

# NEWINGTON BUDGET COMMITTEE

## MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 29, 2003

Present: Budget Committee Members (BUDCOM)  
Alfred Smith (Chairman), Dennis Acton, Kay Akerley, Leslie Brock, Laura Coleman, Richard Spinney, Wil Gilbert, Richard Sullivan.  
Board of Selectmen Representative, Janice Stuart

The Budget Committee Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. The purpose of the meeting was to review the budget of the Fire Department.

Janice Stuart made a motion to accept the minutes of the meeting held on January 22, 2003; seconded by Richard Sullivan. Motion carried with none opposed.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Chairman Smith stated that it has come to his attention that there have been three budgets, (Recreation, Police and Sewer) that have been presented to the Budget Committee without first being reviewed by the Board of Selectmen. Smith asked Jan Stuart, the Board of Selectmen's representative if that was true. J. Stuart confirmed this. Smith went on to point out that RSA 35 section 35 of the Municipal Finance Act, requires that all budgets be reviewed by the governing body before they are sent to the Budget Committee. Without the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen there has been a lapse or failure in the budget procedure. Chairman Smith stated that in preparing the budget which is presented to the Town, he will put a zero in the column titled "Recommended by Selectmen" on these three budgets.

Selectman O'Reilly addressed the Budget Committee concerning this matter. He stated that last year when he was the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen he asked about the Sewer Budget and was told that the Board of Selectmen did not need to approve the Sewer Budget. This year he asked if the Board of Selectmen would be able to review the Sewer Budget and was told by one of the Sewer Commissioners, "No, the Board of Selectmen did not need to see it. As far as the Recreation Budget was concerned, the Board of Selectmen did meet on part of the budget, but did not have the YMCA numbers at that time. Selectman O'Reilly said that the issue of the Police Budget goes back ten years. Chief Stimson, the former Police Chief told J. O'Reilly that the RSA for Police Commissions stated that the Police Commission's budget does not have to go before the Board of Selectmen. So, for the last ten years there has been no vote on the Police Department's Budget by the Board of Selectmen. In the past it has been concerned a courtesy for the Police Department to present their budget to the Board of Selectmen for review.

Chairman Smith said that he would review all the RSAs before he would make a final determination in this matter. However, he stated that his belief is that the only separate entity in this budget proceeding is the School Budget. All other budgets, including the Police Department come under the Town Government Budget. Therefore, should be recommended or not recommended by the Board of Selectmen.

## NEWINGTON BUDGET COMMITTEE

### MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 29, 2003

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

Richard Sullivan expressed concern that the Police Department budget was presented with expenditures year-to-date only through December 4<sup>th</sup>. He considered this information not complete enough for the Budget Committee to make an informed decision on that budget. He stated that he felt that the budget should have been tabled until the information was more up to date.

Chairman Smith advised the Budget Committee that billing and timing play a large factor in this situation. Budgets are prepared early in November and December and the expenditures are on-going until the end of the year and even through the annual audit. He went on to say that these are bottom line budgets, how the money is moved from line item to line item is up to the jurisdiction of the individual department. Having the most accurate information possible is important in justifying the request for the current year's budgets.

#### **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Dennis Acton made a motion to accept the Fire Department budget in the amount of \$680,943; motion seconded by Laura Coleman.

Leslie Brock, Fire Engineer presented the Fire department budget to the Budget Committee. She started by pointing out the 15% increase on the bottom line of the budget and reviewing a hand-out on "Explanation of Percentage Change". The explanation pointed to items that the department has no control over.

1. New Hampshire Retirement contributions increased from 6.61% to 13.44% an increase of 6.83%. This was due to an unusually high amount of Fire Retirees in New Hampshire last year and the current condition of the stock market.
2. Last year the department hired two new Firefighters. The benefits and salaries for these the two additional people were budgeted for a partial year during 2002. This year the department will have to budget for a full year on these benefits and salaries.
3. Sick Leave Mandate. The Town's current Personnel Policy states that if an employee does not use any sick time during the year, that person will receive 4 days paid at the end of the year. In the past this has not be budgeted for. This year the department has budgeted for 4 days for each employee. The amount that is actually spent depends on how many employees qualify at years end.

Brock went on to say that these items alone come to \$83,857. If this is subtracted from this year's budget proposal, it brings the increase down to \$5,231. Or 1% increase over last year. In a hand-out of "Explanation of Overtime" it was explained that the department hired two new Firefighters last year. All Firefighters are hired on probation for a period of one year. During that year a new Firefighter can not be left alone. Brock pointed out that since May 2002 there has been an increase in overtime because of this reason, plus most of the vacation for the department come during these months. This year over time will be the same because the department will still have two Firefighters on probation until May and one Firefighter on probation until November

## NEWINGTON BUDGET COMMITTEE

### MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 29, 2003

Richard Spinney asked if a Firefighter has training from another department, why they have to go through a year of probation.

Chief Greenleaf said that it is a local requirement, so that the Firefighter can learn the Town layout, the waterfront, the boxes, response time, and the large industrial area that Newington has. This is not mandated by the State.

Chairman Smith asked if the increase in full time salaries was a step increase and COLA. Leslie Brock explained that it was a 2.5% COLA, a .5 % merit and the step increase. There is also an adjustment of a little under \$400 on the Assistant Chief's salary that moves him up one step. This is because currently the highest paid Firefighter is making more than the Assistant Chief.

Chairman Smith asked if there has been a reduction in participation in Call Personnel. Leslie Brock said there had. Another change this year is in the rate of pay for the Call and Standby Personnel. Prior to this there were four rates of pay for Call Firefighters. If they came in on standby they received minimum wage. If they had a training session the same night, they received the minimum wage, plus a training wage of \$7.00 per hour. If there was a call at the same time, they received the call amount of \$8.00 per hour, plus the other two rates. The result was that the Call Personnel were getting paid more than the regular Firefighters. In this budget all Call and Standby Personnel will receive one rate of pay, \$8.50 per hour. Chief Greenleaf stated that currently we have two active Call Personnel.

Jan Stuart, Board of Selectmen's representative explained that the intent of the wording in the Personnel Policy on Holiday pay was for only non-salary and non-administrative people to receive additional Holiday pay. Therefore, the Fire Chief and the Assistant Fire Chief should not be receiving the additional Holiday pay.

Chairman Smith asked why there are different figures for Holiday Pay. Leslie Brock explained that the figures are based on the employees hiring date. So one employee may have 5 holidays at one rate and 6 holidays at another rate. The fiscal year for pay is based on the employee's anniversary date not on a calendar year.

Chairman Smith asked how retirement was figured. Leslie Brock explained that the retirement number is based on the total salaries of \$342,658, plus overtime of 45,000 and sick pay of 4,954. The percentage from the Town is 13.44%. Smith asked if the Town should be appropriating the amount that is paid to New Hampshire Retirement on behalf of the employee. AA C. Gillespie explained that the withholding for New Hampshire Retirement is handled the same way as federal and state taxes and social security that is withheld from the employees. These contributions do not affect the expenditures of the Town. The Town holds the amount in a liability account and forwards it onto the appropriate place at the appropriate time. The Town is only acting like an agent.

Jan Stuart asked why the retirement is figured at the 13.44% for the full year, when the rate does not change until July 1, 2003. Chief Greenleaf stated that that is the way he was told to figure it by the old Fire Chief. That is the way it has always been done.

## NEWINGTON BUDGET COMMITTEE

### MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 29, 2003

Chairman Smith asked what the increases were in insurance premiums this year. Leslie Brock stated that health increased 5% and dental increased 5.2%. AA C. Gillespie stated that there was no increase in life and disability.

Chairman Smith asked if the clothing allowance was increased due to the increase in employees. Chief Greenleaf said the clothing allowance rate is \$350 per person which is the same as last year. Chairman Smith asked if the \$350 included replacement, repairs and cleaning. Chief Greenleaf said it did.

Chairman Smith asked if the increase on secretary's pay was due to an increase in rate or an increase in hours. Chief Greenleaf stated that it was an increase in rate from \$9.00 to \$10.00 per hour.

Kay Akerley asked why the request on line item number, 631 SCBA Maintenance had doubled. She pointed out that last year the appropriation was \$2,672 and the expenditures were \$1,825. Chief Greenleaf explained the department must replace bottles periodically. Also after a certain number of years the department is required by law to purchase specific parts for repairs to the SCBA equipment. The equipment is a lot cheaper to upgrade than to replace complete SCBA packs. There are certain devices that must be on the packs to keep them up to the FDA certification standards. The department purchases the parts and a trained in-house technician does the repairs, which the department has found to be very cost effective.

Jan Stuart commended the department for initiating in-house training programs.

Kay Akerley asked what the new line item "Public Education" was for. Leslie Brock said that the money will be used for fire prevention & safety programs in the schools. Dennis Cote, Assistant Fire Chief added that the department will also be running CPR classes for local businesses, residents. The money is for the material to run the courses, such as videos, brochures, course curriculum, and course manuals. The largest program will be the "RISK WATCH" Program for the children. The program includes baby sitting courses, first aid courses, and other safety and emergency response instructions geared to the ages of the children participating. These classes will be held at the school. Chief Greenleaf stated that the teachers at the school and Great Bay Marina's employees have already taken advantage of the CPR Classes.

Chairman Smith asked why there is a request of \$5,000 for computer expenses this year and no request in past years. Chief Greenleaf stated that in the past the money was taken out of office expense. This year he felt it would be better to break out the expense in order to track the costs more readily. Last year the department experienced a lot of problems with its computers and found the upgrades to programs and technical support quite costly. Chairman Smith expressed the need for a computer network between all the departments in town, with a single computer vendor.

Kay Akerley asked why the department needed legal fees. Chief Greenleaf said it was for any labor disputes. Akerley asked why the selectmen did not pay for it. Selectmen Iocovozzi said that labor dispute and other personnel costs are the responsibility of the department.

## NEWINGTON BUDGET COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES  
JANUARY 29, 2003

Chairman Smith asked about the increase to Ambulance Supplies. Chief Greenleaf pointed out that the department will be purchasing two new items this year. The current scoop stretcher the department is currently using needs to be replaced because it is old and does not work very well; the wheels are frozen on it. The stair chair is an excellent piece of equipment that will help to prevent back injuries with the ambulance attendants.

Chairman Smith asked about the increase on line 691 "Fire Alarm Maintenance". Chief Greenleaf explained that the cost of the system that the department is running have gone up. This line item includes any parts and pieces that are needed for repairs and any loose cable that needs to be replaced.

The Chairman called for a vote to accept the Fire Department's Budget in the amount of \$680,942. Those in favor-Laura Coleman, Wil Gilbert, Richard Spinney, Jan Stuart-**4 Yes**. Those opposed-Kay Akerley-**1 No**. Those abstained-Leslie Brock, Richard Sullivan (Due to their position on the Board of Fire Engineers)-**2 Abstained**. Motion carried.

Budget committee member, Richard Sullivan and Chairman Smith commended Chief Greenleaf and the department for their efforts in obtaining donations of equipment from local business. All in attendance agreed with applause.

Chairman Smith made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Laura Coleman.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Gillespie  
Administrative Assistant