

**NEWINGTON BUDGET COMMITTEE**

**Public Hearing**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
February 9, 2002

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

*Board of Selectmen Representative (BOS)*  
Chairman, Jack O'Reilly  
Jan Stuart  
Cosmas Iocovozzi

*Fire Chief, Larry Wahl*  
*Board of Fire Engineers (BOFE)*  
Guy Young

*Fire Department*  
David Low  
Dale Spainhower  
Dennis Cody

*Police Chief, Brad Loomis*                      *Foster's Reporter, Michael Goot*

George & Ruth Fletcher, Jean Bowser, Gail Pare, Chris Cross  
Doug & Helen Reed, Barbara Baird, Lulu Pickering  
AA, Susan Newcomer

Budget Committee Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the final recommendations of the School (FY2002-2003) and General Operating (FY2002) budget proposals.

Chairman Smith asked for the minutes of January 30, 2002 to be read. A motion to accept the minutes of January 30, 2002 was made by Laura Coleman; second by Kay Akerley. No questions, motion carried with none opposed.

Chairman Smith asked for the minutes of February 2, 2002 to be read. A motion to accept the minutes of February 2, 2002 was made by Laura Coleman; second by Kay Akerley. Leslie Brock noted an error in the minutes and asked if a correction could be made to pg. 3, paragraph 2, to say that "Fabyan Point Grounds (John Newick's business) was the lowest bidder for ground maintenance and that the maintenance of grounds included everything except 2 clean-ups". BUDCOM Chairman Smith requested the wording be changed as noted. A motion to amend the minutes of February 2, 2002, as noted, was made by Laura Coleman; second by Kay Akerley. Motion carried, none opposed.

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#### **2002-2003 School Budget Proposal**

BUDCOM Chairman Smith noted the changes that had been made and asked if the Budget Committee would accept the 2002-2003 School Budget in the amount of \$1,518,957. Motion to accept by Wil Gilbert; second by L. Brock. Smith asked if there were any questions.

BUDCOM member L. Coleman asked about the change of \$30,000. Smith explained that the \$30,000 was placed in a warrant article after SAU Business Administrator, Jim Katkin, received clarification from the DRA on the procedure. Smith asked if there were any more questions from the BUDCOM; none—any questions from the public; none—closed to public comment and called for a final recommendation to accept the 2002-2003 School Budget of \$1,518,957. Vote carried; none opposed.

A motion was made by Wil Gilbert to accept the warrant article from the Newington School District; second by L. Coleman. Chairman Smith noted that it was the recommendation of the BUDCOM to set a warrant article for repairs, septic, etc., because the BUDCOM wanted a Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) for these items. L. Coleman said she thought it was non-capital. Smith said the funds must be addressed this way in order to have more latitude in spending. K. Akerley noted that the spelling of “capital” must be changed. Smith asked if there were any further comments or questions. Being none, the floor was opened to public comment and question. There being none, Smith called for a final recommendation from the BUDCOM to raise and appropriate funds as read from the warrant article—vote carried; none opposed.

BUDCOM Chairman Smith addressed the public regarding the BUDCOM's recommendation to the school district relative to the warrant article. Smith also gave an overview of the information given to the BUDCOM regarding the 2002-2003 school budget increase of 0.89% and commended the school district for how well they handled the budget this year.

Chairman Smith discussed issues with the MS-7 form, noting that there was a total recommendation from the BOS, but that column 8, the BUDCOM's section was still incomplete. A motion was made by Wil Gilbert to accept the BOS, FY2002, General Budget recommended appropriations of \$3,681,956; second by L. Coleman. Smith asked the BUDCOM to start at page 1 of the MS-7 form for a line-by-line review.

In the “Executive” line, BOS Chairman O'Reilly noted that the bottom line would remain the same, but \$1000 had been removed from the Deputy Tax Collector and added to the Road Agent.

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Financial Administration line—O'Reilly explained that the part-time bookkeeper was done and an ad would be placed for a secretary/receptionist for 15-20 hrs. p/week for an estimated \$12,500. He also noted that Bob Belmore would be done in the upcoming week.

Legal Expenses—A breakdown of Attorneys fees was provided to the BUDCOM by the BOS.

L. Coleman asked if the Road Agent was paid a stipend. BOS Chair O'Reilly said there was a stipend above and beyond the hourly pay rate because the Road Agent was taking on more responsibility.

Chairman Smith noted that the General Gov't Buildings line was not completed by the BUDCOM because there was a question on renovations at the Police Department. BUDCOM Chair Smith, Police Chief Loomis, and BOS Chair O'Reilly discussed the confusion over the \$500 additional funds from emergency management. It was clarified that the \$500 would stay in the General Gov't budget and the amount was not duplicated in the Police portion of the budget.

Issues regarding Fire Station renovations were discussed heavily throughout the meeting. The key issues relative to the older section of the building (left side) were asbestos removal, coed bunking, liability issues, the money required to complete the project (some funds were encumbered from 2001), heating, and ventilation.

The BUDCOM felt they had been misled by the BOFE and wanted clarity regarding projects for completion. Chief Wahl took the floor and displayed a map to help explain the phases of the project. Wahl told the BUDCOM that money had been saved on the project because some of the firemen had come up with a new design.

Although the BUDCOM appeared unanimous in their understanding that the bunk area issue was to be solved in 2001, with funds from 2001, Chief Wahl said no. Chairman Smith requested that the BOFE give the BUDCOM, in writing, the plans for completion of the project, along with the money required to finish.

Chairman Smith asked the BOFE the following question for public record: Given the additional \$35,000 for next year, with \$25,000 for heat etc., leaves \$10,000 for remainder of year. Will this sum of money be enough to resolve the issue once and for all and keep the Town from litigation? BOFE Young passed on answering the question since he is doing much of the work. BOS Chairman O'Reilly said the estimate for the \$10,000 should finish off segregated bunking areas—the \$13,000 encumbered funds will finish the other side.

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Chief Wahl agreed that it would resolve the bunking issue, but not remodeling issues. Chief Wahl also explained how the bunking situation has been dealt with during the project. Chairman Smith requested that the other \$10,000 be explained at the Public Meeting, and to note that it will resolve the current bunking situation, and that \$25,000 is for heating, AC, and ventilation. Table agreed with Smith. Smith said the BUDCOM's section of Acct. # 4194 on the MS-7 would be \$234,300.

Cemeteries: Chairman Smith noted that, again, there was no representative from the cemetery committee at this meeting to resolve the supply items and computer issue, and that the BUDCOM's appropriation of \$10,200 was for the care contract. He also noted that the stipend for the sextant needed to be addressed on a warrant article.

locovozzi requested that the stipend be changed to an hourly rate. BUDCOM Chair Smith said the request had never been made in the past and wanted to know why it was requested now. locovozzi said the previous sextant, prior to B. Beals, was handled differently before there was a contract for mowing. With the mowing contract, there is no money for the sextant to work on plumbing etc., or for meeting with the public at the cemetery. locovozzi also felt the sextant should be compensated for bookwork.

BUDCOM member Kay Akerley asked who put the bid out for the cemetery. BOS Chair O'Reilly said the BOS did and there was only one response because no one wants to do the job. O'Reilly recommended that the amount for the sextant be placed on the BOS maintenance salary for this year and address the \$350 appropriately next year. L. Coleman said the amount of money was ridiculous and there was no member of the cemetery committee in attendance. BOS locovozzi mentioned that AA Newcomer had contacted a member of the cemetery committee.

Further discussion took place and it was decided by Chair Smith—on a recommendation from K. Akerley—that \$350 be placed in the cemetery funds for a total of \$10,550, with all at the table in agreement.

Advertising and Regional Assoc: This item is for donations to 4-H etc. The comment was made that the account would be restructured next year. Barbara Baird asked to be heard, with approval from Chair Smith.

Baird said the Newington Neighbor has an agreement with the Town to send the March issue of the publication to residents free of charge because of upcoming election information. Baird discussed the rising costs of publishing the Neighbor and gave a breakdown. She then requested that the Town donate the original \$1,000 that was asked for, rather than the \$500 that was appropriated.

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A great deal of discussion took place between the table and the floor as to the benefits of the Neighbor, the costs, ads that off-set costs, the volunteerism, and the inability to meet costs. Lulu Pickering stated that \$1,000 was a vastly underestimated figure. Chairman Smith agreed to add an additional \$500 to give the Neighbor a total amount of \$1,000 for the year, and Acct # 4197 a total of \$4,496.

Lulu Pickering questioned Chair Smith on the procedure for public questions and comments. Smith said he would follow the MS-7 and leave comment for each line. Pickering questioned the money appropriated for 4-H, which was less than asked for, and questioned how the decrease was justified. BOS Chair O'Reilly said the BOS were concerned about setting a precedent.

Pickering requested that the \$1,000 be put back into the appropriation and explained the work that had been done in town by the 4-H group, such as landscaping and fencing at the school. Pickering described the "sweat equity" and that the group was devoted to teaching kids. Chairman Smith said he appreciated the efforts of the 4-H, but that the school issues should be included with the school budget. He further commented that the Town does not request volunteerism and Town funds should not go to volunteerism.

There was further discussion and Chair Smith asked if the BOS charged clubs for the use of the buildings. Pickering said they had been asked to pay \$25 for school use. BUDCOM member Wil Gilbert commented that he sees what the money is used for and none of it is spent frivolously; it is used to beautify and benefit the Town.

Chair Smith asked for public comment. Helen Reed spoke, saying that the 4-H was a great organization and if there is anything the Town can do for the kids after school, it should. Ruth Fletcher said that all the talk over \$500 that benefits kids in Town is absurd. C. Iocovozzo said the BOS could help with grounds supplies, L. Coleman said if the kids are helping someone they should get the money, and Gail Pare recommended that the kids help support the Town's current web-site rather than starting their own. BOS Chair O'Reilly mentioned that a lot of hours had been put in trying to cut the bottom-line, that every line was looked at hard, and every line adds up.

Wil Gilbert made a motion for a roll-call vote to add an additional \$500 to the 4-H donation; second by L. Coleman. Those in favor—yes, 4—no, 3. Vote passed to add \$500 to the 4-H donation.

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#### Public Safety:

It was noted that \$922,080 should be the original recommended appropriation amount for the BUDCOM, not the \$992,080 that was written in error. The actual appropriation is \$921, 580, removing the \$500 duplication of police (4210-4214).

Chair Smith noted the uncontrolled costs of the public safety lines, such as personnel, insurance, COLA's, etc. Smith also noted that the Police Department handled the items in direct control very well. There was no public comment.

Chairman Smith addressed the public to explain the original fire department budget. The initial figure, from Fire to BOS, was \$662,786, to include the hiring of 3 additional full-time firefighters. The budget committee decided it was an issue of such merit that the 3 men should be removed from the budget and entered on a warrant article.

Kay Akerley made a motion to reconsider the vote of January 23, 2002, approve the hiring of 1 additional firefighter, and change the warrant article. Since the BUDCOM can't change a warrant article, Akerley said perhaps she should change her recommendation to read, "...if the BOFE elects to rescind the warrant article". Discussion took place on other options and Ruth Fletcher was asked to look up the rule regarding rescinding an article when BOFE G. Young asked if a warrant article could be rescinded.

The Budget Committee Chairman called for a 10-minute break at 2:50 p.m. The Public Hearing reconvened at 3:10 p.m.

Chairman Smith noted that the warrant articles had to be posted by February 25, 2002. The BUDCOM and the BOFE felt the money and 3 people all at once was too much for the committee to propose, which was the reason for the warrant article. BOFE Wilbur Goins joined the meeting at 3:15 and Chair Smith gave the fire department the opportunity to take a few minutes to come up with another plan proposal so the issue could be resolved.

#### Fire:

BUDCOM Chair Smith explained the \$2,000 to the public as money that goes in and out, but it must be appropriated. Smith said the money is a donation received from Wal-Mart for the Thermal Imager. The Fire Department has no Federal ID# to handle these funds directly.

#### Health Agencies:

Chairman Smith explained lines 4415-4419, Health Agencies & Hospital & Other as donations to organizations such as CrossRoads, Meals-On-Wheels, etc., which provide assistance to townspeople. T. Spinney asked if this line included 4-H and the Neighbor. Chair Smith said, no, those items were in line 4197.

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#### Other Culture & Recreation

HDC Grant from previous year that requires an appropriation.

#### Admin. & Purch. of Natural Resources

4611-4612—Funds to help identify wetlands and enhance the Planning Board etc., in making decisions.

The BOFE and Fire Chief returned to the room and said they would go with Kay Akerley's decision, but Chairman Smith noted that the amounts given did not coincide with actual cost. BOFE Young asked if they were to take one person on the budget, could they ask for one more in the warrant article. Kay Akerley said she would withdraw her motion on that request.

Chairman Smith said the issue was too confusing, and although there were some strong and valid points on both sides of the issue, the BUDCOM felt strongly that the issue should go to the town meeting. Kay Akerley withdrew her motion. Chairman Smith said the figures would remain the same in line 4215-4219 at \$509,332.

#### Debt Service:

Line 4902, Machinery, Vehicles and Equipment was heavily discussed for clarification. BUDCOM Chair Smith noted that 2 police vehicles were requested for \$54,000 compared to 1 fire department vehicle at \$45,000. Smith also noted that a CRF for Fire Vehicles was already in place. BOS Chair O'Reilly said the CRF was for fire trucks. Chair Smith read the warrant article that stated the fund was for all fire vehicles except the ambulance. BOS Chair O'Reilly recommended that \$45,000 be taken from the \$99,800 and added to the CRF. BUDCOM Chair Smith said that it should be left out of the budget and the CRF should be left alone.

Chairman Smith roughly recapped the adjustments made to the bottom line. These adjustments included 4-H, the Newington Neighbor, the PD building, the FD warrant article submission, and the FD vehicle for an estimated revised budget of \$3,481,702 (noting the possibility that the figure was not exact and would need to be calculated properly), with a decrease of \$200,254. Wil Gilbert made a motion to amend his original motion of \$3,681,956 and to accept a 2002-2003 Town Budget of \$3,481,702; second by L. Coleman. A vote for \$3,481,702, a difference of 200,254 as presented by the BOS, was made with none opposed.

\*\*Please note that the precise calculation of the FY 2002-2003 Budget comes to \$ 3,478,202 .

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#### Warrant Articles:

BUDCOM Chair Smith noted to the table that they would only be discussing dollar value articles.

Article 4: Motion by Leslie Brock to recommend \$10,000 to existing CRF for FD Communications; second by T. Spinney. No questions; vote carried with none opposed.

Chairman Smith interrupted the voting of warrant articles and noted that, in his haste to get through the General Budget, he forgot to open up the floor to public comment.

Lulu Pickering asked if BUDCOM minutes are posted on the web-site. BOS Chairman O'Reilly said they were, but noted that all minutes are not approved before they are placed on the site. BUDCOM Chair Smith said he would try to have major items from the BUDCOM listed in the Newington Neighbor and at Town Meeting.

George Fletcher, in response to FD Chief Wahl's comment that he was unable to find a diesel suburban, said he knows that this type of vehicle can be purchased.

Firefighter David Low brought up some issues relative to a command vehicle so that the BUDCOM would not feel they had been misled. These were:

1. The PD offered to give the FD an old cruiser, but the offer was turned down.
2. Pumps can be removed from the forestry vehicle, but it is difficult to do.
3. Two command posts are available, 1 from the Sheriff's Department, which would take 20-25 minutes to get to Newington, and the other from Portsmouth.

L. Coleman asked Low if that meant that a vehicle for the command post was not needed. D. Low said that was not necessarily true, that things get lost in the shuffle and the big picture should be defined better. Low said that the Deputy Chief currently uses the old police cruiser, and sometimes the Chief uses it.

L. Coleman asked if the cruiser could be used for a command post. Low said it could, but certain events require a larger vehicle and that the Chief and BOFE explained quite well that the priority is the people.

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Firefighter Dale Spainhower asked if anyone could speak at this forum or if it was for residents only. Chairman Smith allowed Spainhower to speak. Spainhower commented that only one firefighter had been offered, but the department was over-taxed. He explained that there are 3 call guys doing shifts with lots of overtime, and they are beat. He recommended that the \$45,000 from the vehicle be put to firefighters. Chairman Smith said that the request must be put to the Town for such a large amount of money.

L. Coleman asked if more money was being spent on overtime. Spainhower replied that he just had 39 hours of overtime and that it might save the Town's pocket, but it was killing the men.

Firefighter Low explained the 600 hours that needed to be covered and how it broke down if 2 men were hired or if 1 man were hired.

Kay Akerley asked Chair Smith if the BUDCOM still had to talk about this issue if it was going to be a warrant article. Smith said that it will be a warrant article and there are some valid arguments that must be brought to the floor at Town meeting. Chair Smith asked if there were any more questions on the General Budget. There being none, the Committee continued with the warrant articles.

#### Warrant Articles:

*Article 5:* T. Spinney made a motion to recommend \$15,000 to existing CRF for revaluation of the Town; second by Laura Coleman. Vote carried, none opposed.

*Article 6:* T. Spinney made a motion to recommend \$12,000 to existing CRF for replacement of Ambulance and major medical equipment; second by K. Akerley. Vote carried, none opposed.

*Article 7:* T. Spinney made a motion to recommend \$20,000 to existing CRF for replacement/repair of FD vehicles; second by Laura Coleman. Vote carried, none opposed. Chief Wahl asked if the ambulance was left out last year. Chairman Smith read that year's Town Report and clarified. With no questions, vote carried, none opposed.

*Article 8:* T. Spinney made a motion to recommend \$50,000 to existing Conservation Fund for land management; second by L. Coleman. No questions. Vote carried, none opposed.

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*Article 10:* L. Coleman made a motion to recommend \$127,482 to create three (3) full-time firefighter positions; second by J. O'Reilly. Kay Akerley asked if the committee had to recommend. Chairman Smith reviewed rules. Gail Pare said that although the BUDCOM explained the process of options, wasn't it more confusing to deal with a warrant article that the BUDCOM doesn't recommend. Chairman Smith said no, that it was cleaner and all discussion takes place in one room. Vote carried, none opposed.

BOFE Young asked if the warrant article were for two (2) firefighters, would the BUDCOM recommend it. Chairman Smith said, no, that the BUDCOM would not bargain with it. BOS Chair O'Reilly asked if the floor could change the article at Town Meeting, to which Smith replied, yes. More questions and comments took place that were repetitive. Chairman Smith interrupted the room discussion and reiterated that this was a long-term permanent commitment to the Town, and he would not argue for 1 or 2, needed or not. Smith stated further that the Chairman would not take a position, other than it [the decision] will go to the Town.

L. Brock asked how the warrant article would read if the BUDCOM didn't recommend it. A discussion took place and Lulu Pickering asked if she could make a comment. Chairman Smith said no, the committee was taking a vote. BUDCOM Chair Smith read *Article 10* again and asked for a vote. Those in favor—Wil Gilbert, **yes**; J. O'Reilly, **yes**; K. Akerley, **no**; R. Spinney, **no**; L. Brock, **no**; L. Coleman, **no**; T. Spinney, **no**. The Budget Committee did not recommend Article 10.

Gail Pare mentioned that she didn't realize that the Budget Committee position was an elected one and noted that she wanted to be a write-in for a 3-year term.

Chairman Smith asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion to adjourn made by J. O'Reilly; second by Kay Akerley. Vote carried, none opposed.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M Newcomer  
Administrative Assistant