

**Hill Budget Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 28, 2018**

Present: Paul Meyerhoefer, Denise Robie, Kristen Cunningham, Jerry Desrochers, Charlie Estes, Bill Wilson, Charlie Henry, Shelly Henry, Eric Herr, Tom Seymour

Absent: Patrick McDonough

Public: Andrew Williamson (Police Dept.), Dee Ford (Fire Dept.), Jeff Ford (Fire Dept.)

Meeting Business

Charlie Estes called the meeting to order at 7:00pm

Minutes from 11/13/18 mtg. were distributed. Jerry made a motion to accept the amended minutes, Shelly seconded, vote was eight in favor with two abstaining b/c they weren't in attendance on 11/13

Old Business

When the fiscal year ends the Selectmen will provide the Budget Committee with projected expenditures.

This will probably happen in mid-January.

Dept. heads have been notified about upcoming mtg. dates.

The only encumbrances listed as expenses were the computers for the Tax Collector and Town Clerk.

New Business – Review of Departmental Proposed Budgets

Police - Corporal Andrew Williamson led the discussion

He pointed out that the only differences from the 2018 budget to the proposed budget for 2019 are Payroll

Taxes and Wages. Payroll Taxes for 2018 are \$5,132 and for 2019 they will be \$4,804. Wages for 2018 are \$67,080 and for 2019 they will be \$68,640. The increase in payroll taxes is due to the increase in wages. It is proposed that each of the three part-time officers receive a \$1/hr. increase and the administrative secretary receive a \$1.50/hr. increase. Jerry pointed out that the figure for 2019 payroll taxes was incorrect b/c it was figured at 7% instead of 7.65%. The correct figure should be \$5,251.

Paul asked if any \$\$ from the 2018 budget was taken/used to keep the bottom line. Tom answered No.

Paul questioned why the same items show up in each yrs. budget for Equipment Maintenance and if the \$\$ is being spent. Andrew answered that the items listed are examples of what the \$\$ could potentially be used for.

Bill asked if the \$2,500 for Equipment Maintenance is adequate. Andrew responded that it is if he is able to purchase body armor as planned this week.

Eric asked if the proposed budget was adequate for the safety and training of the officers. Andrew responded Yes.

Eric asked if the dept. had \$4,000-\$5,000 less what would need to be taken out. Andrew indicated he would have to cut New Equipment, Equipment Maintenance, and Wage increases.

Eric also asked if the dept. had \$4,000-\$5,000 more what would it be spent on. Andrew replied that it would go towards new uniforms, new boots, new batons, new duty belts and equipment for the new part-time officer.

Eric asked how many hrs. of coverage the dept. would have if it were at full staff. Andrew provided the following breakdown: Chief = 32 hrs.

Andrew = 12 hrs.

Jim & John = 6-8 hrs. each

Admin = 4 hrs.

Denise questioned why the spreadsheet for 2019 indicated that the total proposed budget was \$95,858 vs. \$95,514 listed on the proposed budget he presented to us. Shelly said the difference was probably the result of payroll taxes being figured incorrectly.

Jerry brought up the conversation that was had last yr. about obtaining town issued cell phones so the officers didn't need to use their personal cell phones. He asked if part of the Telephone line was being used to address this. Andrew answered No.

Charlie Estes questioned how officers communicated with dispatch if they weren't on the radio. Andrew replied that they used their personal cell phones if they had cell service. If not they had to come back to the office and use a land line.

Charlie Estes asked him to look into the different options available to improve cell service. This may be something to consider for 2019 or 2020. Andrew will do some research on the cost of a booster for the cruiser and/or the office and also the cost of a cell phone for the dept. Andrew will get back to us with the info. he has by our next mtg. on 12/6.

The question from the 11/13 mtg. about the offsetting revenue for the sum of \$6,367.50 from Special Details was answered. It came from road construction projects and a security detail at Freudenberg. It was billed out at \$8,540. Special Details are currently billed at \$65/hr. and the dept. is looking to increase that to \$75/hr.

Fire - Chief Dee Ford led the discussion

She explained that the proposed budget increase was due to the following:

- increased dispatch dues (not under the dept.'s control)
- four new portable radios w/ antennas, extra batteries and a six-bank charger
- ten new tires for Engine 2 (it's 16 yrs. old and the tires have never been replaced)

Eric expressed his concern about tariffs affecting the price of the tires and increasing the amount needed to purchase them substantially.

The dept. currently has four SCBA's in service but needs six.

Dee mentioned that the dept. needs to think about replacing Engine 4 (1996) and that she plans to bring this before the town in the next three yrs.

Bill questioned if the Fire Dept. bldg. can be reroofed for \$1,500. Dee said they would make it work. They plan on holding fundraisers and the dept. is providing the voluntary labor to complete the project.

Charlie Estes brought up the fact that there is a need to start working the budget more satisfactorily (forward thinking) to get the different departments what they need rather than just planning yr. to yr.

Shelly expressed concerns with how very different this thinking is. She wondered how each dept. head would find the time to do this and also how they would begin to approach this.

Charlie Estes asked Dee how much \$\$ she thought would get cut out of the dept.'s proposed budget. Dee answered \$10,000. Eric asked her what would need to be cut if that happened. She indicated that it would come out of New Equipment and she would cut the new portable radios before the SCBA's.

Jerry pointed out that the correct figure for Payroll Taxes was \$459 vs. \$368.

Paul asked about the two new employees. Dee responded that there are currently thirteen volunteers total on the dept. and that there are six who are fully certified. He also asked how much it costs to outfit a new volunteer. Dee indicated it was \$1,700 and if he/she was certified as a Firefighter 1 or 2 it would be another \$800.

Water - Water Commissioner & Chairman Jerry Desrochers led the discussion

He indicated that the YTD expenses presented were through November and the YTD income presented was through October.

The total projected operating expenses for the Water Dept. in 2019 are \$138,000. These expenses will be offset by revenue and existing cash.

Jerry went through each line item and explained how the expenses for each were incurred. Some of the notable expenses he covered were the two loan payments, monthly monitoring of the pump systems, system repairs, system upgrades, meter reading wages, commissioner wages and tank inspection & cleaning.

He explained that the loan for the expansion of the pump house and the 2nd well will be paid off on 4/1/2025 while the refinanced loan will not be paid off until 8/15/2037. The combined yearly payments for these two loans total \$41,051.

Monthly monitoring of the pump systems is billed at \$200/month and visits are made once a wk. System repairs involve the repair of leaking pipes and it is estimated that these repairs will cost \$18,000 in 2019. Most of the mains and pipes are 75 yrs. old.

The Water Dept. is planning to upgrade the system by adding more radio read units and estimate this improvement will cost \$1,000.

The cost to read the meters in the upcoming year will be \$1,200 (\$100/month).

The Commissioners Wages will total \$2,500 in 2019. This amount will be divided among three Commissioners.

The water tank must be inspected and cleaned every five years. This inspection and cleaning was last done in 2014. The Water Dept. estimates it will cost \$4,200 to have this done.

Eric questioned whether the budget was self-financing. Jerry explained that when the rates were set in 2011 they were too low to cover the debt service completely. The Water Dept. has \$45,000 in debt services alone and at the current rate being charged they fall \$4,000-\$5,000 short. The rates were set low b/c the dept. wanted to limit sticker shock. He indicated that there will probably be a rate change in 2019.

Currently there are 136 accounts being billed.

Closing Remarks

Bill reiterated the need to plan for the future.

Kristen asked when the Budget Committee would review the School Budget. It was agreed that this would happen at the Dec. 6th mtg.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen Cunningham