

Wakefield Budget Committee
7-14-2014 Meeting at Wakefield Opera House
Draft Minutes

In attendance:

Committee Members: Jerry O'Connor, Nancy Spencer-Smith, Carlene Stewart, Dave Mankus, Steve Brown (school board rep), Charlie Edwards (board of selectmen rep), Priscilla Colbath, Bruce Rich, Craig Farley,

Town: Teresa Williams, Town Administrator

Public: Connie Twombly, Pam Wiggin, Phil Twombly, Dave Tibbetts, Fred Clough, Nate Fogg, Kenneth Fifield, Angie Casperonis, Valerie Ward, Rosemary Stewart, Arlene Fogg, Wayne Robinson

Mr. O'Connor opened the meeting at 6:45, & led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Williams informed the committee that department heads had been invited to answer any questions the committee have regarding the current budget status. She went on to explain that the budget figures distributed are as of 5-31-14, adding that each department is on target with 50%-60% of the budget funds used as of that date. In addition, she told the committee about the new accounting software being installed and explained a little about the format changes that the committee will be seeing later this year.

Mr. O'Connor commended the department heads on the current figures. Mr. Edwards told the committee that the 2013 audit is done, and GASB Unqualified status – a very good result. He went on to say that the town's surplus fund balance is at @\$1.7M. Mrs. Williams explained that projections say that a town's surplus fund balance should be 8%-17% of revenue and Wakefield's is at @13%. Mrs. Williams went on to say that a small amount, perhaps \$200,000, might be available to offset some of the next tax rate.

Mr. O'Connor then began the budget review asking for questions/comments by segment:

Executive – no questions

Election, Registration & Vital Stat. – Mr. Rich asked if the expanded Town Clerk hours were working out. Mrs. Ward said that they are worthwhile. She also confirmed that the clerk's office is now accepting credit card payments.

Voter Registration – no questions

Financial Administration – Mrs. Williams explained the shortfall in Budget Committee expenses as coming from notices that needed to go into Foster's instead of the weekly paper because of notice timing. Ms. Caperonis explained the change in lock-box procedures. While the tax

collector office is working 4-5 extra hours recording payments during the 2 tax collection weeks, there is definitely no reason to go back to paying the \$3,600 for a lock box.

Reappraisal of Property – no questions

Legal Expenses – no questions

Personnel Benefits – no questions

Planning Board – Mr. Fogg was asked about use of Mr. Garrepy professional services. Mr. Fogg explained that he has not yet presented the bills, but he expects about \$3,000 in charges shortly.

Zoning Board – no questions

Heritage Commission – no questions

Town Hall – it was noted that approximately \$10,000 in repairs & maintenance expenses will probably be incurred before the end of the next quarter.

Greater Wakefield Resource Center – no questions

Town Hall Annex – Mr. Mankus wondered if the fuel oil figures were in line. Mrs. Williams confirmed they are. Mr. Rich wondered if the books are prepared on a cash or accrual basis. Mrs. Williams confirmed they are prepared on a cash basis.

Cemeteries – no questions, though Mr. Twombly did advise the board that the 1st 3rd of the maintenance contract has been paid since 6-1-14 and the Misc. Maintenance item is being held for tree removal being done soon.

Insurance – Mrs. Williams advised the committee that the town's package policy (property & liability coverage) has been paid at a little below original estimates.

General Administration – Mrs. Colbath wondered how the Virtual Town Hall web services were working out. Mrs. Williams responded that it is taking some getting used to, but having the ability to post notices immediately, as needed, is great. She added that (1) the software is very user friendly and (2) this year's bill is not reflected yet. Mr. Mankus expressed concern about timely posting of agendas & minutes. It was confirmed that everything is current now.

Police Department – Mr. Mankus wondered why the department had a warrant article for the spike strips requested in March rather than including them in the Equipment line. Chief Fifield explained that it had been his plan to purchase them with a 50% grant, which we did not get, so the spikes were not purchased. He went on to say that Wakefield borrowed Ossipee's last week, and that having our own set would be worth it. He also explained that there is a maintenance component to having the spike strips – spikes need to be replaced every time the equipment is used. Then there was a discussion about how holiday pay is distributed.

Ambulance – Mr. Mankus asked if the service breaks even, explaining that the selectmen do have a process for “forgiving” charges to residents. Mrs. Williams responded with figures: revenue for period is \$70,275 against expenditures of \$58,391. Mr. Mankus then asked the committee to be prepared to discuss having 24hr ambulance coverage, and where/how to provide a location for staffers to wait for calls. Mr. Edwards expressed the opinion that 24 hr coverage would be too expensive.

General Fire – Mrs. Williams believes the clothing line shortfall is because of unanticipated new personnel. She also noted that the chief holds the new equipment line funds until he sees how the other lines are faring.

East Wakefield & Union Fire Stations – Noting the heat line shortfall, Mrs. Williams said the heat is set as low as possible.

Forest Fire – no questions

Building Inspector – no questions

Public Safety Building – no questions

Town Maintenance – It was noted that \$66,000 just came in against the highway construction projects line.

Highway Dept – Mr. Rich asked about a wood chipper

Street Lighting – no questions

Solid Waste Disposal – Mr. Mankus asked how much the town received from scrap metal. No figure was available.

Animal Control – no questions

Outside Agencies – no questions

Public Assistance – no questions

Parks & Recreation – Mr. Robinson offered that the ball fields are in good shape. He is still shopping for a van.

Libraries – no questions

Patriotic Purposes – no questions

Conservation Commission – Mr. Fogg noted that membership expenses are up, causing the shortfall in the Educational Resources line.

Mr. O’Connor applauded the efforts of all the departments.

Mrs. Williams reported the CIP should be done soon w/input from the department heads. It will be distributed to the Budget Committee as soon as it is available.

Mr. Edwards reported that the new sheds are on their way, and the construction plan is okay.

Mr. Rich asked about revenue from boat permits, and they were not segregated in the report. Mrs. Williams advised the committee that the new format lumped all vehicular revenue into one item – auto.

Mr. Mankus made a motion of accept the minutes of 5-8-14 as amended. Mrs. Colbath offered the 2nd. Motion carried 7-0-2.

Mrs. Colbath distributed something she had prepared on the status of the school budget.

Mr. O'Connor made a motion to adjourn at 7:45PM. Mrs. Colbath offered the 2nd. The motion carried 9-0.

Respectfully submitted by Deborah D. Gauthier