

**Budget Committee
November 6, 2013**

Present: Nancy Spencer Smith, Chairperson; Carlene Stewart; Dave Mankus; Priscilla Colbath; Bruce Rich; Ken Paul, Selectmen's Rep; Ron Canney; Craig Farley; Jerry O'Connor; Asha Kenney; Teresa A. Williams, Town Administrator; and Toni Bodah, Secretary.

Ms. Smith called the posted meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Department and/or committee representatives were present as indicated below.

Ms. Colbath advised that Committee members would be receiving new packets from the School tomorrow, as there was a correction made to the Spaulding tuition information.

General Government – Financial Administration

Mr. O'Connor noted that this appropriation is down by \$3200 from 2013. Ms. Smith referred to the increased request for Tax Collector's expenses, noting there is a substantial balance remaining in that line in the current budget. Ms. Casperonis referred to the anticipated increase in postage, as well as the cost to maintain the copier shared with the Town Clerk. Ms. Williams referred to an updated expenditure report and advised the Tax Collector's expense line actually has about \$1269 remaining. Ms. Casperonis anticipates that will be spent by year end as the abstractor performing title searches has not been paid. There will also be additional mailings. **Mr. Mankus moved to approve the \$76,187 for Financial Administration. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

General Government – Elections, Registrations, etc.

Ms. Smith referred to the increased request for Town Clerk expenses. Ms. Ward noted that there will be 3 elections in 2014 (compared to 1 in 2013), which actually affects a number of the lines in this section. It was noted that there were 3 elections in 2012, yet the appropriation that year was much less. Ms. Williams stated that this line includes the cost of new software components from Interware. This budget is also picking up a portion of the copier maintenance, shared with the Tax Collector's budget. It also includes the cost to mail absentee ballots. It is unclear where that cost was covered in the 2013 budget. This line is currently over-expended. The turnover in personnel necessitated a greater than anticipated expense for advertising. Ms. Smith stated that a \$3000 increase seems excessive. Ms. Stewart was advised that the \$1800 cost for the Interware software is a one-time cost, with a \$300 per year maintenance fee. Ms. Williams added that we must still pay the maintenance fee for the out-going software; however, we may be able to get a portion of that fee refunded. Ms. Ward noted that she is trying to utilize just one company that offers more services. Mr. Mankus indicated he would rather see funds appropriated for software within the operating budget (rather than as a separate warrant article). Ms. Williams advised Mr. O'Connor that the \$968 listed in the supporting information is just for Town ballots.

Mr. Canney referred to the increase in the salary line and questioned whether there is any criteria used in evaluating performance. Mr. Paul advised a multi-page form is used to evaluation fulltime employees, with many factors considered. The Town used to have an automatic COLA increase each year; however, that was eliminated and changed to a merit-based system. Mr. Rich noted that the increase in the salary line is significant and asked whether it reflects the same hours. Ms. Ward stated that she hopes to change her hours to include some evening hours, perhaps being open one night until 6 p.m. Mr. Rich asked how many more hours per week that would be.

Ms. Ward has budgeted for 38 hours per week in order to allow time for the necessary closing routine. The former Town Clerk had budgeted for 34 hours. Related employment costs are located elsewhere in the general budget. **Mr. O'Connor moved to approve the \$74,436 appropriation for Election, Registrations. Mr. Mankus seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

Public Works – Highways -Town Maintenance

Mr. Paul noted that this appropriation request is down more than \$2000 from 2013. **Mr. Paul moved to approve the \$203,000 appropriation for Town Maintenance. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

Public Works – Highways - Highway Department

Mr. Clough noted that there is a slight increase in the Mileage/Expense line to allow new employees to access pertinent training. Ms. Smith asked whether there will be funds left in the 2013 budget. Other than the costs for hot-topping, Mr. Clough anticipates most areas will be in line. Mr. Mankus referred to the reduction in the Vehicle Maintenance line, noting the frame work that was accomplished in 2013. Mr. Clough stated that the frame work went well and should extend the life of the truck. Mr. Clough confirmed to Mr. O'Connor that there is a separate electric meter for the school buses, paid for by the school department. Mr. O'Connor referred to the equipment list and noted that the new F350 is not listed. Ms. Williams indicated the list should be updated. **Ms. Colbath moved to approve the \$352,423 appropriation. Mr. Mankus seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

Public Works – Solid Waste Disposal

Ms. Smith referred to the increase in the fuel line. Ms. Williams believes the 2014 request is based on actual 2013 expenditures. Ms. Smith referred to the increase in the equipment maintenance lines. Ms. Williams advised this relates to planned service on the compactor. Ms. Smith referred to the cost to haul brush listed in the explanation for Disposal Fees. Mr. Paul explained that we used to burn brush; however, it cost more than \$30,000 to remove the resultant ash. We will now chip the brush, but the finished product has little value. Mr. Paul advised Mr. Canney that the cost is based on tonnage. Mr. Canney was also advised that revenues are generated from recyclables, as well as sale of permits. Mr. O'Connor wondered whether use of off-road diesel would suffice for the skid steer and the loader, noting there is no tax associated. Mr. Paul noted that the Town may be exempt from that tax, adding that we get diesel from the state. Ms. Williams will check. **Mr. Mankus moved to approve the \$416,752 appropriation. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

Town Hall Annex

Ms. Williams advised that the cost for cleaning services has increased by \$400 (to \$3400). **Mr. Mankus moved to approve the \$19,058 appropriation. Mr. Paul seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

Parks & Recreation

Ms. Smith asked about the reference to scholarships in the Holiday Programs explanation. Mr. Robinson stressed no one will be turned down from participating, and each individual situation is considered. Various fundraisers are held throughout the season to help offset the cost of running the programs. Although \$1200 is listed for scholarships, the actual cost may be higher.

Mr. Robinson spoke to the higher number of children signing up for the various programs. In addition, it is not unusual for a private individual to come forward to pay for a registration fee, sneakers, etc.

Ms. Colbath asked how the anticipated expansion of the after-school program would affect Parks & Recreation. Mr. Robinson does not believe it will have a large effect, and in some cases it may actually be a benefit to the Parks & Rec program.

As of October 8 \$400 remains in the Park Flowers line. Mr. Robinson stated that not all bills have been paid. Additionally, he would like to add an area for beautification in 2014. Ms. Smith noted it would be more cost-effective to use perennials. Mr. Robinson stated they are doing that where possible.

Mr. Mankus is aware of the suggestion to purchase a bus for Parks & Rec use. Mr. Robinson hopes there will be a warrant article to purchase an 18-25 passenger bus. This would be much more comfortable for the adults who participate in various programs, and it would also benefit various youth programs. Ms. Colbath received confirmation that Parks & Rec has a revolving fund (separate from this operating budget). Mr. Canney asked about revenues. Mr. Robinson explained that all revenues go to the revolving fund and are used to pay the cost of various programs. The \$5200 profit from the recent golf tournament will be used towards the fireworks display. Ms. Williams advised that year-to-date revenues total \$41,100. **Ms. Colbath moved to approve the \$136,645 appropriation. Mr. Mankus seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

General Government – Greater Wakefield Resource Center

This is a line for repairs of the building. Ms. Smith asked why all funds relating to the GWRC are not in one place. Ms. Williams stated there is a separate section for each Town building. This line was established several years ago for maintenance of the outside of this Town-owned building, for which the Town is responsible. The GWRC is responsible for the interior of the building. Additionally, the Town is required to pay for capital items exceeding \$1000. **Mr. Mankus moved to approve the \$2500 appropriation. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

General Government – Town Hall

Ms. Williams stated that she now has updated figures for janitorial costs. Only 1 bid was received in response to the Town's solicitation. The portion of the bid for Town Hall was quite high; however, Ms. Williams was able to negotiate with the bidder. The cost is still higher than the current cost; however, the current system is not working well. Ms. Williams advised that the current contractor did not offer a bid, although they were asked to do so. **Mr. O'Connor moved the \$54,450 appropriation for Town Hall. Mr. Mankus seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

General Government – Insurance

Ms. Williams advised that the Board has determined the cost for Workers' Comp at \$38,763 (through Primex) and the cost of property liability at \$54,184 (through Property Liability Trust). The new total for this section is \$99,325. Ms. Williams advised Mr. Canney that the Town's modifier rate for property liability is .81 (slightly reduced from last year). Discussion followed regarding how modifier rates are established. **Mr. Mankus moved to approve the \$99,325 appropriation. Mr. Canney seconded the motion, which passed 10-0.**

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The next meeting on the municipal budget was set for Monday, December 9, 2013, at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall.

The Budget Committee will meet tomorrow, November 7, at 6:30 p.m. at the Paul School to begin review of the school budget.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Toni Bodah, Secretary