

**Budget Committee**  
**January 13, 2015**

**Present:** Jerry O'Connor, Chairperson; Priscilla Colbath; Lisa Kimball; Bruce Rich; Dave Mankus; Steve Brown, School Board Rep; Carlene Stewart; Charlie Edwards, Selectmen's Rep; Nancy Spencer Smith; Teresa A. Williams, Town Administrator; and Toni Bodah, Secretary.

Also present at this time were: Donna Martin (videotaping); Relf Fogg, Norma Joy; Beryl Donovan; Sharon Theilling; Aru'vah Ferrill; Cait Mills; and Denny Miller.

Mr. O'Connor called the meeting to order at 6:20 p.m. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. O'Connor referred to the Gafney Library request for support of a warrant article, which request he then read aloud. The Gafney is requesting \$15,000 from the Town of Wakefield (as part of a total of \$30,000 to be raised) in order to hire a professional fundraiser and an architect, both relating to the planned expansion of the library. Mr. O'Connor questioned why this issue was not raised at the November 1 meeting, when the Gafney Library initially met with the Budget Committee. Ms. Donovan indicated that the Gafney Library had apparently misunderstood the process and had anticipated that the Board of Selectmen would be putting together the warrant article. **Mr. Mankus moved to recommend the article presented by the Gafney Library. Ms. Stewart seconded the motion.**

Mr. Miller referred to his past relationship with the Gafney Library. He noted that previously this was a county library and is now a privately owned facility. Mr. Miller believes the Gafney already has an approximately \$130,000 appropriation within the Town's operating budget, with which he has no issue. He does, however, have an issue with the Town paying \$5000 towards an architectural plan for a building which the Town does not own. He referred to the Library's request several years ago for the Town to contribute towards repair of the front of that building, which request the Budget Committee did not support since the building was privately owned. Mr. Miller believes this is a similar situation. As long as the library is a private structure, owned by a private corporation, the taxpayers should not contribute towards the building.

Mr. O'Connor agreed that we must be careful about spending taxpayers' funds on private property. Mr. Edwards asked whether Mr. Miller believes the Gafney Library is beneficial to the community. Mr. Miller indicated he absolutely believes that to be the case. Since it benefits the community, Mr. Edwards believes the Town should help. Mr. Miller indicated that the Gafney Library is just like all other outside agencies. He suggested that the Town would not support an appropriation to address a structure located in town but owned by the Red Cross. Mr. Edwards stressed that the library goes with the community. Mr. Miller would agree if this was a publicly owned library. He noted that the Gafney chooses to remain a privately owned building.

Ms. Donovan stressed that all other towns in the county are supporting libraries. She agreed that the building is privately owned but added that the Town is getting a good bang for its buck. Ms. Donovan added that the Town contributed \$10,000 years ago to construct the present building. Mr. Mankus stated that if the Town were to accept ownership of the library, it would result in a huge money pit. He added that the Gafney provides many services, and he personally would choose to support this article. Mr. O'Connor called for a vote. **The Committee voted 3-3-3 (Ms. Smith, Mr. Rich and Ms. Kimball abstaining), and the motion failed.** Therefore, the ballot will indicate that the Committee voted not to recommend the article.

Article #22 – Operating Budget – Mr. O’Connor read the proposed article aloud. This article would raise \$4,425,989 as an Operating Budget, with a Default Budget of \$4,335,578. Mr. Brown questioned whether the Committee needs to wait for the Board of Selectmen to vote on all articles. However, the Board has voted on all articles other than #22, and they have voted to support all appropriations that comprise the proposed Operating Budget. The Board will confirm their support of this article at its January 14 meeting. **Ms. Colbath moved to support Article #22 as presented. Mr. Mankus seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.**

Mr. Fogg referred to the relationship between the total operating budget and certain individual appropriations that comprise that total. Mr. O’Connor called for a recess at 6:42 p.m.

At 7 p.m. Mr. O’Connor called the session back to order and opened the public hearing. At this time Chief Ken Fifield, Mark Duffy, and 2 unidentified individuals joined the session.

Mr. O’Connor stated that the Budget Committee has reviewed this proposed budget during a number of meetings held since November 2014. He directed those present to the Budget Summary, specifically to the Budget Committee’s recommended appropriations, and proceeded to review each section as follows:

General Government- \$1,225,302 – Mr. O’Connor referred to a change having been made previously to the Assessing line, which was increased to allow for the possibility of performance of a statistical update. Ms. Williams advised the cost of the update, if necessary, would be \$25,000. A portion of that cost would be covered by funds encumbered from the 2014 budget. No update was done in 2014.

General Government Buildings - \$303,953 – No comments forthcoming.

Public Safety - \$1,296,155 – Ms. Williams advised Mr. Duffy that the \$900 increase in the Union Fire Station budget reflects actual use of electricity and heating fuel.

Public Works - \$539,237 – Ms. Williams noted that the decrease in this budget is a result of the creation of a separate capital reserve fund for highway construction projects.

Landfill - \$423,965 – Mr. O’Connor noted that significant revenues are generated at the Transfer Station to offset this budget.

Public Health - \$23,907 – No comments forthcoming.

Human Services –Outside Agencies - \$111,173 – Mr. O’Connor noted that Wakefield is more generous than some other communities in funding outside agencies. Mr. Duffy asked whether AWWA is on track to complete the Brackett Road project. Ms. Williams was unsure whether AWWA received adequate funding to proceed with this project.

**Budget Committee**  
**January 13, 2015**  
**Page 3**

Public Assistance - \$52,515 – No comments forthcoming.

Community Affairs - \$321,918 – No comments forthcoming.

Financial Affairs - \$11,619 – Mr. O'Connor noted that most of this appropriation relates to the sewer debt service.

The total for this portion of the proposed budget is \$4,339,744.

Capital Outlay

Safety Grant - \$5,228 – Chief Fifiel advised this relates to extra patrols to enforce the speed limits. The cost of the officers is reimbursed 100%, via a portion of the fuel tax paid at the gas pumps.

DWI Grant - \$7,028 – Chief Fifiel advised this relates to extra patrols used to discourage drinking while driving.

Safe Commute Grant – Chief Fifiel advised this grant does not become available until the fall and will be addressed at that time.

Spike Strips - \$1,950 – The Chief proposes purchasing 5 sets of spike strips, 50% of which cost would be reimbursed.

Highway Department Mower - \$25,000 – Mr. O'Connor advised this mower would be used on the sides of the roads. Previously, the Town has rented this equipment, which is not always readily available.

Mr. Fogg referred back to the Financial Affairs section and Mr. O'Connor's comment that most of the appropriation relates to the sewer debt service. He asked to what the remainder relates. Mr. O'Connor advised that \$11,618 represents the sewer debt; the remaining \$1 is in the Interest Expense line in the event the Town needs to take out a tax anticipation note.

Back to the mower: Mr. Duffy asked whether anyone has compared the cost to purchase a mower vs. renting. Mr. Edwards noted that the mowers are in high demand in the summer, and the Town was unable to rent one this past year.

Mr. O'Connor then directed those present to the Warrant Articles that involve an appropriation, and read each as follows (including vote tallies of both Board of Selectmen and Budget Committee):

WA #6 - \$25,000 for the Ambulance Capital Reserve Fund – This appropriation is in accordance with Chief Nason's plan for replacement.

WA #7 - \$10,000 for the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund – This appropriation is to continue to build the fund in the event it becomes necessary to address an issue.

WA #8 - \$75,000 for the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund – Mr. O'Connor noted that the Town just purchased a new truck in 2014. It is now time to rebuild the fund for future purchases.

WA #9 - \$50,000 for the Highway Truck Capital Reserve Fund – Mr. O'Connor advised that the Town purchased a new truck in 2014, and this fund must also be rebuilt.

WA #10 - \$53,000 for the Invasive Species Capital Reserve Fund – This fund is used for the protection of our lakes. Mr. Duffy received confirmation that the fund is generally exhausted each year. The lake associations have submitted requests already for 2015; however, it is difficult to know in the fall what actually will be needed for the following year.

WA #11 - \$31,500 for the Police Cruiser Capital Reserve Fund – Generally, one vehicle is replaced each year.

WA #12 - \$16,000 for the Technology Capital Reserve Fund – Ms. Williams stated that the Town plans to replace the server in 2015, as well as one work station.

WA #13 - \$50,000 for the Town Hall Improvement Capital Reserve Fund – This is an on-going project, on which progress is being made.

WR #14 - \$2,000 for the Cemetery Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund – No comments.

WA #15 - \$1750 for the Emergency Management Capital Reserve Fund – No comments.

WA #16 - \$193,000 for the Highway Construction Projects Capital Reserve Fund – Mr. Duffy asked which roads will be addressed. Ms. Williams advised that the potential list includes work on Summer Street, Beech Street, Canal Road, Witchtrot Road, White Birch Road, and Oak Hill Road. The final decision will be made in the spring. High Street will be paved in the spring. Mr. Duffy believes the funds for road construction projects should be included in the regular budget. The Town runs a risk of this warrant article not passing. Ms. Williams agreed, but if it does pass, any unused funds would still be available for the next year rather than being returned to the undesignated fund balance.

WA #17 - \$1950 for Spike Strips – Previously addressed by Chief Fifield. If the grant is not received, the expenditure will not be made.

WA #18 - \$25,000 for a Highway Department Mower – Also previously discussed.

WA #20 - \$30,000 for the Gafney Library – It is proposed that \$15,000 would be raised from taxation, and \$15,000 would be contributed by the Gafney Library Capital Fund. Mr. Duffy asked about the plan to expand. Mr. O'Connor stated that a purchase and sale agreement is in place. The Library has requested these funds to complete a floor plan and to hire a professional fundraiser. He added that the Budget Committee has just received this information this evening. Ms. Donovan indicated the process has been on-going for more than a year. Currently, they are doing the work of a library three times its size. The project is a big one and is being broken down incrementally. Significant fundraising needs to be accomplished. The Library is hoping the Town will be willing to assist with the cost of an architectural plan, as well the cost of a professional fundraiser. Mr. O'Connor expects further discussion on this article at Deliberative Session and personally expects the voters to pass this article.

WA #22 - \$4,425,989 for an Operating Budget – If this article should fail the Default Budget would be \$4,335,578. If everything passes, the 2015 budget would reflect a 3.7% increase over the 2014 budget. This would represent about \$0.20 on the tax rate, assuming the valuation remains the same.

Mr. O'Connor closed the public hearing at 7:41 p.m.

**Ms. Colbath moved to approve the minutes of December 8, 2014, as presented. Ms. Stewart seconded the motion, which passed 8-0-1.**

**Ms. Colbath moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Stewart. Vote unanimous!**

Respectfully submitted,  
Toni Bodah, Secretary

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