

**Budget Committee**  
**January 14, 2014**

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

Also present were Wayne Robinson; Jim Miller (videotaping); Phil & Connie Twombly; and Nathan Fogg. Joining the session in progress were Police Chief Ken Fifield and Mark Duffy.

The posted meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Ms. Smith. **Mr. Mankus moved to approve the minutes of December 9, 2013, as presented. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed 6-0-3.**

There are several outstanding 2014 budget issues to address as follows:

Article #31 – This relates to purchase of a vehicle for Parks & Rec. The original request was for \$47,000. Mr. Robinson is reducing his request to \$27,000. He is confident that he would be able to purchase a used shuttle bus, with 27-person capacity. [Language will be amended to refer to a “small used shuttle or mini bus.”] Mr. Robinson has consulted with a number of vendors. Mr. Fogg was advised that Mr. Robinson would be the driver of the vehicle, and would be fully licensed. Said vehicle would have government plates and would be insured under the Town's property liability insurance policy. Mr. Paul noted that the \$27,000 figure includes the first year's expenses. **Mr. Mankus moved to recommend Article #31, as amended. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

Articles #34 & #35 – Ms. Williams stated that Town Counsel has revised the proposed warrant and has recommended that the Budget Committee vote to recommend/not recommend each of these articles. Article #34 created a CRF to establish the new Town cemetery, and the Board of Selectmen is recommending that this CRF be dissolved. The current balance in that CRF is approximately \$100. **Mr. Mankus moved to recommend Article #34 as presented. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

Article #35 created a CRF to purchase land and easements for aquifer protection. Ms. Smith questioned the rationale behind this article. Mr. Paul noted that the funds have not been used in some time, and the Board believed those funds would not be used. He added that the original language was rather restrictive. The current balance in that CRF is approximately \$26,000. Ms. Smith suggested it would be wise to keep this fund in place for a year to see if a need for its use arises. Mr. Mankus thought the purpose of the original article was to protect the Town's well; which has been addressed. Ms. Smith indicated that she has a parcel in mind at present but would need to determine whether it actually relates to the aquifer. Ms. Williams advised that the article must now stay on the warrant; however, the Budget Committee may vote not to recommend the article. **Mr. Fogg moved to recommend Article #35 as presented. Mr. Paul seconded the motion, which passed 5-4.**

Article #37 – This article includes the Operating Budget (\$4,313,758) and the Default Budget (\$4,270,548). **Mr. O'Connor moved to recommend Article #37 as presented. Mr. Mankus seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

**Budget Committee**  
**January 14, 2014**  
**Page 2**

At 6:50 p.m. the meeting recessed until 7:05 p.m. Ms. Twombly led those now present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Ms. Smith opened the public hearing and indicated the purpose of the hearing is to review the proposed municipal budget for 2014. She advised that the Operating Budget is being proposed at \$4,313,758. This includes the General Operating Budget at \$4,232,446, 2 grants at \$5228 and \$6389, and the Sewer Budget at \$69,695.

Mr. Twombly received clarification from Ms. Williams regarding the percentages listed under "Prior Year Change." This calculation represents the percentage of change between the Committee's 2014 recommendation compared to the 2013 appropriation.

Mr. Miller suggested taking 5 minutes to explain to the viewing public a little about the budget process and how we got to this point this evening. Mr. Paul advised that in September, the Town Administer begins to meet with Department Heads to discuss their anticipated requests. After that, the Board of Selectmen meets with the Department Heads to discuss the requests in more detail. As a result of those meetings, the Selectmen's proposed budget is developed and presented to the Budget Committee for deliberation. Adjustments may or may not be made. Mr. Miller stated it is important to note that there are multiple layers of review, and at each step the opportunity exists to ensure the budget is "trim." Ms. Smith noted that this evening is the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Budget Committee to review the proposed municipal budget for 2014. She added her belief that the Board of Selectmen has done an excellent job in preparing this budget, and the Committee has amended very little. Mr. Rich indicated that the next step is Deliberative Session, scheduled for February 1 at 7 p.m. at Town Hall. Ms. Williams stated that at Deliberative Session, each article will be reviewed. Qualified residents will be able to propose amendments to the dollar amounts listed in any article, which amendment will then be voted on by those qualified voters present. Dollar amounts can be increased or decreased; however, the purpose of the article cannot be changed.

Mr. Miller questioned how the individual warrant articles are developed. Ms. Williams indicated that the Board of Selectmen decides early in the process what amounts to recommend for established (and new) capital reserve funds, based on the needs of the Town, equipment replacement schedules, etc. Additionally, a Department Head may have a specific item to purchase, such as the shuttle bus for Parks & Rec. The Department Head makes the recommendation to the Board, who votes and takes their recommendation to the Budget Committee, who also vote. Other articles are submitted via petitions and can be for a variety of purposes. Ms. Williams briefly outlined the requirements involved. Mr. Miller stated that ultimately the voters decide what money to appropriate on voting day.

Mr. Duffy noted that at some point the Town will need to stop increasing the budget. He personally does not feel that the Town Hall needs to be open 5 days a week and suggested it could operate 3 days each week. Mr. Mankus noted it would be difficult to keep good employees if you do not offer competitive compensation packages. Mr. Duffy suggested that the Committee should consider flat-lining the budget. Mr. Mankus stated that some portions of the budget must be increased each year. Mr. Duffy stressed that the Committee cannot expect the taxpayers to continue to fund the increased budgets. He noted that Parks & Rec does wonderful work but questioned whether purchase of a bus is necessary. Ms. Smith noted that will be up to the voters to decide.

**Budget Committee**  
**January 14, 2014**  
**Page 3**

Mr. Duffy reiterated that we should consider reducing hours in some areas and flat-lining the budget. Mr. Miller noted that this is a great community and sometimes we need to give a little so that others in the community benefit.

A brief discussion followed regarding the role of the Budget Committee. Mr. Mankus suggested the possibility of soliciting public input at the beginning of the budget season to hear recommendations.

Ms. Smith closed the Public Hearing at 7:27 p.m., at which time the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Toni Bodah, Secretary