

Budget Committee
November 1, 2014

Present: Jerry O'Connor, Chair; Dave Mankus; Bruce Rich; Lisa Kimball; Carlene Stewart; Priscilla Colbath; Steve Brown (School Board Rep); and Charlie Edwards (Selectmen's Rep) joining the meeting in progress.

Mr. O'Connor called the posted meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Representatives from various organizations and Town committees/departments were present as indicated below. Mr. O'Connor advised that Craig Farley was unable to attend due to a personnel situation, and he read an email from Nancy Spencer Smith regarding her attendance at the funeral for her Episcopal Bishop in Boston this afternoon.

1. Outside Agencies

AWWA – Linda Schier – Ms. Schier thanked the Town for its support over the years. AWWA is seeking an increase in funding for the first time since 2008. They continue to receive State grants, both from ME and NH. Ms. Schier gave an overview of 2014 projects. Mr. Rich asked whether any testing had been done to determine how phosphorus levels have been affected. Ms. Schier advised that they are monitoring all lakes and are waiting for 2014 test results. She noted, however, that response time in the lakes is not immediate. A complete report will be provided directly to the Planning Board. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$15,000. Mr. Rich seconded the motion, which passed without objection.**

Wakefield Food Pantry – Howie Knight – Mr. Knight referred to material previously provided to Committee members, and noted that the WFP request for 2015 is \$500 higher than 2014. The cost of food has risen by 17% for a variety of reasons. Additionally, the cost of propane has increased. The WFP continues to seek ways to reduce their operating costs. Mr. Knight stressed how fortunate they are to have so many volunteers. He added that every applicant is screened for eligibility. Ms. Stewart questioned the percentage of volunteers who are also recipients. Mr. Knight advised there are only 2 volunteers who are also recipients. More would be willing to volunteer but presently there are more than enough volunteers. Mr. O'Connor expressed appreciation for the work done at the WFP. **Ms. Colbath moved the request at \$6500. Mr. Rich seconded the motion, which passed without objection.**

VNA/Hospice – Mary Lou McLane – Ms. McLane provided an overview of services provided. She advised they made 1899 visits during the past year to Wakefield residents. The 2015 appropriation request is down slightly. Ms. McLane referred to the decrease in Medicare reimbursement. Mr. Rich asked how the Affordable Care Act has impacted this program. Ms. McLane indicated that more people definitely have insurance; however, she does not expect that the need for VNA/Hospice services will disappear. They did not see a decrease in visits over the past year even though more participants have insurance. There seems to be a "wash" between the cuts in Medicare and the increase in those having insurance. Mr. O'Connor received confirmation that Wakefield taxpayers will not pay any portion of deductibles for those participants with insurance. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$14,000. Ms. Kimball seconded the motion, which passed without objection.**

Meals on Wheels – Ms. Olimpio stated that this meal delivery program is administered by GWRC. The meals are prepared by Ossipee Concerned Citizens and are delivered by volunteers organized by GWRC. These drivers are not reimbursed for any expenses.

GWRC generally receives \$1000 from the Town (within its regular budget appropriation request) to administer the program. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$8406. Ms. Stewart seconded the motion, which passed without objection.**

Starting Point – Melissa Couture – Ms. Couture provided an overview of their program, which is available 24/7.

Ms. Colbath moved to reconsider the previous vote. Mr. Brown seconded the motion. Ms. Olimpio expressed concern regarding the appropriation for “Meals on Wheels” as this is not an accurate description of the program. She also referred to the senior meals program at St. Anthony’s. It was noted that the official Meals on Wheels program used to operate in Wakefield and was awarded an appropriation each year. That program no longer extends to Wakefield. In its place, meals are prepared by Ossipee Concerned Citizens, Elderly Nutrition Program and are picked up (and delivered to Wakefield residents) by volunteer drivers, whose schedule is established by GWRC. The Town Administrator will be asked to rename this line. **Ms. Colbath withdrew her motion, and Mr. Brown withdrew his second.**

Mr. Mankus moved the request for Starting Point at \$2214. Mr. Rich seconded the motion, to which all agreed.

Huggins Hospital Medication Bridge – Jack Drinkwater – Mr. Drinkwater stated that this request has decreased as the number of participants has decreased in part due to the Affordable Care Act. A brief discussion followed regarding Medicare Part D limits. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$347. Ms. Kimball seconded the motion, to which all agreed.**

Northern Human Services/Mental Health Center – Eve Clauson – Ms. Clauson provided an overview of the services offered. They are seeking level funding. 98 Wakefield residents were served in 2014. According to Ms. Clauson, many participants benefit from the Affordable Care Act. Perhaps one day, this organization will not need to seek financial assistance from surrounding towns. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$4300. Ms. Stewart seconded the motion, to which all agreed.**

American Red Cross – Mr. O’Connor noted that the request is down from last year. Mr. Mankus noted that many negative comments about the presence of the American Red Cross have been made in the news recently. However, Mr. Mankus has personal knowledge that the Red Cross has been very present in areas recently hit by severe storms. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$1500. Mr. Rich seconded the motion, which passed without objection.**

Tri County CAP – Lisa Hinckley – Ms. Hinckley stated that they are seeking level funding even though the numbers served has increased. She provided an overview of their services, including the Wakefield Senior Meals, held at St. Anthony’s, which relies on contributions. Home deliveries of meals is not a part of this program. They are, however, the conduit for food pantries to pick up food from Manchester. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$12,500. Mr. Rich seconded the motion, to which all agreed.**

GWRC – Liz Olimpio – Ms. Olimpio noted that the GWRC is seeking an additional \$2500 over the 2014 request. Basically, this would cover the increased cost of food. The grant from the State covers 3200 meals; however, they served 3746. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$32,500. Ms. Stewart seconded the motion, to which all agreed.**

Ms. Olimpio stated the GWRC is at a crossroads. Less than 1/3 of their annual budget comes from the Town of Wakefield. They have many wonderful volunteers. However, there is no money in the budget for future plans/development of the building. She spoke to the activities occurring within the building. She questioned whether the Board of Selectmen wants only the first floor used. The GWRC board would like to eventually create two offices upstairs. Ms. Olimpio suggested there may be a need for a subcommittee to create a vision of the entire building. Mr. O'Connor noted that the role of the Budget Committee is to review the budget requests. Perhaps the GWRC and the Board of Selectmen need to include a plan for the building on the CIP and develop a budget request for the Budget Committee to review. Ms. Olimpio also noted that they are always looking for additional volunteers.

WPI – Victor Becker – Mr. Becker referred to two goals of WPI, the first being to bring the Town Hall up to code in spirit and letter. He spoke to a number of improvements made in that regard. Additionally, WPI wants to bring the building to life in the areas of culture and entertainment. Wakefield's World Musical Festival was a great success. In 2014 WPI was able to use Town funding to leverage over \$30,000 in grants, plus another \$6000 in private contributions. The next project is to create a fire vestibule. It is also hoped to improve the lighting on the stage. The grant process is becoming more intense. Mr. Rich asked whether the GWRC building could eventually come within the bounds of WPI. Mr. Becker stated that WPI currently has its hands full, but the overall purpose of WPI would include such other projects. Mr. O'Connor referred to fire exits being an issue in Town Hall. Mr. Becker agreed, adding that plans include addressing that issue; however, it will be quite expensive. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$10,000. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, to which all agreed.**

Chief Nason advised that the Fire Department has been working with the Town Administrator, Board of Selectmen and WPI on fire safety. They are also working with the Gafney Library to get that building tied into the Town Hall alarm system. In response to Mr. Mankus, Chief Nason said he would have to check whether the alarm would sound in the event of a heating failure. It could be added if it is not currently part of the system.

Child & Family Services – Ruth Zax – Ms. Zax stated that they have been serving children and families in NH for 165 years. 1079 hours last year were spent on Wakefield children and families. She distributed literature about their services and spoke to those services. The State grant requires local financial support. Many of their participants are insured, but insurance does not cover ancillary services. In response to Ms. Colbath, Ms. Zax stated they do not approach towns for funding until the level of services warrant same. Staff members do work directly with Deb Wilson at Paul School. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$1000. Mr. Rich seconded the motion, to which all agreed.**

Appalachian Teen Mountain Project – Nate Boston – This organization is celebrating its 30th anniversary as a mentoring activity-based program. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$1200. Ms. Stewart seconded the motion, to which all agreed.**

CASA- This organization is seeking level funding. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$500. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed without objection.**

Coast North Bus – Jeff Donald – Mr. Donald spoke to the routes and frequency of this bus service, which typically includes Market Basket, Hannaford and Walmart in Rochester. Ms. Kimball understands that this service was initially provided without cost to the Town.

Mr. Donald stated that when the program was first launched, they had several grants, which are now petering out. If Wakefield were not to fund this program, the service would continue for now, but perhaps not for the long term. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$1206. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed without objection.**

The approved section total for Outside Agencies is \$111,173. Mr. O'Connor called for a recess at 10:38 a.m. and called the session back to order at 10:51 a.m.

Gafney Library – Beryl Donovan – This request reflects an increase over the 2014 request. Feedback from a recent survey indicates the need for additional hours. Therefore, the Gafney is proposing a 3 hour per week increase in operations. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$130,200. Ms. Stewart seconded the motion, which passed, with 2 abstentions.**

Literacy Program – Beryl Donovan – This program is administered by the Gafney Library but is budgeted separately. They are seeking level funding. According to Ms. Donovan, the actual testing is paid for by the SAU. Mr. Brown believes that the City of Rochester pays for the testing as part of the tuition contract. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$37,210. Ms. Stewart seconded the motion, which passed, with 2 abstentions.**

Wakefield Library – Pam Wiggin – The Wakefield Library is seeking level funding even though some expenses have increased. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$9610. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed without objection.**

Heritage Commission – Pam Wiggin – Ms. Wiggin stated that the Heritage Commission is part of Planning and Zoning and has been in place since 1993. The Commission deals with historic aspects of Town and administers the Historic District. Much is done via volunteers. The budget request is for operating expenses of the Commission and is slightly increased to cover the new alarm system at the Grange, as well as increased heating and electric costs. Ms. Wiggin spoke of the activity at the Railroad Station, as well as the Stagecoach Museum and upcoming events. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$12,507. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed without objection.**

General Fire – Todd Nason – Chief Nason referred to various changes in utility and fuel costs. Mr. Mankus referred to the ambulance response time during the day (estimated at 9 minutes) vs. night (estimated at 23 minutes). Chief Nason agreed those were reasonable estimates. Eventually he believes we will require 24/7 coverage at the public safety building. Some towns have contracted ambulance services, quartered within a town-owned building. Chief Nason indicated that other towns are in situations similar to Wakefield. Mr. Mankus noted that Wolfboro has more of a transporting service, given that the hospital is in that town, while smaller towns are more serviced based.

Mr. O'Connor brought the discussion back to the General Fire budget and questioned whether any firefighters are 24/7. Chief Nason advised that answer is “no” and stressed the need to address the 2nd floor of the public safety building, anticipating the future need for 24/7 coverage. Mr. Mankus asked about the number of volunteers. Chief Nason indicated that the numbers have increased slightly for the ambulance service, adding that we now have good coverage.

Ms. Kimball asked about the response time comparison between mutual aid and our volunteers. Chief Nason advised that it is about the same. Mr. O'Connor asked if we have the new truck yet. Chief Nason advised it is currently being built and is expected by mid-December.

Ms. Colbath questioned the request for a 17% increase in pay for the Fire Chief. Chief Nason stated that he has needed to contribute more time over the last several years, which works out to about \$21 per day. He has held back from seeking an increase previously in an effort to fund the cost of increased coverage for nights. Ms. Colbath asked whether the Board had any cap to pay increases. Mr. Edwards advised that the Board is currently working on a wage chart using information for surrounding towns. The Board is trying to get all personnel on that chart in order to control increases. Some increases have been larger percentages if it has been determined that the previous rates were very low on (or absent from) the wage chart. Mr. Edwards stressed the importance of keeping the current great group intact.

Chief Nason stated that the position of fire chief is considered to be part time. There is more need for the EMT's to be on site than the fire chief. Ms. Kimball asked why 3 employees left over the past year. Chief Nason advised that one just didn't work out and had difficulty working with volunteers. The others advanced their careers via better job offers. Mr. Edwards spoke to the high standard to which Chief Nason holds his staff. Mr. O'Connor noted that a stipend is different than a per-hour rate. Mr. Edwards stated the Board tends to apply a common-sense rule when awarding increases. In response to Mr. Rich, Chief Nason advised that it has been 8-9 years since he received an increase, noting the importance of insuring adequate pay for his staff. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$177,373. Mr. Rich seconded the motion, which passed without objection.**

Ambulance – Todd Nason – The decrease in the wage line reflects a long-time (higher paid) employee having left. In addition, Chief Nason had previously included funds for anticipated increases in this line; however, those funds have been moved to the Payroll Contingency line. A brief discussion followed regarding how the contingency line works. Ms. Kimball was advised that we have 4 fulltime personnel working 12 hour shifts, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mr. Mankus asked whether Chief Nason has investigated the cost of contracted services. This option was investigated a number of years ago, at which time it was decided not to be the best option for Wakefield. These services would only respond to medical calls. They would not respond to fire calls, would not work with the school programs, would not do inspections, etc. Additionally, the cost of the contract would increase each year. In most cases, the contractor would provide its own ambulance. Any revenue generated would have gone directly to the contractor.

Ms. Kimball asked how much of the ambulance billing is written off. Chief Nason stressed that he wants people who need the ambulance service to seek it, rather than not calling because they can't afford to pay. The Board of Selectmen reviews the list of unpaid bills and may decide to waive balances due to hardship. Approximately \$113,500 in revenue has been received year-to-date. Chief Nason referred to shared revenue with Frisbie for runs when they meet our response vehicle. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$182,640. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, to which all agreed.**

East Wakefield, Union and Forest Fires – Chief Nason noted that most of any increase relates to heating. He spoke to their efforts to reduce heat loss in the buildings. A CRF has been established to meet the needs of a large outside fire. This Forest Fire line is for tools and, possibly, for leveraging grant money.

Mr. Mankus moved the request for East Wakefield Fire at \$4980. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed without objection.

Mr. Mankus moved the request for Union Fire at \$4780. Ms. Stewart seconded the motion, to which all agreed.

Mr. Mankus moved the request for Forest Fires at \$2001. Ms. Kimball seconded the motion, which passed without objection.

Chief Nason expects to request \$75,000 for the Fire Truck CRF, plus \$25,000 for the Ambulance CRF. We will likely need to replace the ambulance within the next couple of years.

Public Assistance – Arlene Fogg – Ms. Kimball referred to the request for \$1000 for an assistant. Ms. Fogg explained these services would be used if she went on vacation, or was otherwise out of the office. Revenue year to date is more than 10% of what has been expended for General Assistance. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$52,515. Ms. Kimball seconded the motion, which was agreed to be all.**

Land Use – Nate Fogg – The revenues listed on the budget form were compared to the revenue report— all good! **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$11,503. Mr. Rich seconded the motion, which passed without objection.**

BI/CEO – Nate Fogg – The increase in the computer software line was questioned. Mr. Fogg advised there is no new software; rather allocation of costs have been reconfigured. Reference was made to only 7 permits issued for new houses. Mr. Edwards noted that business is steady. Mr. Mankus referred to this department having grown dramatically over a number of years. Mr. Fogg noted that the land use clerical line is now included in the BI/CEO wage line, as both positions are held by him. Mr. Mankus emphasized that the increase in the budget is considerable for only 7 new house permits. He believes the department was created with the understanding that expenses would not exceed revenue. Mr. Fogg noted that the land use budget has decreased by \$15,000. Ms. Kimball added there appears to be much work involved with permitting renovations, with the associated permitting fees being lower. Mr. Rich noted it is almost a “wash” between changes in the land use clerical and BI/CEO wage lines.

Mr. Jim Miller referred to the aggressive changes in zoning regulations several years ago, adding that now we are trying to unravel that mess. He wondered whether Mr. Fogg could advise us how much time and money is being spent to accomplish that. Mr. Fogg stated that it will take years, as we must address the regulations in pieces. We have made some good progress, but there are still conflicts to address. Most of Mr. Fogg’s hours are spent on code enforcement rather than land use. Every issue in code enforcement is unique and must ultimately be defensible. However, Mr. Fogg is very familiar with land use and its associated issues. Mr. Mankus referred to a number of unenforceable rules. **Mr. Brown moved the request at \$112,190. Ms. Stewart seconded the motion, to which all agreed.**

Conservation Commission – Nate Fogg, yet again! – Mr. Fogg advised that only 1 camper from Wakefield attended the summer camp this year, but it is hoped that number increases next year. Several lake associations have also assisted with sponsorship of campers. Discussion followed regarding the value of educating our youth regarding care of the lakes. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$3853. Mr. Rich seconded the motion, which passed without objection.**

Voter Registration – The decrease in the 2015 request is a result of fewer elections next year. **Ms. Colbath moved the request at \$1975. Ms. Kimball seconded the motion, to which all agreed.**

Patriotic Purposes – Level funding is sought for this line. **Ms. Colbath moved the request at \$1650. Ms. Kimball seconded the motion, which passed without objection.**

Solid Waste – Mr. Winn is unable to attend given current staffing issues. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$423,965. Ms. Stewart seconded the motion, to which all agreed.**

Sewer – Mr. Soucy is unable to attend given the staffing issues at the Transfer Station. Mr. Edwards advised that one of the pumps was replaced this year. The plan is purchase a second pump to be held in reserve for the second station. Discussed the revenue generated to offset the entire budget and how the user rate is determined. Mr. O'Connor stressed the importance of controlling the material coming in as the current lagoon system cannot support increased use. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$73,960. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed without objection.**

Sewer Bond – The bond is scheduled to be paid off in 2019. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$11,618. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, to which all agreed.**

Tax Anticipation Note - \$1 is kept in this line in the event it becomes necessary to take out a note prior to property tax revenue coming in. **Mr. Mankus moved the request at \$1. Ms. Colbath seconded the motion, which passed without objection.**

Mr. Fogg referred to the capital improvement plan ("CIP") and asked how it can be made to work better for the Budget Committee. Mr. O'Connor advised he was provided with a copy of the CIP, adding it should be made available to all Budget Committee members. He agreed it would be beneficial for each member to have this as a planning tool. Mr. Fogg advised that the CIP committee has not met in 2014—perhaps this should occur. The CIP could be useful when considering appropriations to various capital reserve funds. Mr. Fogg will endeavor to gather the CIP committee prior to the BC's December 8 meeting.

Mr. O'Connor requested that members review the minutes of the July meeting so that they can be amended/approved at the November 6 meeting.

Ms. Stewart questioned whether the BC had thoughts on the overall percentage of increase in the 2015 budget. Mr. O'Connor noted that the Board of Selectmen usually presents a reasonable budget. Mr. Rich noted that the proposed operating budget reflects a 2.3% increase, without consideration of capital reserve funds.

Mr. Brown referred to the School Board's investigation of possible withdrawal from SAU 64. The School Board has a plan for its own SAU; however, because Milton's withdrawal committee did not support moving forward with withdrawal, Wakefield's withdrawal committee has chosen not to support moving forward. The relevant warrant article in March will ask voters whether they support the withdrawal committee's recommendation to not move forward. According to Mr. Brown, the School Board is encouraging voters to vote against that article.

A “no” vote will actually be an indication that the voter wishes the Board to move forward with withdrawal, which could then be effective as early as July 1, 2016. A “yes” vote would delay the process for an additional year. Mr. Brown stated that the Town could save \$174,000 by having its own SAU, with most of the savings found in salaries and benefits. He stressed that Wakefield would also have more local control.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Toni Bodah, Secretary