-year transition of \$18,362 per year which would include training and software to implement the first phase of document transition and do phase 2 and phase 3 to get the remaining sums to implement it. The biggest cost is planning which is \$33,558. His recommendation is that the document system is the appropriate thing to do and is desperately needed. He would recommend that the Town Administrator's and the Town Clerk's offices be entered into the first phase of the transition. He said he feels the payroll system is important but not all the departments have reviewed and digested the information. It may be better to consider it for next year.

**Member Malo said that the Technology Department will be meeting to begin a documentation management implementation plan for Phases 1, 2 and 3. There is a scanner in the Town Hall and a lot of the scanning can be done with the employees here. He said for the last seven months they have been flowcharting and have identified a number of things that can be eliminated which would result in a significant time savings. Therefore, there is no money necessary to be spent.**

Member Worden asked if this includes scanning current documents.

**Member Malo said what he envisions Phase 1 would be, at the very least, they need to start doing the work; there would be the training; and anything new would be entered into the system. This would be done for a couple of months, people would be comfortable with the system, and documents could be retrieved whenever they want. Phase 2 would be starting to attack the Planning and Zoning, the Engineering documents. We would start with making sure that, with anything new, we'd know from whoever is submitting the documents what the requirements are coming into Atkinson it would be a PDF file or a source file from the Computer Aided Design (CAD) tool from the developer that created the document. The next thing is to identify all the drawings in the cabinets that are fairly recent and that whoever created them still has the source file. Rather than pay someone to scan those items, we can just say contact these people with a list and say look here's 100 documents you have submitted to us in the last 5 years. This way, we move forward without spending any money to get the work done.**

Member Worden asked if Member Malo has asked the department heads to be involved and which choices they would like.

**Member Malo said yes, the Town Administrator, the Town Clerk, and one other have found the top two systems that they like. The Technology Committee has to review a little more.**

Chair Smith asked what Member Malo thought of the Selectmen's vote for \$150,000 total.

**Member Malo said the Selectmen asked him if he was OK with \$180,000. He said as a Budget Committee Member, he was not. He feels they came up with \$150,000 based on worst case scenario. Whether it's \$18,000 or \$20,000, we are required to invest the money wisely.**

Chair Smith asked if Member Malo was picky about whether he got \$18,000 or \$20,000.

**Member Malo said \$18,000 is close enough.**

**Financial Administration (Computers) – Cont'd**

**Chair Smith asked if the Technology Committee would be OK with \$18,000.**

Member Malo said he thinks so.

**Chair Smith said that Vice Chair Barker wanted a detailed plan.**

Member Torosian said he feels the committee should hold off on voting. He would like to see if this amount could be cut down a little bit. He thinks it's still too high.

**Member Malo said one thing he's learned, at the conference he attended, is the importance of a firewall because of the number of cities and towns that have been affected with ransomware.**

Member Worden said numerous municipalities have ransomed out their entire town's data and have had to pay off pirates to get their data back.

**Member Torosian said that's part of the problem of putting all this stuff up... it's a never-ending place to spend money. Right now, he feels we're getting the job done. Part of the impetus with wanting to do this is the Budget Committee is looking at it as how can we save money in the long run with less labor hours. But he feels that this is far from a sure thing. He'd like to see us phasing in and testing the waters before we commit to this full blown.**

Member Malo said what we haven't done as a town is focus on how much are we saving from investing in this software and hardware. If we get a document management system, how much are we going to save; it's not how much is it going to cost.

**Chair Smith said it's also how well does it work. Ransomware would not affect paper documents.**

**There are pros and cons and ransomware is a con. If you are all electronic and you get a ransomware problem, you could end up losing a lot more money. It's not a guaranteed thing. Of course, with paper documents, there's the threat of a fire. It's complicated; it's not a clear cut panacea. We need to think carefully and do a good job of it. Don't rush into it. Don't try to do it in one big bang. Do it incrementally. He would like to digest the PDF file and possibly ask more questions later. He feels Vice Chair Barker would also like to do the same. He agrees with Member Torosian that \$150,000 is still too high.**

Member Malo said it's basically \$20,000 in new software to give us new capability. The balance is \$128,000 up from \$108,000 is really just maintaining what we have and our vendors are raising prices. We're buying a couple of computers for the Town Hall.

**Member Torosian said every year the cost is going up and a concern. Vice Chair Barker said she feels we're putting the cart before the horse in regard to a wing and prayer that we're going to save money.**

Chair Smith asked if Member Malo has any estimated cost-savings numbers.

**Member Malo said he doesn't on the document handling system. But he does have a lot of savings that were accumulating in flowcharting the process that we used in the Town Clerk's office with Interware. The system is flexible enough to allow us to do certain things. For instance, everyday someone gets in a car after they deal with a deposit slip which takes a fair amount of time because of the checks, cash and e-checks. They drive to the bank and make the deposit. On the way back, they stop at the post office to mail all the registrations and things that people did from home. That's an hour a day, five hours a week; we don't need to do that. They have electronic transfer capabilities from Interware and we just need to talk to the bank. Right there, we can save some money.**

Chair Smith proposed that the topic be deferred to the next meeting.

**Financial Administration (Computers) – Cont'd**

**Member Fournier said where he used to work they would back up everything on a portable hard drive every week. The most they would lose is a week.**

Chair Smith said that's the way it should be done. There should be back ups and we should be possible to recover from a ransomware attack without paying the ransom based on back ups if you have good backups. Good backups are essential. He hasn't heard anyone mention the importance of regular backups and testing that backups really work.

**Dave Williams said they do backups here and they work. Several years ago there was a ransomware attack on site. It was brought back up and only 24 hours of data was lost. Backups to the Cloud are done nightly, so they should never lose more than 24 hours of data.**

Member Malo said Russell Wolf should come back along with himself to further discuss this topic.

## **Budget Committee**

Chair Smith said since the Budget Committee recording clerk has received an increase in salary, he proposes to increase **Line 41509.110.00** by \$332 from last year.

**Member Torosian made a motion to approve the Budget Committee proposed budget. Member Malo seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Vote: 5/0/0**

Chair Smith said that it's not just the recording clerk's salary that's a factor, it's how much we talk.

## Legal Services

Member Torosian made a motion to cut **Line 41531.320.00** from \$28,700 to \$27, 700. And on the Other Professional Services **Line 41531.390.00** be reduced from \$8000 to \$7000.

Member Malo seconded the motion.

After further discussion, Member Torosian amended his motion to leave **Line 41531.320.00** at \$28,700 and to change Other Professional Services **Line 41531.390.00** from \$8000 to \$6000 making the bottom line \$35,200.

Member Malo still seconded the motion. All members were in favor. **Vote: 5/0/0**



## **Personnel Administration**

Chair Smith said that's pretty fixed.

**Member Torosian said he would like to know what kind of numbers they're looking at because Workmen's Comp is usually set every year.**

Chair Smith said the proposed is down from last year.

**Member Torosian would like to learn more about it. He said he would talk to the Town Administrator.**

## **Buildings**

**Member Worden suggested this topic be deferred until Vice Chair Barker is in attendance including the whole board.**

After extended discussion, Member Malo made a motion that they strike septic system maintenance in 2020. Member Torosian seconded the motion.

**Member Worden said he does not have enough professional information on how the septic system works, therefore he would abstain from the motion.**

Member Malo suggested the town hire a professional to open the tanks, give us an estimate as to how full they are and how long can we go until the next pump.

**Four members are in favor and one abstained. Vote: 4/0/1**

Member Torosian made a motion for **Line 41944.430.00** of \$29,600. Part of that amount is \$18,000 to repair the drain grate. He would like to remove the \$18,000 based on what the Fire Chief said. He feels it's minimal risk to defer that. He feels it's premature to do this now.

**Member Worden seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Vote: 5/0/0**

Chair Smith clarified that **Line 41944.430.00** of \$29,600, the Budget Committee has proposed to make that \$11,600. The Budget Committee has voted to change the septic lines to 0. All the other lines in the Building section remain to be voted on later.

## **Other Insurance**

### **Chair Smith said they are set due to contracts**

Member Torosian feels that they need to communicate with the Town Administrator

**Chair Smith asked if they wanted to defer until they speak with the Town Administrator. He asked if Member Torosian would contact the Town Administrator.**

Member Torosian said he would.

**Advertising/Regional**

Member Worden made a motion to accept \$6932 for **Line 41974.855.00** for Advertising/Regional  
Member Fournier seconded the motion. Four members were in favor and one abstained. **Vote: 4/0/1.**

## Police Department

**Chair Smith suggested that they defer discussion until Vice Chair Barker is in attendance including the entire board.**

Member Torosian made a motion to flatline **Line 42109.635.00** to \$23,000. Chair Smith seconded the motion. All members were in favor. **Vote: 5/0/0**

**Member Torosian made a motion to approve the rest of the budget as proposed. Chair Smith seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Vote: 5/0/0**

## **Ambulance**

Chair Smith made a motion that they approve the placeholder of \$1 for **Line 42152.350.00**. Member Worden seconded the motion. All members were in favor. **Vote: 5/0/0**

## Homeland Security

Member Torosian made a motion to approve **Line 42901.740.00** for \$200. Chair Smith seconded the motion. All members were in favor. **Vote: 5/0/0**

## **Dispatch**

Chair Smith made a motion to approve **Line 42992.390.00** for \$46,186. Member Worden seconded the motion. All members were in favor. **Vote: 5/0/0**



## **Street Lighting**

Chair Smith said he agreed that Street Lights could be worked on but feels it's not the Budget Committee's job and it's kind of late in the game. He asked if someone would be willing to work on a proposal for next year.

**Member Malo volunteered to take on the project.**

After extended discussion, Chair Smith made a motion to approve **Line 43163.410.00** for \$47308 as proposed. Member Fournier seconded the motion. **Vote: 5/0/0**

## **Solid Waste**

Chair Smith made a motion to approve **Lines 43241.390.00 and 43241.560.00** as proposed. Member Worden seconded the motion. All members were in favor. **Vote: 5/0/0**

## **Health Administration**

Member Torosian made a motion to approve **Line 44111.110.00 through Line 44111.800.00** as proposed. Chair Smith seconded the motion. All members were in favor. **Vote: 5/0/0**

## Health Agencies

Chair Smith said that since Vice Chair Barker has been collecting all of the letters from various places asking for money, they should defer this topic until she is in attendance.

Member Malo said **Line 44151.350.02** should be removed because it is no longer operational.

Member Torosian asked if the line could be removed.

Chair Smith said yes.

## **Animal Control**

**Member Torosian said he would like to see Animal Control under the Police Department section. There's no reason for it to be separate anymore.**

Member Worden made a motion to accept **Line 44191.110.01 through Line 44191.870.00** as proposed.

Chair Smith seconded the motion. All members were in favor. **Vote: 5/0/0**

## General Assistance

**Member Torosian said until the numbers become more accurate, we may want to revisit that budget. There may be a place where we can cut a little bit.**

Chair Smith made a motion to approve **Line 44421.390.00 through Line 44421.810.00** as proposed.

Member Fournier seconded the motion. All members were in favor. **Vote: 5/0/0**

## **Patriotic Purposes**

Member Torosian made a motion to change **Line 45831.390.00** from \$1850 to \$1500. Member Worden seconded the motion. All members were in favor. **Vote: 5/0/0**

**Chair Smith made a motion to approve Line 45831.630.00 through Line 45832.680.00. Member Torosian seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Vote: 5/0/0**

**Chair Smith clarified that they are almost done with their first past with the exception of sections they deferred discussion till the following week which are Health Agencies, Buildings, Personnel Admin, and Computers.**

**Minutes of 11/5/2019**

Member Torosian made a motion to approve the minutes of 11/5/2019 as written. Member Worden seconded the motion. All members were in favor. **Vote: 5/0/0**

**Minutes of 11/12/2019**

Chair Smith made a motion to approved the minutes of 11/12/2019 as written. Member Fournier seconded the motion. All members were in favor. **Vote: 5/0/0**

**Member Torosian said they made some progress with the spreadsheet but he's hoping to further reduce the budget down to 2%.**

Chair Smith pointed out that they are at 4.14%. To get to 2%, they would need to reduce by \$109,000. They reduced it a little bit tonight; it's less than 1.14%.

**Member Torosian suggests that everyone take a look at the spreadsheets for the next couple of meetings so that they can get to their goal.**

**Member Torosian asked if anyone knows how the trees that were cut down at the Library were paid for.**

Member Malo said he doesn't know but would find out.

**Member Torosian said he was not aware of this project and felt that the Budget Committee was not informed and was taken out of the equation.**

**Member Worden suggested to Member Malo that maybe his proposal on septic question could be directed toward having the expert opinion added to that.**

Member Malo said he is going to consult with the Town Administrator to let him know that the Budget Committee is interested in understanding what the right answer is. But the committee is going to take some action now but before they go too far they need someone that is qualified to advise them.

**Member Torosian made a motion to adjourn and Chair Smith seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Vote: 5/0/0**

The Atkinson Budget Committee adjourned at 9:16 p.m.