

DRAFT MINUTES

BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS COMMITTEE MINUTES

November 15, 2011

Chairman Don Brabant convened the Budget Recommendations Committee at 6:00pm in the Nowak Room of the Town Office. The members of the Committee and Board of Selectmen present are: Mark Leighton, Bob Kelly, Corey Stevens, Harry Thayer, Don Woodward, Allen Corey, Dan Chartrand, Chairman Bobby Aldrich, Selectwoman Julie Gilman, Selectman Don Clement, Selectman Matt Quandt, Finance Director Doreen Ravell, Staff Accountant Laura Hill and Town Manager Russell Dean.

Mr. Brabant said that so far the committee has made \$309,127 in cuts to the budget, and he appreciates the hard work of the committee.

Recreation Department

Recreation Director Mike Favreau and Assistant Director Greg Bisson appear to discuss their budget.

Mr. Woodward gave an overview of the subcommittee's review, saying that the subcommittee went on a van tour of the town's parks and cemeteries that are maintained by this department and they found that they are doing a good job maintaining their budget. Mr. Favreau said that he is trying to move more expenses into the revolving fund and out of the General Fund budget. The revolving fund is all of the user fees that are collected through programs in the department. This year they completed a pool bathhouse renovation, pool painting, tennis court repainting, and playground work from the revolving fund. Last year there was \$46,000 carried over and there will be less this year as the expenses were higher. He also mentioned that they are saving up for some large projects like a tennis court renovation for \$20,000. Some unexpended expenses for 2012 are a pool lift that is ADA required in the amount of \$4,000, a pool slide needs to be replaced for about \$1500, and they are looking to purchase a cash management system for about \$7,000. Mr. Corey thinks a point of sale system is a good idea but suggests that he may want to find a lower cost option.

Mr. Woodward moved to recommend the Recreation Total of \$294,276. Mr. Corey seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Parks

Mr. Chartrand notes that there is not a lot to pick at in the Parks budget, and that it seems like a clean operation.

Mr. Woodward moved to recommend the Parks Total of \$188,687. Mr. Corey seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Pool

Mr. Favreau says that the Electric and Water line items will be moved out of the pool budget and moved to the public works budget. This will not affect the bottom line of the budget but it will change line items next year. There are a few items that are pool related that will be moved to the revolving fund and paid by user fees. Mr. Leighton agrees that the pool costs should be paid for by the users. Mr. Thayer suggested that Mr. Favreau may want to see if he could use impact fees to pay for the ADA required lift or the point of sale system.

Mr. Thayer moved to reduce 803-5012 to \$0 and move this \$8,200 to the revolving fund. Mr. Chartrand seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

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Mr. Thayer moved to reduce 803-6220 to \$0 and move this \$3,500 to the revolving fund. Mr. Chartrand seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Mr. Thayer moved to reduce 803-4110 to \$0 and move this \$6,300 to the revolving fund. Mr. Woodward seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Mr. Thayer moved to recommend a Pool total of \$4,200. Mr. Chartrand seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Mr. Thayer moved recommend a total Parks and Recreation budget of \$487,163. Mr. Woodward seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Welfare Department

Welfare Director Sue Benoit appeared to present her budget request. She reports that the poor economy had resulted in more clients this year than usual. She is happy to have a lot of help from outside agencies. Mr. Corey asked if Exeter is charged by outside agencies for helping Exeter residents and Ms. Benoit said that they do not as long as the Town funds them. Mr. Corey asked why this budget is increasing and Ms. Benoit said that the State has cut a lot of funding and the towns are legally responsible to help our residents.

Mr. Stevens moved to recommend a Welfare total budget of \$95,301. Mr. Woodward seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Library

Library Director Hope Godino appeared to update the committee on the library budget. She reported that her department's health and dental numbers have been reduced since the original budget was distributed and that the Trustees have agreed to leave a vacant position open for 6 months of 2012 so that they can reduce their budget overall by \$12,890. Mr. Brabant said that he helped the subcommittee to review this department because Ms. Aten has a conflict, and Mr. Brabant was going to have a lot to talk about in this budget until Ms. Godino offered to make this cut.

Mr. Chartrand is very happy with the Library and thinks the staff does a wonderful job developing readers. Mr. Corey is concerned that the Library employees received 4% raises this year and no other town employees received that. Ms. Godino said that Library employees are not town employees and that the Trustees have chosen to honor a salary scale that calls for this raise. They feel that if they are going to not honor the salary scale, they should give adequate notice to them. Mr. Corey thinks that the Library needs to cooperate with the town residents and employees and help out with budgetary constraints. Mr. Corey believes that many of the services that are being provided at the Library are also offered at other places.

Mr. Thayer moved to recommend a Library budget of \$879,848. Mr. Chartrand seconded. Vote: 6-1, Mr. Corey opposed.

Transportation

Mr. Dean said that this line item is for COAST Bus. This is an assessment that the town must pay and compliance with this payment affects other state grants. Mr. Woodward said that COAST also offers ADA Van Services for the handicapped.

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Mr. Chartrand moved to recommend \$20,919. Mr. Thayer seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Legal

Mr. Dean said there is not a lot of active litigation, mostly legal advice and contract reviews. Mr. Brabant asked how much was spent fighting the warrant article issue. Mr. Dean said that cost over \$10,000. Mr. Aldrich reminded the committee that the town also had to pay the legal fees of the other litigant. Mr. Kelly suggests level funding since he thinks it is difficult to forecast. Mr. Kelly asked if the alternative to this line item would be actually hiring a full time attorney, and Mr. Dean agreed.

Mr. Chartrand moved to recommend \$70,000 legal budget. Mr. Woodward seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Swasey Parkway

Mr. Leighton asked if it made sense for the Parks and Rec Dept to mow and maintain this area. Mr. Clement, a Swasey Trustee, said that it has been discussed a few times and the Rec department does not have the resources or the equipment needed for it. Mr. Thayer asked for an update on the culvert issue and Mr. Dean said that an expedited permit has been issued and the town is hoping to have this complete by late spring.

Mr. Thayer moved to recommend a budget of \$10,950. Mr. Stevens seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Trustee of Trust Funds

Mr. Thayer moved to recommend a budget of \$891. Mr. Chartrand seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Economic Development Commission

Mr. Dean said that the EDC has discussed a need for funds to cover expenses like printing, advertising, postage and website development in their goal setting and visioning session. Mr. Kelly asked if there is a business plan for these funds and Mr. Dean said they have an action plan and subcommittees. Mr. Clement believes that this investment will pay dividends to the town, and Ms. Gilman agrees that this is an active group. Mr. Brabant asked why the EDC is not spending the money they already have. Mr. Thayer suggested reducing the funding to \$5,000. Ms. Gilman noted that the EDC is looking for larger business owners to get involved, and she also said that the Zoning Ordinance Review Committee is reviewing zoning regulations for the areas of concern for the EDC.

Mr. Thayer moved to reduce the EDC funding to \$5,000. Mr. Leighton seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Other Culture and Recreation

Mr. Dean said that he received a request from the Chamber of Commerce for an increase in Christmas Light funding. This is a late request, but it reflects actual costs.

Mr. Thayer moved to level fund Christmas lights. Mr. Woodward seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Mr. Thayer moved to level fund Christmas parade. -WITHDRAWN

Mr. Chartrand moved an Other Culture and Recreation budget of \$10,250. Mr. Woodward seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

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Special Events

Mr. Chartrand moved a total Special Events of \$13,000. Mr. Woodward seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Mr. Chartrand moved a total in this section of \$23,250. Mr. Woodward seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Ms Gilman reminded the committee that 2013 is the 375th Anniversary of Exeter.

Debt Service

Mr. Dean said the Norris Brook project will not require a payment until 2013. Mr. Brabant reminds the committee that we will need to retain 6 months of interest for that project.

Mr. Chartrand moves to reduce 921-8xxx to \$0. Mr. Woodward seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Mr. Thayer moves to reduce the Norris Brook interest by \$10,000. Mr. Woodward seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Mr. Chartrand moves to recommend a Debt Service total of \$666,273. Mr. Woodward seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Payroll Taxes and Benefits

Mr. Dean said this is the Health Insurance Buyout program. Mr. Stevens asked the history of this item. Mr. Dean said that the town used to offer a \$1,000 payout if someone opted out of health insurance. The current program offers 30% of the Town's share of the premium in savings and there has been a lot more interest and the town is saving a lot of money also.

Mr. Thayer moves to recommend a total of \$62,829. Mr. Chartrand seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Unemployment

Mr. Dean noted that this item will be serviced by Primex because the cost was lower.

Mr. Thayer moves to recommend a total of \$12,575. Mr. Chartrand seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Worker's Compensation

Mr. Thayer moves to recommend a total of \$131,572. Mr. Chartrand seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Insurance

Mr. Thayer moves to recommend a total of \$133,827. Mr. Woodward seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

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Total Benefits and Taxes

Mr. Thayer moves to recommend a total of \$340,805. Mr. Woodward seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Vehicle Replacement

This item will be revisited when DPW is here to speak about it.

Town Office - Revisited

This discussion began at an earlier meeting and focused on getting more help in the Finance Department. Mr. Dean states that the Finance Department is not able to perform a number of essential functions such as internal audits and risk assessment program reviews because they are spending a lot of time helping out the tax office with its daily functions as well as a number of projects like tax liens, tax deeds, water/sewer shutoffs, customer service and meetings to set up payment plans. He proposed four options to the Board of Selectmen last night.

- Option 1- Move receptionist to the tax office full time. This would require a change in duties but it is a no-cost option.
- Option 2- Hire a part time 34 hour clerk. The Finance office has funding in their budget for \$12,500.
- Option 3- Do nothing.
- Option 4- Move Town Clerk office employee to tax. We have one clerk employee with tax experience. The Town Clerk is not in favor of this option.

Job descriptions would have to be rewritten and the Tax and Finance functions should be separated.

Mr. Aldrich said the Board discussion was that there are several members that are not in favor of Option 4, and Option 1 has not been historically accepted. That option is not eliminated, but it is not desirable. The Board asked Mr. Dean and Ms. Ravell to put the recommendation in a budget form so that the real numbers can be reviewed. He acknowledged that something has to change, and Option 2 solves the problem without breaking the bank.

Mr. Dean said that the Deputy Tax Collector needs to be available to meet with people and when she is out of the office it needs to be attended by someone, creating a chain reaction. Mr. Corey would like to see Finance employees to focus on Finance duties. Mr. Brabant does not agree to add a position. He thinks the receptionist is underutilized, so why not change to the tax area. He said that he went to bat for more help last year for the Finance Department, and would like to explore using the receptionist for collection for a year. He also thinks that if we use current resources, maybe we can cut the Finance budget a bit. Mr. Aldrich said that this option has a lot of details to work out and decision to be made regarding staffing of the reception, and he wonders if this is a short term or long term solution.

The Board of Selectmen prefers the option of hiring a part time employee to add to the Tax office. This option would cost under \$7,000 when the other \$12,500 is used from the existing budget. Mr. Kelly said that the cost is low, but it does not address the issue that the receptionist is underutilized. There should be a way to use that resource to solve the problem. Mr. Thayer recalled that a few years ago residents were opposed to losing a receptionist, and he wonders if people will be more open to the elimination of the receptionist in favor of not increasing the budget. Mr. Brabant would like to see the receptionist relocated for a year and see how it works out.

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Mr. Thayer moves to encourage the Board of Selectmen to move the receptionist to the Finance Department. Mr. Kelly seconded. Vote: 6-1, Mr. Chartrand opposed.

At 9:27 PM, Mr. Chartrand moved to adjourn. Mr. Woodward seconded. VOTE: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Geis
Recording Secretary