

NEWINGTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 23, 2002

Present: *Budget Committee Members (BUDCOM)*
Alfred Smith (Chairman), Dennis Acton, Leslie Brock, Laura Coleman, Kay Akerley, Wil Gilbert, Terri Spinney, Dick Spinney

Board of Selectmen Representative (BOS)
Jan Stuart

Fire Chief
Larry Wahl

Assistant Fire Chief
Roy Greenleaf

Board of Fire Engineers (BOFE)
Guy Young, Wilbur Goins, William White

firefighter
John Klanchester

Christopher Cross and Administrative Assistant (AA) Susan Newcomer

Budget Committee Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. The purpose of the meeting was to review the Fire Department Budget proposal.

Chairman Smith asked that the minutes of January 16, 2002 be read. Kay Akerley made a motion to accept the minutes; seconded by Laura Coleman. Motion carried with none opposed.

Fire Department Budget Proposal 2002

BUDCOM Chairman Smith asked the committee if they would accept the proposed Fire Department operating budget of \$663,786. BUDCOM member Laura Coleman made a motion to accept; motion seconded by Terri Spinney.

Chairman Smith asked the BUDCOM if there were any questions.

BOFE Guy Young asked for the floor to explain the purpose of the increased budget, referencing Warrant Article 11, published in the 1995 Town Report. He felt that the budget proposal reflected the number of men needed to meet the Town's expectations. After reading Article 11, Smith told Young that the Fire Department Budget Proposal should note the exact number of new hires needed to meet the Article's 24 hour coverage rule, including the dollar amount.

BUDCOM member Laura Coleman wanted to know how many men were hired after the Warrant Article was accepted. Discussion followed, led by Young and Chief Wahl, as to the number of men hired over time, which included a position to fill the spot left open by the promotion of a FD member to Assistant Chief.

NEWINGTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 23, 2002

Chairman Smith noted to the Budget Committee that the budget amount for new employees was \$114,072. BUDCOM member Terri Spinney asked if retirement was figured in, and if not, the budget figure could be higher. Smith said it was. Chairman Smith felt there were numerous good issues to both sides. However, he recommended that the BOFE remove the \$114,072 from the budget and place it on a Warrant Article because it was too much money for the Budget Committee, the Board of Fire Engineers, or 12 people to commit to the Town.

Coleman asked Chairman Smith how he got \$114,072. Smith said the figure included employee salaries, Holiday pay, Health and Dental Insurance, Disability Insurance, clothing, physicals, and protective clothing—for three (3) people, and he re-iterated that the budget requested too much money for 12 people to commit to the Town.

BOFE Guy Young said that \$154,454 would have been the real figure if they had been able to hire the new secretary full-time at the salary that had been previously requested.

BUDCOM member Akerley asked for confirmation that the Warrant Article was going forward with a recommendation from the Budget Committee. Chairman Smith said yes, that the Selectmen passed it on to the Budget Committee to deal with. Selectman Stuart said she wanted to make it very clear that two of the Selectmen ok'd it to be passed on but that she had vehemently opposed it. BUDCOM member Terri Spinney asked how the Warrant Article would be handled.

Selectman Stuart asked if there was any workable solution, like maybe 1 person being added this year, or was it all or nothing. BOFE Young said they could work with it but felt the request was necessary since the Fire Department was so short-handed.

Laura Coleman asked why anyone wasn't hired before now. Young explained that some people were upset with the tax rate so the Fire Department didn't ask for more, and then the number of employees went down. Coleman said that her only objection was that the taxpayers couldn't go with feast or famine—there were too many dry years. Smith said there was never a dry year with personnel.

Questions raised by BUDCOM members included whether or not the figure could be divided by 3 to come up with a figure for each hire, if Call Firemen were an option, and how it was that everyone use to become a Volunteer Firefighter when they turned 18.

NEWINGTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 23, 2002

Young explained that the Fire Department gets few responses to ads for Call Firefighters. Chairman Smith said that the whole environment—regulations, OSHA, and the dangers have changed, among other factors. Re-iterating that he was not making a pitch for either side, he suggested the issue come off the budget and be placed on a Warrant Article.

Selectman Stuart mentioned that CON-ED had offered to cover the new men but that the offer was turned down. Young and Wahl did not recall the offer and asked for specifics.

Kay Akerley asked if the men were being used effectively and if it wouldn't be cheaper to pay overtime, adding that maybe the Fire Department should be more innovative. More discussion took place at the table regarding innovative scheduling and overtime.

Chairman Smith took the Committee, line-by-line, through a copy of the "4th Draft" budget submitted by Chief Wahl, and compared it to the budget copy that reflected "No New Employees", in order to clarify confusion at the table. An example: Overtime decreased \$12,000 in the comparison.

Laura Coleman asked what Shift Leader Stipends were and Young explained that a person should be in charge of each shift, with compensation. Smith recommended against stipends and Shift Leaders.

There was further discussion to clarify figure changes and the hiring process, and it was confirmed that Fire Chief Wahl and Mary Wahl would terminate their employment with the Fire Department in August.

Discussion also took place on COLAs, step increases, and longevity pay. Chairman Smith said it was time that the BOFE, the Selectmen, and the Police Department sit down and come up with consistent pays across the board, and that the BOS have been delinquent in dealing with the issue.

Kay Akerley asked about the Forestry Pick-up and Young explained that it was to be purchased with encumbered funds from FY2001. The truck has hose apparatus useful for potential fire at the Wildlife Refuge. Also, a \$12,240 Wildlife Grant would be used toward the skid unit, 2 radios, and tools.

NEWINGTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 23, 2002

Other items questioned and explained in the budget were:

- New training equipment—an overhead projector that uses transparencies (inc. light bulbs, and maintenance)
- New office equipment—telephones from Lucent that are like the Police Department phones (which can be upgraded)
- Telephone lines—emergency line w/3 business lines, (fax, private, and internet)
- Emergency dispatch—cheaper to patch calls through
- Scoop Stretcher—aluminum can't be pulled apart
- AED Training Unit—a requirement.

Chairman Smith indicated he felt little concern with the budget that did not include the new employees and that the motion on the floor was to accept a budget of \$633, 786.

Laura Coleman said she would like to amend her motion to accept the budget at \$663,786 to \$509,332; seconded by Terri Spinney. Chairman Smith said he had a motion to amend the Budget from \$663,786 to \$509,332; motion carried with none opposed.

Chairman Smith asked if there were any other questions to come before the Budget Committee. Smith added that he thought the filing list for the BUDCOM was incorrect and would look at the FY2000 Town Report.

Kay Akerley made a motion to adjourn the meeting; second by Selectman Stuart.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:32.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M Newcomer
Administrative Assistant