

Exeter Budget Recommendation Committee

Date: October 25, 2012

Meeting begins: 8:30am

Attendees:

Budget Committee	Board of Selectman	Department Heads
Robert Kelly	Don Clement	Doreen Ravell - Finance Director
Mark Leighton	Matt Quandt	Andie Kohler – Town Clerk
Carol Aten	Frank Ferraro	Russ Dean – Town Manager
Rob Corson	Julie Gilman	Doug Eastman – Code Enforcement
Corey Stevens	Dan Chartrand	Sylvia Von Aulock – Planning
Harry Thayer		John DeVittori – Assessor
Don Woodward		Linda Fecteau – Deputy Tax Collector
Allen Corey		Andy Swanson – IT Coordinator
		Donna Cisewski – HR Director

Corey Stevens begins by welcoming everyone.

Review of prior minutes:

MOTION: Approval of 8.23.12 minutes - all in favor

MOTION: Approval of 9.20.12 minutes - all in favor

-Approach budget knowing that we cannot do everything at once, but at the same time not making it hard for people to do their jobs.

Default Budget vs. Current Budget

-Russ Dean talks: General fund Budget, after health insurance rating 16,705,625 (3.5% increase over 2012). 2013 Default (draft) – 16.5 million. Still going through numbers and cleaning up.

-Corey Stevens asks, If you did nothing to last years budget it would include:

-Anything that is recurring, obligations, contracts, etc.

-Included in default

- Electricity increase
- Health insurance
- Retirement

Overall impression from the room:

-Don Clement spoke: Last year was a good process. They set a goal; it gave them something to shoot for. What also worked was that it was a combined effort, the two groups (Budget Committee and BOS) working together to achieve the goal.

-Carol Aten remembers that they decided that they would not set a goal this year. Others agree that a goal is not necessary this year.

-Russ Dean mentions some increases:

- Budgeted COLA 2.43% increase for non-union personnel – every year half of the union personnel receive a step of 2.23%. COLAs are negotiated.

-The committee and selectmen need to figure out what they can afford. Have an idea what will work. The department heads are all asking reasonable increases, but 3.6% may be too much.

-Russ Dean: The default budget is a good reference point, and does take care of all the required increases, but the town can't keep going back to it every year.

-Rob Corson: Would like to rely on BOS to advise, help to drive cost down (expenses vs. revenue). For example: use property tax to offset the increases.

-Don suggests that it would be beneficial to have those numbers (property tax).

-Carol Aten mentions that she found some Federal statistics (IRS) Cost of living 2013: 1.7%, vs. 2012: 3.6%

-Russ Dean explains that the town does not use national comparisons for cost of living increases/decreases. The CPI used is the Boston-Brockton-Nashua index year over year.

-Corey says that it is nice to have a goal. It is important that the budget doesn't keep going up and up each year. It is important that everyone can do their job.

TOWN CLERK

Andie Kohler

Major Increases:

- Andie starts by saying that she would like to open third window in the office.
- They would like to add more hours for their staff. (2 FT Clerks, 1 FT Deputy Clerk)

Decreases:

- Andie replaced previous Town Clerk

-Rob Corson asks how adding a 3rd window benefits the office. Is there a time of day that has a demand for services? There is a concern of overtime. It would be interesting to collect some data on the current staffing model so they know when the third window would be beneficial during day.

Wages (dialogue)

-Corey asks if there will be overtime?

-No, Andie explains that it will be 40 hr. week. Stay open Monday night (already open anyway – keep 2 windows open), close early on a Friday to offset.

-Rob Corson asks what is more important, having night hours or a third window

-Andie will need to collect some data to move forward.

-Corey reminds that adding a FT Deputy position will increase health care.

-Rob Corson asks, What is changing that is making you need more coverage?

-Andie explains that it is a convenience and a service to the community. There is no change.

-Harry asks about the third window. The window does not have a computer so not all customers can go to it. What is the point of having it open if people cannot go to that window?

-Andie explains that the budget includes purchasing necessary equipment for the window.

-Andie explains that the budget includes the PT for 34 hrs, but they are not using the hours.

-Rob Corson – need to figure out how many hours staff works.

The group agrees that they are a little confused regarding the hours.

-Carol mentions that it would be great if information could be clear.

-Rob asks for a summary

Goals

- Hire FT deputy
- Open third window
- Have late night hours
- Register dog fees
- Organize the front windows: Improve counters to eliminate desks in the back, allow for third window WITH computer
- Back room – book retention (buy plastic sleeves for 25 books)
Corey – how come can't go electronic – state requires hard copies
- Three year project – reorganize the back room

-Corey agrees that tax payers would notice that there is a FT deputy. It would be a benefit to the community.

-Allan Corey would like to see a rough sketch of the goal for the layout of the windows.

-If they added a Deputy Clerk FT the final cost increase would be 17K

-Rob Corson mentions that he would like to see them utilize the staff to their fullest potential prior to making people FT. You have hours that you are not using.

Rob Corson: MOTION – Leave the Deputy Clerk’s position at the 34 hrs that it is currently funded at → Motion Failed – 4 against 4

-Allan & Don would like to see the Deputy Clerk at FT

Postage (Notices):

-Carol asks about elderly knowing what homes need the notices (paper copy)

-Andie explains that people like getting them, it is a service and a reminder

-Allan asks if you could add a surcharge for the notices?

-Andie would have to look into it.

-Russ Dean mentions that if they do remove the paper notices, there would have to be an education piece for the public.

-Harry suggests that maybe the first of the year ask people if they want to get reminders via email. You can start saving money that way. Start cutting it back. Ask the community the question, and get it started.

-Andie - when people do it online, the following year, they automatically get an email reminder.

-Allan suggests letting people know that at this date the notices will stop.

It is a courtesy - There will always be complaints when services change.

Corey Stevens: MOTION to Reduce postage to 4K (eliminate courtesy piece of renewal notices) - All in favor

Dog registration - Andie explains that she wants to send out letter to people who have not registered their dog. She will need some money for postage. (*Animal Control officer will no longer need to go out and collect – will be a savings in the long run*)

Record Retention:

-Andie explains that she got a cost on what is left to preserve. The books will be created the same as in the past. It is an ongoing project.

-Corey asks what is a year of binding costs.

-Andie explains that this year using the budget of \$5K, it will cover getting 2 books bound.

Andie explains that the information is also online.

-Corey, is this a requirement?

-Andie explains that it is a historical/archive process, people come in and look at the books. They have books from the 1500's.

Equipment Purchase:

Increases due to:

- 3 window: computer, printer, validator

- New server (3K): Air Conditioner leaked onto server. It will cost 3K to fix server

>> Rob Corson thinks it's important to talk to IT first regarding the server.

Corey Stevens: MOTION – Town Clerk total budget: \$343,389 – All in favor

ELECTIONS

MOTION – Total Elections budget \$11, 044 – All in favor

FINANCE & ACCOUNTING

Doreen Ravell

Major Increases:

- **Benefits**
- **Postage:** Mail out A/P, checks to vendors
- **Supplies:** Carol asks about the jump of 5,000 on supplies? They would like to purchase a folding machine for town hall (2K)

Audits:

-There was an issue with the auditor this year; had to wait for them due to a leave issue. Every year they make improvements. They are in better shape than 2 years ago. They are working toward being more efficient.

Weekly AP & Weekly payroll:

-Processes are still a labor intensive, inefficient process, but there is always the need for the checks and balances.

-Payroll and AP stuff envelopes. Corey asks about the labor intensity of stuffing envelopes – is there a solution? Direct deposit is not mandatory. 40% of employees still ask for live/paper checks.

-They would like to look into an electronic solution for AP & Payroll.

-Harry asks if the audit fee would go down since Doreen has been more efficient?

-Doreen explains that that there isn't less work. It is unlikely that the price will ever go down.

Conference/Education:

-Why the increase?

-Doreen strongly feels that the money is needed. Important that they attend conferences, education is important.

MOTION - \$265,960 – ALL in favor

TREASURER

Deputy Treasurer:

Treasurer has unique responsibilities, having a deputy as back up is very important.

MOTION – \$10,080 – ALL in favor

INSPECTIONS CODE ENFORCEMENT (Building Department)

Doug Eastman

Request: Would be great to see commercial vs. residential permits. How much revenue is coming in for each?

Major Increases:

- Vehicle Maintenance: They put a lot of miles on the vehicle. Eventually would like to replace vehicle.

MOTION - \$227,778 – ALL in favor

PLANNING Department

Sylvia Von Aulock

Major Increases:

- Would like to attend a conference (1K)– will make the time to attend
- Make Portsmouth Ave. user friendly (8K) – economic development related.
 - This study isn't just getting words on paper – it will be graphics, show what you want, provide visual for developer – they will hire architect.*
 - How come just Portsmouth Ave? – Want to make it look more like downtown: to get that look and feel you have to use graphics.*
 - Planning board working with zoning ordinance.*
 - Will present road map for future (plan first, fix it later).*
 - Property owners will be invited to discuss study and plan.*
- Study (12K) - Barrier Wall proposed for Sportsman Club (2K used to review this option this year). The study will cost 12K. Still unclear on how this will move forward. The club has some gray area guidelines for noise control.
 - What kind of complaints are there? How bad is the noise?*
 - The issue has come up at meetings. That area of town has been less than happy with the noise.*
 - Harry - Do we want to fund 12K or the “100 people” who are effected by the gun club. Should the tax payers be paying for this?*
 - It would be beneficial to have a benchmark.*

-At the end of the year, most studies will be performed, there will be a lot more discussions regarding the wall installment – the money (12K) would be a placeholder.

- Mapping (7K) – The data in regards to wetlands is very conceptual. All they need to do is take the plans and have them digitized so they can be uploaded into the database.
 - The data that they have is not reliable. When an applicant comes in, before they apply, they will do the research.*
 - Rob Corson asks - doesn't the applicant need to provide the wetlands information?*
 - Corey mentions that it is nice to have, but what is the benefit?*
 - The data that they present to the public is highly inaccurate. It is difficult to constantly go down to the basement and pull data. It would be more efficient to have it on the computer.*
 - Allan asks what our obligation is to provide this information. Is it a service? Is there a legal obligation to provide this information?*
 - If they do not have accurate information, it may eventually add conflict and additional steps to the building application process.*
 - If this information was made available to the public, it would prevent homeowner violation.*
 - Allan – Hosting this information is taking on a liability.*
 - Anyone could be asking for this information.*
 - Allan – but it is not the town's responsibility.*

SUGGESTION: Maybe we can pick a few of these? (1 Mapping, 3 Studies).

- Color Copier (2,580) would be a benefit. It is very difficult to communicate land uses using black and white.
 - Sylvia did her homework with looking into prices.*
 - Allan – Will you need to take projects out to vendors still?*
 - Yes, we will need to outsource binding books, and other larger items*
 - Harry – The town should look into one vendor for all copiers, printers, etc...*
 - It is very important to have more than one copier in the building. Also there are confidential print outs.*

Robert Kelly MOTION: Remove the 12K from Studies line item (wall barrier) from budget - 6 in favor/2 oppose

Robert Kelly MOTION: Planning total \$226,999 – 6 in favor/2 oppose

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

MOTION: \$2900 – ALL in favor

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MOTION: \$1980 – ALL in favor

CONSERVATIVE COMMISSION

MOTION: \$9,605 – ALL in favor

HERRITAGE COMMISSION

MOTION: \$1400 – ALL in favor

ASSESSOR

John DeVittori

Major Increases:

- Postage: Will be sending out more letters this year, which will require responses. EE + VETS requalification's by April.
 - Vets receive \$500 per year.
 - Exeter has a very generous elderly exemption program

MOTION: \$217,127 – All in favor

TOWN MANAGER

Russ Dean

Increases

- Wages: FT Increase admin to 40hrs/wk – the position supports the Town Manager plus two other Department Heads; Welfare and Human Resources. The office needs the coverage. There is a public service component to this as well.

Bob - Are there slow periods during the year, can this person be a seasonal FT?
No, she is busy at all times, there is always a need. It is important that there is someone there. It is also a schedule issue with FLSA – if it walks like a duck it's a duck.
- Wages: PT increase for recording secretaries.
- Supplies: many of the buildings supplies comes out of that budget
- Subscriptions: preserve legal notices
- Office Equipment

Savings:

- Town Report – make less copies. Some day they will shift away from paper
- Legal/Public Notices

- Travel Reimbursements
- Equipment Purchase

Allan Corey - MOTION: \$192,940 – ALL in favor

TAX COLLECTION

Linda Fecteau

Major Increases:

- Supplies: printer cartridges
- Legal Expenses (10K): Bankruptcies/Deed follow-up legal work. The budget needs to reflect taking action. They spend legal fees for taking care of bankruptcies.
 - In 2012, they spent about 10K (quantified in special expense account).*
 - *Recently paid a condo fee going back about 2 months.*
 - Allan mentions that there needs to be a line for this - Russ Dean agrees.*
 - Russ Dean mentions that these legal expenses are here to stay and they tend to fluctuate slightly with the economy.*
 - All agree that 10K is a reasonable amount, but they need to change the line item name to explain where this money is going.*

Suggestion: Create new line under Legal

MOTION: \$93,708 – ALL in favor

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Changes:

- Consulting Services: Change from \$10,00 to \$1,000

MOTION: \$21,774 – ALL in favor

IT

Andy Swanson

Last year made many improvements: Some of which include; Website, point of sales at pool, tbma, virtual web project.

Major Increases:

- Health Insurance

- Cell phones: The town pays a % of the bill (people contact Andy all day on his phone).
- GIS Software (7,500) – There are many layers to this system. Each department has their particular need for GIS. Although there is no GIS administrator, everyone is discussing and on the same page. (Andy is planning for Consultants, software, etc...)
 - Bob - Have you sought out advice regarding this project?
Andy – Yes have asked around.
 - Bob – Seems like a huge increase to the IT budget. Would be smart to focus on one improvement.
 - Corey Stevens asks Andy to Prioritize: GIS, Phone, etc...
- Phone Equipment Expense (13K) – (Andy offers to take 9.5K off – 6.5K) – this project is to replace failed equipment. Andy is willing to phase in a better system.
 - NOTE: phone system is old. There are a lot of internal functions that are not working. Looked into Comcast vs. Bayring (Comcast is twice as expensive).
- Internet Services (\$7,200) – Website expenses, keep software subscription up to date. (\$250/month to maintain website)
 - The website is a free software, why is there such a high monthly fee?
 - What is this monthly service doing?
 - Keeping the software up-to-date, security upgrades, site recovery, customer support, free upgrades (\$2,400/yr).
 - The prior site vendor did not upgrade, there was baseline security (\$440/yr for hosting and that is it).
 - Also must turn up the bandwidth; fail safe for phone systems in future.
 - Google Apps – pay for it by the person - get the who package (It is less expensive than Microsoft exchange).
- Education Training: training to manage servers, agree that this is an important training for Andy.

>>Request for Andy – would like summary for budget lines.

>>**Don Woodward - MOTION: DELAY final decision on the IT budget**

HUMAN RESOURCES

*Did not cover this today (10/25/12)

>>MEETING WILL CONTINUE on 11/13, 6pm (Complete IT & Human Resources on that day)

Meeting Adjourns: 3:23pm

Minutes by: Laura Jeffords