

**Town of Newington
Budget Committee
February 10, 2001 Meeting Minutes & Public Hearing**

Budget Committee (BudCom) Members Present: Chairman Alfred Smith, Jan Stuart, Kay Akerley, Leslie Brock, Richard Spinney, Laura Coleman, Terri Spinney, and Board of Selectmen (BOS) Rep. Jack O'Reilly. Absent: Cindy Noble. Others Present: Board of Selectmen Chris Cross and Cos Iocovozzi, Fire Chief Larry Wahl and Guy Young, & Executive Assistant Bob Belmore.

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

Motion by Stuart, 2nd by Akerley to approve the meeting minutes of January 31, 2001; motion passed, 8-0 vote.

Motion by O'Reilly, 2nd by Akerley to approve the meeting minutes of February 3, 2001; motion passed, 8-0 vote.

Selectman O'Reilly told the Committee that the Town was hosting a NHMA Local Officials' annual workshop in April.

School District Budget & Warrant Articles

Chairman Smith said he would like to have the Committee act on the School District's proposed warrant articles first. Smith read each article.

Article 2 – this referred to the approval of funding \$12,104 for the next fiscal year for increases associated with the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Motion by O'Reilly, 2nd by Stuart to recommend the appropriation; passed with an 8-0 vote.

Article 3 – this requested a \$27,137 appropriation for the pre-School program. Motion by Coleman, 2nd by T. Spinney to recommend the appropriation.

Discussion: Smith explained there were two separate articles being presented: one for the program costs and one related to transportation costs. Akerley asked if this would be an on-going program; answer was yes – if approved, it would then appear in future operating budget requests. T. Spinney said the Board had not yet decided on moving kids from morning to afternoon kindergarten; she said they had talked about the pre-school program for some time now but had not requested funds until now. Smith reiterated the fact that no one had yet been identified for the program at this time. Brock asked if a child moved into the area, what would happen. T. Spinney said the District would pay to have the child sent elsewhere. She said historically they have had kids for the program so they felt the District could benefit more if it was offered here.

Motion was to recommend the appropriation, motion was defeated: 2-6 vote (for: Coleman & T. Spinney).

Article 4 – Motion by Brock to recommend \$29,700 for transportation costs related to the pre-school program, 2nd R. Spinney; defeated by 2-6 vote (for: Coleman and T. Spinney).

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Article 5 – Motion by O'Reilly to recommend the establishment of a School Property Maintenance Fund, authorize the School Board as agents to spend and appropriate \$30,000 to the fund, 2nd by Brock. Smith said there has been a need for such a fund & with this approach they might avoid a spike cost down the road. School Business Administrator Katkin said DRA had suggested the wording since it was for maintenance needs and not a capital equipment type purchase. Motion to recommend passed with an 8-0 vote.

Article 6 – School District Operating Budget at \$1,493,127
Motion by Akerley, 2nd by Coleman to recommend this amount.

Chairman Smith opened the meeting to the public (Public Hearing).

Jean Bowser asked about the pre-school program and if it was a required program. T. Spinney said it was not required for every student. Ruth Fletcher asked why the bus schedule was not in line with the Portsmouth schedule. T. Spinney said Portsmouth adopts their school calendar before Newington.

Smith closed the Public Hearing on the School Budget.

Discussion: O'Reilly asked about discrepancies between the school board and treasurer salaries and the requested increases. Katkin said the increases were a decision of the School Board and he explained the differences that existed in the various district towns. He also said there were different stipends given for the different level of responsibilities taken on by members of the Board and he explained how various towns handled it. T. Spinney said the Board did increase the Treasurer's salary two years ago. Katkin said the last School Board increase was in 1986. Akerley questioned the rationale for the Principal's salary increase. T. Spinney said it had been so long since they hired a new principal, the Board wanted to put \$5,000 more into the salary amount in case it was needed. Superintendent Cushing said the amount allows the District a salary range to consider depending upon the skill level of the individual. Stuart asked if the current principal was paid more for being a teaching principal – answer was *no*. Superintendent Cushing said he had seen a lot of value in a teacher Principal and he thought it was a good idea – it allowed the Principal to stay in contact with students. Akerley asked how a new principal would be able to make more than one who served some 30 years. Cushing said the market has changed along with the demand.

Motion to recommend the operating budget at \$1,493,127 passed unanimously, 8-0 vote.

Town Budget & Warrant Articles

Motion by Brock, 2nd by Akerley to recommend a Town operating budget for FY 2001 in the amount of \$3,471,878.

Discussion: Chairman Smith gave a review of the Budget as presented on the State MS-7 Budget form. O'Reilly stated DRA had suggested that the Committee should have made

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budget cuts at the last meeting – not after the fact. Smith said the Committee was going to make the cuts at this meeting. Smith explained each line appropriation and the differences between the Selectmen requested amount and the Budget Committee recommended amounts including the following cuts: \$2,700 from the executive line relating to the deputy town clerk hours increase/ salary increase; \$7,400 from financial administration which reflected amounts in computer & new equipment & substitute help funding; \$20,000 from the legal account; \$25,400 was cut from the general government buildings. Smith explained his concerns about prior work budgeted and not completed. O'Reilly reiterated the Selectmen's plans for various building improvements. Coleman suggested forming a building maintenance committee (as mentioned in the past). O'Reilly explained the high level of legal work being done including addressing the Pease noise issue. Selectman Iocovozzi said the Board would need about \$20,000 to appeal the recent adverse ruling in the Simplex case. Chairman Smith continued along with the budget line account by line account.

Smith explained the not recommended amount of \$23,400 in the police department budget regarding salary equity and \$500 additional funding being placed into the fire department budget for salary fairness. O'Reilly mentioned the need to budget \$2,000 for the fire department's purchase of an infrared camera that will be offset by the Wal-Mart \$2,000 donation. The Building Inspection funding was discussed. O'Reilly explained why the increase was needed. Selectman Cross also explained the rationale regarding the budgeting requested and the Selectmen's decision to have the inspector achieve a certain level of expertise through continuing education courses & to allow him to pass a certification test. Akerley questioned paying the inspector to attend training. Cross said the Board wanted to allow him to improve his ability to inspect for the Town. Smith asked if the State had no requirement for certification, then how was the town's liability mitigated. T. Spinney questioned there being no agreement for him to work a certain amount of time for the town to pay back the investment made in him. Cross pointed out that the Town pays for the town planner to attend training and O'Reilly mentioned the training attendance by police officers at the town's expense.

Chairman Smith explained the \$500 not recommended in the sanitation administration line. O'Reilly said the Board hired a new transfer station attendant and he will need to attend some training. Smith continued with the budget presentation.

Smith opened the public hearing portion of the meeting. Ruth Fletcher asked for a budget breakdown of the executive line. Smith explained the animal control salary went from \$4,000 to \$5,000 and the building inspector salary went from \$3,500 to \$28,000. Fletcher asked about the hours of the inspector. Cross said they had budgeted 28 hours per week to allow for some office set up time. He said he met with the inspector 1x per week to review his work progress and activity level. Fletcher suggested requiring a written report. Cross mentioned that the Planner gets a much higher salary and no tracking is done. Smith said the Committee had an accountability concern regarding all town employees and it was a long-standing concern. O'Reilly said each Selectman worked and they didn't have a town administrator to track employees. Fletcher suggested job descriptions. O'Reilly said the Board was working on it. Smith continued on with the budget breakdown for positions. George Fletcher asked if the building inspector was full

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time and did he have another business. Cross said he was still in the building trade and he was part time. Discussion continued regarding town personnel policies including selection process, vacations, probationary periods, job performance reviews, etc. Ruth Fletcher asked about the custodian salary and executive assistant salary. Chairman Smith gave a breakdown of these positions and also the town planner and other items under financial administration. O'Reilly said the executive assistant position is also required to do financial administration, research and seek bids, and a variety of other duties and tasks. It was explained that the position is required to do administrative duties assigned by the Board of Selectmen. Mrs. Susan Smith questioned the road agent position. O'Reilly said the position was being filled by the Board of Selectmen, themselves. Smith said it should be on the record that the Board satisfied themselves, not the Town. Mrs. Smith asked how the Town accounts for highway department (man) hours. Selectman Iocovozzi said the highway department puts in time slips. Jean Bowser asked how many full time employees worked at the town hall. O'Reilly said the Planner and Executive Assistant. Discussion again went onto the procedures used for the tracking of time worked by town employees and the process used to hire new employees and other related policy and procedures.

O'Reilly read excerpts from the State RSA's regarding the Budget Committee's responsibilities as differentiated from the Selectmen duties. The use of time clocks for employees was discussed. O'Reilly said it was researched about 5 years ago and the decision was not to use them. George Fletcher said there was distrust now because of the money that went out the back door and he didn't want it to happen again. O'Reilly said they were not out the woods fully yet and the Board was working on some changes and progress was being made.

Chief Wahl said more money was needed to complete building renovations and he suggested following the CIP, either fund it or not – don't nickel and dime it. Discussion took place regarding the renovations to the fire station. The Chief confirmed that an additional \$22,000 was needed to address the work at the station. Guy Young said it was feasible that work could be completed by this June or July.

Chairman Smith closed the public hearing portion of the meeting. Akerley said she had a concern that no police commission members were present. Smith asked that it be noted that no police commission representative was present to his disappointment. Chief Wahl said there might have been some confusion regarding the public hearing date being changed from February 17th. O'Reilly suggested adding \$200 into the budget for the printing of the town report and another \$2,000 to cover the purchase of a thermal imaging camera for the fire department. Smith recommended \$2,000 being added to budget line account 4220-4229 for the thermal camera and \$25,000 for the fire station building renovations.

Brock amended her motion to include \$27,200 to the budget & recommend a new total of \$3,499,078; second by Stuart; motion approved with an 8-0 vote.

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Warrant Articles

Smith read the Selectmen's proposed warrant article appropriations and he gave a brief explanation on each article.

Article 2- \$10,000 for capital reserve fund (CRF) for fire dept. communications, motion-Akerley, 2nd-Coleman, 8-0 vote to recommend.

Article 3- \$15,000 for revaluation CRF, motion by Coleman, 2nd-Stuart, 8-0 vote to recommend.

Article 4- \$30,000 for PD communications equipment CRF, motion-Brock, 2nd-Coleman, 8-0 vote to recommend.

Article 5- \$12,000 for ambulance & equipment CRF, motion-O'Reilly, 2nd-Brock, 8-0 vote to recommend.

Article 6- \$20,000 for FD vehicle CRF, motion-Akerley, 2nd-Coleman, 8-0 vote to recommend.

Article 7- \$50,000 to be placed in a Conservation Fund, motion-Coleman, 2nd-Brock, 8-0 vote to recommend. Mrs. Smith asked if any properties had been identified. O'Reilly answered – *no*, but said the idea was to have the funding should something come along that the town wished to purchase.

Chairman Smith said the total appropriation with warrant articles was \$3,636,078.

Other

Selectman O'Reilly read a written statement signed by the three Selectmen regarding their recent cuts to the Selectmen Budget proposals (see attached). Chairman Smith said the RSA's required all questions asked by the Budget Committee be answered to their satisfaction. Smith also said if derogatory comments were made by the Committee and they were uncalled for, then as Chairman he will take responsibility and apologize, however such comments were never intended. Further discussion took place on comments made.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert M. Belmore