

TOWN OF WILTON BUDGET COMMITTEE

Location: Wilton Town Hall: Selectmen Office
7:00 P.M.

FINAL MEETING MINUTES November 20, 2014

Members Present: Chair Cary Hughes, Betsy Castro, Joyce Fisk, Caitlin Maki, Joe Torre, and Dawn Tuomala, Secretary

Selectmen: William Condra and Rick Swanson

Attendance: Mr. Jerry Greene, Treasurer, Ms. Pam Atwood and Mr. Steve Elliott, DPW Director

1. Chairman Hughes called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

The Selectmen were invited to attend the meeting for their input and expectations for the proposed 2015 budget.

2. Review and Approval of September 25, 2014 Minutes

Motion was made by Ms. Castro to accept the minutes of September 25, 2014 as written; seconded by Mr. Condra; 4 in favor; 2 abstained; motion passes.

3. Review Expense Report Through October

Mr. Greene has been reviewing the budget throughout the year presenting recommendations to the Selectmen. His review of the October expenses had not found anything major at this point. Mr. Swanson stated that the Energy Committee has been reviewing the Town's buildings beginning with the Town Hall to suggest energy improvements and where there might be savings.

Ms. Castro questioned the Ambulance budget and if a mortgage should be within the budget. After discussion it was determined that the Town can't hold a mortgage and that the mortgage for the Ambulance building is held by the Ambulance Association and is not held by the Town. The Town leases the building from the Association; this line item should be listed as a lease and not as a mortgage. Under the Warrant Articles the Town Hall Storage and bathroom repairs is listed as Article #14 and it should be listed as #19.

Mr. Greene stated that the Library is having a storm drainage problem; to do the full plan could cost up to \$50,000. There was a leak causing 4 feet of water in the children's section in the basement. Intercepting storm drains are being installed 5 to 6 feet off the building this year as a partial solution for this year. The new drainage will be tied into the street drainage. Mr. Greene stated that the entire building will need to have a perimeter drain to adequately solve the problem.

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The question of carrying money over from the previous year was raised. Town Attorney Little has been consulted and has stated that he can be the Town agent that could put the money into an escrow account. He would then be able to disperse the funds once the work is completed. To be able to do this a contract will need to be in place prior to the end of the year. The contract along with a letter requesting the amount of funds to be escrowed/encumbered will need to be given to the selectmen prior to the end of the year. The HTE contract for the new reservoir dam can be done this way. The Planning Board contract with NRPC for the Master Plan chapters that have been started but not yet completed can be done this way. The Rescue Truck should be under contract before the end of the year.

Mr. Swanson questioned if a department has a surplus at the end of the year can that be rolled forward into the next year otherwise they would be tempted to just spend the money. Chairman Hughes stated that the Department Heads are rarely spending money at the end of the year just to use up the money in a budget, additionally budgets have been trimmed down in the past years so there isn't any extra monies in the department budgets. The Town Hall building budget has saved money this year doing the repairs. According to the energy audit if a little money is spent weather proofing the building then ultimately more money could be saved. This will need to be put back into the budget for this year. It is important that the real numbers be put in the proper items and that the budget values are not changed. If a line is overspent it will need to be justified but the overall bottom line for a department should not be overspent.

There were questions raised about the \$80,000 to purchase the easement on Abbott Hill, since it would appear that the deal won't have been completed by the end of the year; what will constitute an encumbrance? Mr. Condra stated that the Selectmen have contacted Attorney Little who then returned a letter with 11 questions. The Board of Selectmen have reviewed the letter and decided that 5 out of the 11 issues raised need to be further investigation. They want to know how to preserve the funds. Chairman Hughes will contact DRA to find the answers to the questions. Questions were also asked about whether it has been determined what the appropriate sum of money to purchase the easement would be. The Warrant Article was written up to \$80,000 so there could be a lesser amount required if more money were raised. Mr. McSweeney has been asked to provide a full disclosure of funds collected up to the 1.6 million, they want to know how much and from whom they have received funds. There was no public comments.

4. Budget Preparation Process

Mr. Hughes stated that we will be using the 5 year review for each department that was prepared by Ms. Pucciarello. Each Department has been assigned a member of the committee that will review the budget with the Department Head prior to their presentation to the entire committee. All of the budgets will be reviewed in December; Review of the entire budget will begin in January in preparation for the Public Hearing in February.

Mr. Swanson stated that the Selectmen have recommended several additions to the budget. They have decided to help the Souhegan Valley Rides by budgeting \$1,500. Last year the Lions Club paid for them. This could be added to the Health and Welfare line but might best be put in as a small contribution since there are other like items in that budget.

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The Town Clerk is preparing to accept credit cards for water and sewer bills along with car registrations and taxes. The people will also be able to pay bills on line but there will need to be a \$5,000 initiation fee to purchase the software and hardware required. There will then be an annual fee of \$350. There won't be any loss of income since they add 3% in charges to the transactions. Since this expense is under \$10,000 it can be added to the operating budget of the Town Hall instead of as a warrant article.

Ms. Atwood explained that in the year 2016 the Town is going to be required to do a Town wide revaluation. The appraiser estimated \$30,000 to do the entire revaluation and suggested to put \$15,000 in a capital reserve account. They will still have to do the 20% yearly rolling evaluation the following year. Doing 20% each year makes the full evaluation easier.

Mr. Swanson stated that last year the Budget Committee cut the maintenance line item out of the Conservation Commission Budget and the Selectmen have decided to put \$2,800 into that line item. The Selectmen are in general consensus that they are in favor of putting the amount back into the budget and increasing it. There was no public comment.

5. Employee Raises

Mr. Greene stated that to offer 1% increase to the Town employees is an insult to the employees and that it is less than the cost of living. The custodian at the school has a larger increase of 2.6% as a comparison. Even a 2.5% to a 3% increase would be an insult, look at other areas in the budget to cut funds to give the employees more money. Mr. Greene emphatically stated that a 1% is totally inadequate and that it needs to be increased immediately.

The committee had discussed this at the September meeting and had voted on the 1% only as a starting point. There will be further discussions on the matter in January when the entire budget has been put together. It was not appropriate to give a larger raise and then not be able to provide it in the end.

Last year the police asked for a 7% increase, half was given last year and there is an informal commitment for the other half this year. Ms. Castro stated that she already has the Library budget and they put in a 3% raise in their budget. But they are not Town employees.

Mr. Greene wanted the Budget Committee to change their mind and override the decision previously made by the committee. The members did not vote to change the amount at this time but will revisit it in January when the entire membership is present. The intent has always been to provide a larger raise across the board at that time, if the bottom line of the budget has not increased. Some of the departments have a larger payroll than other departments so it might be more difficult for some departments to save on the bottom line while providing a 3% overall. It was felt to be more conservative at this early time in the budget process and not to give and then take away which would be far worse.

The committee asked the Selectmen to attend the budget meeting scheduled on January 8th, 2015 to further the discussion on raises. This would be a Joint Meeting.

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6. Other Business

Ms. Castro stated that the Library employees questioned why they aren't allowed to take part in the Town's retirement plan. Since they are paid from a trust fund and the Town only provides a donation to the Library they are not Town Employees. Mr. Greene suggested that they speak with Edward Jones who helped to set up the Town Employee Retirement Fund.

There was also a question whether the Budget Meeting scheduled for December 18th could be moved to December 16th instead due to conflicts. There will be an email sent out to the members to confirm if everyone is able to do the change.

7. Adjournment

The next meeting will be on December 4, 2014 at 7:00 at the Wilton Town Hall.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Mr. Torres and seconded by Ms. Fisk; all in favor. The Budget Committee was adjourned at 8:18 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Tuomala, Secretary