

Final Minutes

Budget Recommendation Committee

October 23, 2013

Call Meeting to Order

Chairman Corey Stevens called the meeting to order at 8:30 am in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Offices building. Other members present were Vice Chairman Harry Thayer, Allan Corey, Don Woodward, Rob Corson, Robert Wentworth, Bob Kelly, Bill Campbell, Francine Hall, Nikki Graney, Phil Johnson, Nelson Lorenzo, Nancy Boulanger, Selectwoman Julie Gilman, BOS Chair Don Clement, BOS Vice Chair Dan Chartrand, Selectman Matt Quandt, and Doreen Ravell, Finance Director.

Chairman Stevens gave an overview of what the daylong meeting would include. He talked about a site walk on Saturday, October 26 at 1pm. He asked all the subcommittees to get their minutes to Mr. Dean that day. He asked if everyone had had a chance to look of the last Budget Rec. Committee minutes for approval. Not everyone had a chance to look over them so Mr. Stevens said they are available on the town's website.

Chairman Stevens went on to ask if the gas rate had been locked in yet. Mr. Clement said it has been approved and will be done shortly. Chariman Stevens went on to talk about the Preliminary Budget report provided, talking about expenses and revenues. He reminded everyone that 2014 has a 53rd payroll week. Mr. Corson asked if payroll reflects any new positions. Mr. Clement said there are two position changes in the budget. There was discussion about the positions. Chairman Stevens went on to talk about warrants. Mr. Clement asked what the default budget number is, saying it is not provided and it is important. Mr. Corson said the default budget won't affect the tax rate. Chairman Stevens asked what the default is and Ms. Ravell said she can have it for the next meeting.

Chairman Stevens went on to say they need to take a hard look at what to do with general fund warrant articles. They need to evaluate for new spendings. There are elections in 2014. Mr. Clement said there are three elections.

Mr. Wentworth said he wants to make sure Chairman Stevens doesn't prejudge while going through the operating costs that are serving a benefit. He said there are a lot of professionals working within the Committee. He said they need to think about what the old costs were compared to new costs, saying distinctions are important in looking at a budget. He went on to say they are not there to change past costs. Vice Chair Thayer talked about necessity versus want.

Mr. Chartrand said they need to create a new frame, saying one initiative for the BOS is to grow the commercial real estate tax base. Mr. Clement said the BOS have asked the Budget Committee for a time to have a broad discussion. He said the budget process has worked out very well in the past few years.

Assessor

John DeVittori, town assessor, gave the Committee his budget narrative. The 2012 net valuation was \$1,576,917,568 and 2013 net valuation is \$1,606,450,382 making the total net valuation increase \$29,532,814. This will cause a .02 decrease in the tax rate leaving \$765,490 in extra cash. He went on to say improved residential is approximately \$8 million, commercial/industrial is approx. \$8.3 million, utilities are approx. \$4.6 million, and other is approx. \$8.6 million which includes \$4.7 million in elderly exemptions. From 2012 to 2013 thirty applicants have dropped from the Elderly Exemptions Five Year requalification. Mr. DeVittori went on to say the tax base for 2013 ends in March 2014. There is an increase of \$29 million which is justified into the 2013 tax rate which will be set in a couple of weeks.

Chairman Stevens had a question to the BOS about the increase in commercial valuation. Mr. Clement said the tax rate coming in reflects 80% residential and 20% commercial. They are hoping to increase commercial.

Vice Chair Thayer asked Mr. DeVittori about education, wondering if \$500 is enough to cover. Mr. DeVittori said he has to attend seminars and such to keep up his credentials. Mr. Stevens asked what a reasonable number would be. Mr. DeVittori said that figure should be more around \$1500. Mr. Kelly asked if his limit to course taking was due to time or money. Mr. DeVittori said he needs to look into new courses, as many of them are repetitive. Vice Chair Thayer asked Mr. DeVittori if he was comfortable with the \$500 for education. Mr. DeVittori said no, he would like to see \$1500 and if it is not all spent it will go back into the general fund. Mr. Corey would like all department heads to know they should not ask for less money than they need. A Motion was made by Mr. Corey and seconded by Vice Chair Thayer to increase education (line 01-4150-0205-5875) back to \$1,000. Motion carried – all in favor.

Mr. Clement reminded everyone that figures have been discussed between the Town Manager and department heads. Mr. Kelly said Mr. Clement is right, the Committee shouldn't be going around messing with numbers that have already been pre-negotiated.

Mr. DeVittori said the department has dropped its Welcome letter to new property owners. He gave a brief explanation what the letter said and gave reasons why Mr. Dean suggested in dropping the letter. Ms. Hall said emails are more effective and cheaper.

A Motion was made by Vice Chair Thayer and seconded by Mr. Clement to make the total revised assessing \$223,817. Motion carried – all in favor.

Planning

Sylvia Von Aulock, Town Planner, gave the Committee her budget narrative. She talked about her staff in the Planning Department. She said Planning and Building go together usually. The town's Natural Resource Planner, Kristen Murphy, was there to talk about Conservation Committee. Ms. Von Aulock went on to talk about all the Committees involved in Planning. She talked about the department's mission. Vice Chair Thayer asked, based on the Master Plan, what the ultimate population is when everything is developed. Ms. Von Aulock did not have a number, saying there is no perfect population or estimate. Mr. Clement commented, saying Rockingham County will experience a growth rate of 2%/year. Vice Chair Thayer said he thinks there is a number out there. Ms. Von Aulock said growth has not increased very rapidly since she started working for the town 14 years ago.

Ms. Von Aulock went on to talk about the department's goals and budget implications. She said the supply budget is important to run an efficient department. Computers, printers and software must be in good working order. Maintaining the GIS is very important. She went on to talk about the Master Plan. She requests \$10,000 for to make Chapter revisions a steady and efficient process. Every five years the Chapters in the Master Plan have to be reviewed. Chairman Stevens asked what the exercise is to get this done. Ms. Von Aulock talked about hiring a consultant and partially relying on volunteers. Chairman Stevens asked how the Master Plan gets used every day. Ms. Gilman said the Master Plan is what every department, Board, or Commission should be looking at for decision making. Chairman Stevens asked if decisions have to go by the Master Plan and Ms. Gilman answered it is not regulatory, it is a guide.

Ms. Hall had a question about consultant fees, wondering how many hours of work \$10,000 will get. Ms. Von Aulock said it will be negotiated. Vice Chair Thayer said they are spending money, but not in an area they know any figures about, saying he would like to know that population figure. Mr. Lorenzo asked why \$10,000? He asked if Ms. Von Aulock had any proposals or quotes. Ms. Von Aulock answered she did not but she has brought up the idea multiple times. She picked \$10,000 thinking it is a good number to start with.

Ms. Von Aulock went on to break down her budget requests. She requests \$10,000 for the consultant, \$3,000 requested funds, \$5,000 for engineer assistance, and \$2,000 for grant matching funds totaling \$20,000.

Regarding the storm water project, Mr. Kelly said he is worried about hiring a consultant on the DPW side and also hiring one by Planning. He would rather work within regulations and use Jennifer or Phyllis, why have two consultants. Ms. Von Aulock said she has talked to Jennifer about this. Mr. Kelly just said he would rather have someone within the town work on it then have a consultant. Ms. Von Aulock said herself and Ms. Murphy are very much involved. Mr. Chartrand said the meeting was missing Mr. Dean at that moment, that he knows how everything flows. Chairman Stevens suggested waiting on the \$5,000 portion until Mr. Dean was present.

Ms. Von Aulock continued through her budget requests. Chairman Stevens asked how many were in favor of the \$10,000 request for Master Plan updating. Chairman Stevens said they were tabling the MS4 line but could talk about the Master Plan. Ms. Von Aulock said she reviewed her budget with Mr. Dean and also talked about MS4 with Jennifer, who wanted it is Ms. Von Aulock's budget. She went on to say the regulations need to be updated so everything is in compliance with MS4 regulations. The sooner the Master Plan gets updated, the better.

Ms. Hall asked what the price was to put the Master Plan together. Ms. Von Aulock said it was done over a period of time with several grants totaling around \$12,000-\$14,000.

Chairman Stevens had a question about travel. Mr. Corey said if the money is not spent it goes back in the general fund. Ms. Von Aulock said she is very cautious when spending travel money. They are very frugal and do as much as possible that is free.

A Motion was made by Mr. Corey and seconded by Mr. Corson to accept the budget for Board of Adjustment in the amount of \$2,600. Motion carried – all in favor.

A Motion was made by Vice Chair Thayer and seconded by Mr. Corey to accept the budget for the Historic District Commission in the amount of \$2,188. Motion carried – all in favor.

Kristen Murphy spoke next about Conservation Commission. She said there are two new budget items for this year. They are looking for two interns to work at the rate of \$12/hr. She said there were two interns that worked this year and did a very good job.

She next spoke about the Raynes Farm improvements, specifically a new roof. She said this project has been on the Conservation Commission's agenda for years. It will cost \$22,000 to replace the roof. The Con. Comm. feels strongly the barn needs to be up kept. The current roof was installed in 1991. The asphalt shingles last 10-25 years and it has been 22 years. She talked about some events that are held at the barn. L-CHIP gives funds to the barn. Con. Comm. has many volunteers doing multiple events. Ms. Hall asked if the barn is open to the public and also wondered what the interior is used for. Ms. Murphy said it is open upon request. She said some things are stored in the barn. The property does not bring in any money but the field is farmed. Mr. Lorenzo asked what the assessed value is for the property. Mr. Clement the property was purchased for \$500,000 but there were a couple grants that paid more than half the cost. Mr. Lorenzo asked if there is any way to make the property more productive. Ms. Murphy said farming does not produce much money. Mr. Campbell said there is a man who wanted to have animals there but there is no house to live in on the property so they were concerned what would happen to the animals at nighttime. Mr. Corey said if they do not redo the roof then nothing will ever be able to happen inside at the farm. Mr. Clement said the land could be used for hunting or snowshoeing. The land was set aside for historic preservation. Chairman Stevens asked anyone if they are not in support of this improvement. Vice Chair Thayer would be much more receptive if the job was split up into two years. Ms.

Murphy went on to talk about all the repairs that have been done to the barn including internal support posts, storm water power, parking, etc.

A Motion was made by Mr. Campbell and seconded by Ms. Hall to accept the Conservation Commission budget in the amount of \$32,682. Motion carried.

Building

Doug Eastman said he didn't have many budget request increases. He gave some numbers, including \$147,552 for fees collected. He said there are some big projects coming into town. From October 1 to October 23 building permit applications brought in \$30,000 in revenue, which is mostly commercial. All revenue goes into the general fund. Mr. Eastman talked about the new vehicle request. He requested \$16,000 to purchase a new Jeep Liberty for the building department, as the current vehicle is uninspectable. He went on to say there a lot of projects going on and he is very busy. Thirty million dollars worth of construction is a lot of work. He said he does have an electrical inspector that is a lot of help.

A Motion was made by Vice Chair Thayer and seconded by Mr. Johnson to accept Mr. Eastman's budget request in the amount of \$229,456. Motion carried – all in favor.

Town Clerk/Elections

Andy Kohler, Town Clerk, talked about what the town clerk's office does. She said elections are coming up in March, September, and November. She talked about an increase in the Town Moderator salary. A Motion was made by Mr. Corey and seconded by Mr. Kelly to accept the Town Moderator budget in the amount of \$969. Motion carried – all in favor.

Ms. Kohler would like postage to be increased to \$5000. A Motion was made by Vice Chair Thayer and seconded by Mr. Corson to accept the Town Clerk budget request in the amount of \$326,935. Motion carried – all in favor.

Ms. Kohler talked about a new software program to allow registering of boats. Ms. Graney asked what surrounding areas register boats. Ms. Kohler said Hampton and Newfields are a couple. She said there are not many surrounding towns that register boats and talked about how Exeter will profit from being able to register boats. The software program costs \$600 which is a one-time fee. A Motion was made by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Mr. Wentworth to rescind the prior vote. Motion carried - all in favor. A new Motion was made by Vice Chair Thayer and seconded by Mr. Kelly to accept the Town Clerk budget in the amount of \$327,535. Motion carried – all in favor.

A Motion was made by Vice Chair Thayer and seconded by Mr. Kelly to accept the Election budget request in the amount of \$31,077. Motion carried – all in favor. Ms. Kohler talked about adding wages for ballot clerks. Chairman Stevens decided to revisit Elections at a later date. A Motion was made by Vice Chair Thayer and seconded by Mr. Campbell to rescind the last vote. Motion carried – all in favor.

Human Services

Sue Benoit, Human Services Director, said she is now budgeted for a 25 hour work week. Her hours were cut and the budget was lowered. Mr. Corey said there is an increase in rental assistance. Ms. Hall asked what the criteria is for people to get assistance from the town. Ms. Benoit said it is governed by law but the criteria is all different (i.e. for oil, rental, etc.)

Chairman Stevens was concerned that historically the budget has not been this high. There was discussion about the history of the budget and what is needed now. A Motion was made by Vice Chair Thayer and seconded by Mr. Kelly to change line item 2 to \$27,500. Motion carried – majority vote yes, Mr. Corey votes nay.

A Motion was made by Mr. Corson and seconded by Vice Chair Thayer to accept the Human Services budget in the amount of \$86,855. Motion carried – all in favor.

IT

Andy from IT talked about expenses. He said there are 80 pcs for the town with 120 users in six locations within a three mile radius. Andy said there is a typo; line 5000 should read \$1200. Mr. Clement asked what phone utilization entails. Andy explained it involves phones on the desk, all the phone calls that are made (i.e. the service to make the phone calls). Andy went on to say someone is going to come in and do repairs which should cost \$1500 at most but \$7000 is the budget request.

A Motion was made by Vice Chair Thayer and seconded by Mr. Corey to approve the budget for IT in the amount of \$154,297. Motion carried – all in favor.

Tax Collection

Ms. Ravell said the town collects \$40 million a year in tax revenue which comes from property tax and water/sewer. The department reports to the state. She said the requests have increased for legal and deed type expenditures. Mr. Clement commented that they are doing much better as a municipality collecting taxes. Mr. Chartrand said from the end of last year until September 30, 2013, there has been a 64% decrease on property taxes in arrears. Vice Chair Thayer said the department is doing a great job and that 64% proves it and also

commented that they are doing it without having to hire more help. Ms. Ravell said this is the first time in ten years that they town has had a great audit report. Mr. Corey said the financial record keeping is better than ever. Mr. Wentworth said “clean” audit reports are looked at by financial institutes and such and thanked Ms. Ravell for all her work.

A Motion was made by Mr. Campbell and seconded by Vice Chair Thayer to accept the budget request in the amount of \$97,315. Motion carried – all in favor.

Human Resources

Donna Cisewski from Human Resources talked about what she does, including supporting town managers and employees. She explained that her supply budget has increased because she is required to keep employee records for fifty years. She said she has no more room for files. Chairman Stevens asked why she doesn’t keep the files electronically. Ms. Cisewski explained that would require a new scanner which is \$1200. Ms. Hall asked how she planned to put all the files into the hard drive. Ms. Cisewski said that herself, Ms. Riffle and possibly hiring a temporary part-time employee to scan all the files. Mr. Corson spoke from experience, saying putting all the files on a hard drive with all that information could be disastrous. Mr. Kelly recommended talking to Andy and Russ about trying to find a less expensive option.

A Motion was made by Mr. Wentworth and seconded by Mr. Campbell to accept the budget request in the amount of \$88,114. Motion carried – all in favor.

Town Manager

Mr. Dean was absent from the meeting so Mr. Clement spoke on his behalf. He said the Town Manager’s office is the command center for most departments. He talked about all the responsibilities of the office. Mr. Dean gets involved with property owners and developers. Sheri Riffle is his assistant. Next year’s budget reflects her going full-time. He went on to talk about Ms. Riffle’s responsibilities.

A Motion was made by Mr. Campbell to accept the budget request in the amount of \$205,760 for the Town Manager’s department. Motion carried – all in favor.

Board of Selectmen

Mr. Clement talked about the demo of some uninhabitable houses that were put on the BOS expenses. A Motion was made by Mr. Corson and seconded by Mr. Campbell to cut \$3300 out of line 01-00-8050, taking it down to \$3000. Motion carried – all in favor. A Motion was made by Mr. Corson and seconded by Vice Chair Thayer to make the total of the BOS budget be \$21,744, and accept that number. Motion carried – all in favor.

Transportation

Doreen Ravell, Finance Director, spoke about Transportation budget. Mr. Clement talked about COAST. Ms. Gilman explained how transportation expenses and COAST funding works. She went on to explain that town usage has increased because there was a route added. A Motion was made by Mr. Corson and seconded by Mr. Campbell to change the total of the requested Transportation budget to \$26,919. Motion carried – all in favor.

Legal

Ms. Ravell said they are requesting \$25,000 more for legal. They are currently over budget for this year. Mr. Clement talked about reasons why they are over budget, including the 91-A suit and Pine Road. A Motion was made Mr. Corson and seconded by Mr. Campbell to make the budget request for Legal \$80,000. Motion carried – all in favor.

Trustee and Trust Fund

A Motion was made by Mr. Campbell and seconded by Mr. Woodward to accept the budget request for Trustee and Trust Fund in the amount of \$891. Motion carried – all in favor.

Finance

Doreen Ravell talked about what her department does, including managing computers, working with the town manager on the budget, working with all the town's departments, and dealing with the audits. Ms. Ravell continued talking about expenses and Chairman Stevens asked about the increase in the user cost. A Motion was made by Mr. Campbell and seconded by Mr. Corey to approve the finance accounting in the amount of \$273,406. Motion carried – all in favor.

Treasurer

Mr. Corey spoke about what the treasurer and deputy treasure do. A Motion was made by Mr. Campbell and seconded by Mr. Wentworth to accept the budget for Treasurer in the amount of \$11,419. Motion carried- all in favor. One abstention from Mr. Corey.

EDC

EDC was tabled until Mr. Dean can be present.

Other Cultures and Receptions

A Motion was made by Mr. Campbell and seconded by Mr. Corey to accept the budget request in the amount of \$11,350. Motion carried – all in favor.

Swasey Parkway

A Motion was made by Mr. Woodward and seconded by Mr. Corson to accept the budget request in the amount of \$10,950. Motion carried – all in favor.

Special Events

A Motion was made by Vice Chair Thayer and seconded by Mr. Corson to accept the budget request in the amount of \$14,000. Motion carried – all in favor.

Debt Service

A Motion was made by Mr. Wentworth and seconded by Mr. Corson to accept the budget request in the amount of \$726,289. Motion carried – all in favor.

Misc.

A Motion was made by Mr. Johnson and seconded by Mr. Corson to accept the budget request for Miscellaneous. Motion carried – all in favor.

Vehicle Replacement and Capital Outlay

Tabled.

Total Benefits

A Motion was made by Mr. Corson and seconded by Mr. Corey to accept the Total Benefits in the amount of \$348,481. Motion carried – all in favor.

Chairman Corey moved to adjourn at 3:23 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Nicole McCormack
Recording Secretary

