

Draft Minutes

Exeter Budget Recommendations Committee Meeting

October 30, 2013

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chairman Corey Stevens called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Nowak Room. Present were committee members Nancy Belanger, Allan Corey, Nelson Lourenco, Bob Kelly, Bill Campbell, Bob Wentworth, Fran Hall, and Harry Thayer. Absent were Nikki Graney, Ann Surman, Phil Johnson, and Don Woodward. Selectmen present were Matt Quandt, Don Clement (BOS Chair), and Frank Ferraro. Town Manager Russell Dean, Finance Director Doreen Ravell, Police Chief Richard Kane, Fire Chief Brian Comeau, Assistant Fire Chiefs Eric Wilking and Ken Berkenbush, Police Captains Stephan Poulin and William Shupe also present.

2. Police Department Budget Review

Chief Kane presented the 2014 Police Department budget proposal via PowerPoint. The Chief reviewed the department's goals and objectives along with the budget changes from 2013. Chief Kane remarked the motorcycle is working well. He noted the department does not keep any revenue from speeding tickets, which is frequently misunderstood by the public. The revenue goes to the State to fund public safety programs including the Police Academy. Chief Kane discussed the need for an in helmet communications system for the motor officers.

Finance Director Ravell noted the health changes are included in the budget this evening. These are based on the new rates for 2014 and the budgets were distributed to the budget recommendations committee last Wednesday reflecting the change. Chief Kane reports due to a new fuel lock in this week, he is recommending the fuel budget for patrol be reduced from \$80,262 to \$69,498.

Subcommittee Chair Allan Corey presents the subcommittee report on the Police budget with their recommendations. Mr. Corey describes the key elements of the Police budget including health care and retirement costs. Subcommittee member Nelson Lourenco asks for clarification on the detective position. Chief Kane describes that it was a funded position taken out of the 2012 budget, restored at 6 months in the 2013 budget, and is now fully funded in the 2014 budget for 12 months. Mr. Lourenco seeks further clarification of the line item and is referred to 402-1110, FT Wages. Mr. Lourenco asks about the overtime line item increase of \$1,000 and is this attributed to the detective. Chief Kane clarifies this overtime line needs to increase by the amount to cover an increase in complex cases like Hepatitis C and others, which require more time outside regular working hours. Ms. Hall asks about copies, and will the Town be charging more for copies to offset increases in supply costs. Chief Kane suggests this is a Selectmen decision and they charge based on the rates that are set. He also notes revenue goes to the general fund, not to offset the police budget in a direct way. Mr. Wentworth asks about impersonators and a general discussion ensues about the nature of impersonators and fraud type crime including over the internet.

Chairman Stevens asks for a discussion on cruisers. Chief Kane reports there are 2 cruisers to be replaced in 2014 in the vehicles line item. The budget is \$75,396 for 2 cruisers. The days of the Crown Victoria are over. They are purchasing utility type vehicles which are now the norm. These are not SUV's. They have more room than the cars bought last year, which were small and officers had trouble getting in and out. The new sedans have blind spots as well. Chief Kane remarks the \$75,000 cost is not the vehicle cost that is actually \$54,000. However, the difference is needed to transfer equipment from the old cruisers into the new vehicles, paint the vehicles, etc. and these costs have increased. Discussion ensues on assignment of old vehicles, Chief Kane cites they go to the detectives, and then the oldest vehicles are retired. Captain Shupe remarks the 2 cruisers that will be retired have 115,000 to 120,000 miles on them. Chief Kane remarks on how the cruisers go from front line to the detectives to DPW for disposal or reassignment to other departments. Chairman Stevens suggests looking at one of the vehicles to perhaps be made available to the Building Inspector. Mr. Lourenco asks why the department does not buy Dodge Chargers. Chief Kane replies they are too fast for the type of community Exeter is and are not really needed. They are also very poor in the snow.

Chairman Stevens thanks Chief Kane for his presentation. The new total for the Patrol budget is established at \$1,933,464. The total Police budget is established at \$3,690,129. This includes Administration, Staff, Patrol, Animal Control, and Communications. Mr. Thayer moves to recommend, seconded by Mr. Campbell. Motion passes unanimously.

3. Fire Department Budget Review

Chief Comeau comes forward to lead the Fire Department budget review with Assistant Chief Ken Berkenbush and Assistant Chief Eric Wilking. Chief Comeau discusses recent initiatives within the department including the new ladder truck, which was approved in 2013 and will be delivered in spring 2014. Code red has also been a success for the Fire Department. In 2014 his major budget initiatives are adding hours to the deputy health officer to make the position full time, and funding advanced physicals for the firefighters.

Mr. Corey gives the subcommittee report on the Fire Department budget. Discussion about the Deputy Health Officer position. The subcommittee recommended this after discussion with the Department. The increase in hours and benefits totals \$30,298 for nine months. There was one dissenting vote on the subcommittee on this item. Mr. Lourenco as the dissenting vote is asked for his opinion. He describes inspections as being necessary but does not agree that many of the health items are mandated. Chief Comeau describes how the Fire Department was tasked with the health function 25 years ago. Mr. Berkenbush has been delegated the role of Health Officer by the Board of Selectmen. It should not be his primary charge. The need for the hours increase reflects health related activities, including inspection of daycares, food facilities. Other activities include the Sportsmen's Club which is taking a lot of time, water quality testing activities, sewer backups, etc. Mr. Thayer remarks that dining halls are ever expanding and there is a new one at Riverwoods. Mr. Berkenbush relays the intent of this is to allow him to return to more Assistant Fire Chief duties including overseeing the EMS function. Of the three administration personnel he is the only certified paramedic in the group. Mr. Kelly

asks what duties would go away if this is approved, and Mr. Berkenbush describes sewerage backup calls, mosquito control, sheltering, fostering, trash complaints, and tenant/landlord complaints. He is currently lead on all of these things. Mr. Wentworth suggests that the health function is in the wrong area, and should be separate. Discussion. Mr. Clement asks about regional opportunities and does every Town have a health officer. Mr. Berkenbush replies every Town has a health officer and in small towns it is the Board of Selectmen. On regionalizing, he suggests it would be more likely for Exeter to contract supplemental assistance beyond this with another community to use their health officer based on the workload. Chief Comeau suggests the transfer of duties will take up the Deputy Health Officer eight hours per week. He repeats in smaller communities it is the Selectmen who are the health officer, and cites Stratham as an example. Mr. Berkenbush is asked about his time spent on health activities. He says right now it is roughly half his time, or 75% of his time, on health type issues. Mr. Ferraro comments it is unlikely that eight additional hours is even enough. Mr. Campbell echoes this, suggesting that health duties are going to continue to be Mr. Berkenbush's to handle even with this change. Chief Comeau clarifies with the change the plan is the position will report to him directly, to relieve Mr. Berkenbush of these responsibilities. Consensus is that there is more than enough work to support this change.

Mr. Campbell moves the health total of \$160,245 to include the increase as requested. Mr. Thayer seconds. Motion carries.

The Administration budget is reviewed. The subcommittee reports on the funding for physicals requested by Chief Comeau. The Chief explains these physicals are offered by other departments such as Portsmouth and Dover. They are more intensive than standard physicals and he is seeking funds for this. Much discussion ensues on this item including the requirements, should firefighters get these physicals through insurance, etc. Mr. Kelly suggests finding alternatives or a better method and coming back next year. Mr. Kelly makes a motion to reduce line item 501-5263 by \$14,732, the cost of the physicals, leaving roughly \$2,000 the standard amount in the account. Mr. Campbell seconds. After discussion Mr. Thayer moves instead the total Fire Administration budget of \$534,112, which includes the reduction. Mr. Corson seconds. Motion carries.

Mr. Thayer engages on the Keltron additional alarm funding. Chief Comeau describes how this increase is due to old software and technology, and simply keeping up with the latest available upgrades. The subcommittee supports the increase request.

Mr. Corey describes the uniform increase. Uniforms are going up via inflation and must be fire retardant. Chief Comeau cites vendor increases; the department is not buying the "super" version of uniforms but has found a golf shirt type uniform that meets NFPA requirements 100%. The subcommittee supports this increase.

The Fit Trax equipment request is discussed. Mr. Lourenco had abstained on this item. General discussion ensues about the equipment purchase budget and historical spending. Mr. Kelly suggests the line has not been fully spent in years past and could this be purchased out of this

year's budget to allow level funding in 2014? Mr. Campbell seeks clarification on the overall budget, which is up 4.4%. He suggests a tax rate increase of 60 cents would not be seen favorably. He commends the Selectmen for reducing the rate this year but worries about next year. Mr. Kelly asks if there is a list of equipment the department has identified as needing. Mr. Wilking suggests there is not a list this evening. More discussion and Mr. Kelly suggests buying the Fit Trax out of this year's budget and level funding 2014 equipment purchase. Mr. Campbell moves to reduce the equipment purchase line by \$4,846 to \$45,000. Mr. Kelly seconds the motion. Motion carries, with Mr. Thayer in opposition.

Mr. Corey then discusses the SCBA increase in maintenance costs. This is supported by the subcommittee. Mr. Wilking describes how this maintenance is required on the SCBA equipment. It is flow testing to ensure functionality. Mr. Wilking describes the 9 sets of SCBA gear to be tested, 6 firefighters, and 3 call firefighters. The turnout gear increase is then discussed. Chief Comeau relays the NFPA standard lifespan of turnout gear is 10 years.

Discussion ensues on fuel. It is confirmed the fuel adjustment downward was made by the Fire Department last week in anticipation of the downward trend. Mr. Campbell moves the suppression budget of \$3,088,772. Mr. Thayer seconds. Motion carries unanimously.

Mr. Corson moves the Emergency Management budget of \$28,386. Mr. Campbell seconds. Mr. Kelly mentions radio repairs – the money isn't being spent why recommend an increase. Mr. Wilking explains the justification for the increase. No changes are made to this budget.

Finance Director Ravell reports the new Fire Department total is \$3,811,515. Mr. Thayer asks about the health line software. Chief Comeau reports these are new melverse forms being used by the health officer to input inspection information on a tablet. They reduced the supply line but it is more expensive. With no further questions the amount of \$3,811,515 for Fire Administration, Suppression, Emergency Management, and Health is supported by the committee.

Chairman Stevens notes he understands there is a big game tonight. He would like to discuss the Economic Development Director position at the next meeting. Also an outstanding item from last week is the elections budget. Finance Director Ravell confirms the number for elections should be \$31,077. Mr. Thayer moves to recommend this amount, Mr. Corson seconds. Motion carries.

Chairman Stevens states that DPW will be taken up on November 6th, and the committee will also discuss the Economic Development Director proposal at that time.

Mr. Campbell moves to adjourn. The committee stands adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Russell Dean
Town Manager