

**Budget Committee
Public Hearing
February 17, 2007 1:00pm
Town Hall**

Chairman Alfred Smith called the meeting to order at 1:00pm.

Present: Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Larry Wahl, Selectmen's representative Jack O'Reilly, School Board representative Helen Maldini, members Candice Cantalupo, Cliff Abbott, Rick Stern, Russell Cooke, Gail Klanchesser, and Gail Pare; Selectman Jan Stuart, Selectman Cosmas Iocovozzi, SAU 50 personnel Jim Katkin, George Cushing, School Board member Jack Anderson, principal Helen Rist; Police Commissioner Norm Kent and Chief Jon Tretter; Lisa Zhe of the Portsmouth Herald, Cyndi Gillespie and Administrative Assistant Beatrice Marconi.

Gail Klanchesser moved to accept the minutes of February 3 / seconded by Larry Wahl. Motion passed with modifications. (typo: debit service vs. debt service on pages 2 & 3)

The school budget is proposing a budget of \$ 1,776,999 (Article #1). ***Gail Klanchesser moved to accept and recommend Article #1 with Helen Maldini seconding.*** Chairman Smith noted that this represents approximately an 8% decrease. Jack Anderson stated that on behalf of the School Board he wanted to acknowledge that the SAU Office and Principal Rist worked very hard and thanked Mr. Katkin, Mr. Cushing and Principal Rist for their innovated budgeting. Chairman Smith concurred and went on to say how very fortunate we were in having everyone, especially Mr. Katkin. ***Article #1 for the School proposing a budget of \$ 1,776,999 passed with a unanimous recommendation by the Budget Committee.***

Article #2 - To see if the Newington School District will vote to approve the cost items included in the Collective Bargaining Agreement reached between the Newington School Board and the Assoc of Coastal Teachers/Newington which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels:

2007-08	-	\$22,394
2008-09	-	\$10,562-\$21,364
2009-10	-	\$10,591-\$22,216

and further to raise and appropriate the sum of \$22,394 for the upcoming fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits over those of the appropriation at current staffing levels paid in the prior fiscal year. ***Gail Klanchesser moved to recommend – Gail Pare seconded.*** John Lamson asked about the C.O.L.A.. Helen Maldini responded by saying the first year was a step system and the COLAs varied. Equity adjustments followed in year 2 and 3 with more time being negotiated in with the ability to seek out compatible health costs.

The Public Hearing was closed for the School at 1:18pm.

Article #2 passed unanimously when Chairman Smith called for the vote to recommend. The Budget Committee then signed the MS 27.

At 1:20, Chairman Smith opened the public hearing on the Town budget with the Selectmen's coming in at \$5,452,956 and before the Budget Committee right now was an amount of \$5,386,716 for consideration. Regarding the Budget Committee's figure of \$ 5,386,716, ***Gail Klanchesser moved to recommend. Gail Pare seconded*** and Chairman Smith opened up the floor to discussion. Lisa Zhe from the Portsmouth Herald was permitted to ask a question, that being 'why the Fire

Department budget was being recommended by the Budget Committee at an amount much less than what they had originally requested'. Chairman Smith answered stating that a 14% increase was quite high. The Budget Committee examined what was left over from last year unspent and felt that a 7% increase was fair and manageable.

Sharon Brown asked if the Recreation Budget reflected the YMCA program heard to be coming back to Newington. Jack O'Reilly answered by saying he will be making a motion for an increase with John Lamson stating that more than likely the participation level will be on the rise with this move back into town – if passed.

Chairman Smith read aloud the letter presented by the Fire Engineers as there was no representation there at the public hearing. In summary, the letter stated initially they (the FD and Engineers) had asked for a \$138,327 budget increase. The Budget Committee felt that they should cut that increase back by \$ 68,600. The Budget Committee is focused on a total Fire Department budget of \$ 1,074,794 vs. the most recent request from the Engineers of \$ 1,103,332. Chairman Smith spoke of his level of comfort in the Budget Committee's recommendation and felt the FD request was too high to justify to the tax payers as it was not adequately explained. The Engineer's letter goes on to state that the line for ambulance billing in the amount of \$ 6,000 was totally removed from the Fire Department as they felt since the income goes into the general fund, the expense should be that of the Board of Selectmen. Jack O'Reilly says he is not prepared for the Board's budget to be increased by \$ 6,000 for billing and went on to say that this way of thinking would mean that all monies coming into the general fund should have the expenses affiliated come from the Selectmen's lines such as Rec, etc. Gail Pare stated that she is concerned about the vehicle maintenance line being so high considering we just replaced a truck. Chairman Smith went on to comment about the ambulance supplies and defib. Why lease? One cannot utilize the Cap Reserve funds if leasing. He stood firm in saying that the cuts made were adequate and Larry Wahl agreed. Other towns this size generally do not have full time departments but because of our diversity, we do. We have many hazards and our guys do a great job.

After this discussion, ***Chairman Smith closed the public hearing at 1:45pm.***

Jack O'Reilly moved to increase the Budget Committees recommended operating budget by \$ 15,346 bringing the Recreation summer program line up to \$ 25,346 for the YMCA (for costs to bring the summer program back into Newington) which would increase the Recreation total budget to \$47,246. Seconded by Russell Cooke with no opposition. This would now make the Budget Committee's recommended operating budget for the town to be at \$ 5,402,062. Gail Klanchesser moved to accept the amendment to her motion and Gail Pare seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

The Chair called for a ten minute recess.

At 2:02pm, the Chair called for the Warrant Article portion of the meeting to begin with consideration of Article #6 (bonding for land acquisition in the amount of \$525,000). ***Gail Klanchesser moved to recommend with Cliff Abbott seconding for discussion.*** Larry Wahl spoke of the 10% clause as referred to in an e-mail from Beatrice Marconi to the Budget Committee members. He went on to say that *IF* the Budget Committee does not recommend this warrant article, it only leaves approximately \$ 45,000 to work with and we must bear in mind possible amendments from the floor. The ramifications may be big if the Budget Committee does not recommend this article and place difficult limits on the Town's people. If this article is not recommended by the BudCom and then the Town votes Article 6 in, the Department of Revenue Administration will come in and throw out the last voted in remaining Warrant Articles to bring our totals down to within the limits mandated by State law. Discussion will play an important part on explaining this issue at Town Meeting. Gail Pare agreed and felt perhaps the BudCom should vote

to recommend it JUST so to stay within the mandated 10% cap, then explain to the floor. Helen Maldini felt if we endorse, then we endorse – and we should try not to confuse the voters. John Lamson asked the Chair to consider this after the remaining articles are considered by the BudCom for recommendation today.

Article #4 No recommendation needed. Non money warrant article.

Article #5 No recommendation needed. Non money warrant article.

Article #6 (\$525,000 bond for land acquisition) – to be considered last today.

Article #7 (total operating budget) – no further action required

Article #8 (changing purpose of Fox Pt Pav. Cap Res) – no action required by BudCom

Article #9 (adding \$25,000 to Cap Res for Fox Pt Pavilion)

Larry Wahl moved to recommend – John Lamson seconded – motion passed with Cliff Abbott opposing.

Article #10 (Raising \$20,000 for demo of Mott House) ***Larry Wahl moved to recommend – Helen Maldini seconded – motion passed unanimously.***

Article #11 (Adding \$50,000 to Conservation Fund) ***Gail Klanchesser moved to recommend – Gail Pare seconding – motion passed unanimously.***

Article #12 (Establish a Cap Res for Highway Bldg and to raise \$50,000) ***Cliff Abbott moved to recommend – Helen Maldini seconded – motion passed unanimously.***

Article #13 (Adding \$5,000 to Highway Vehicle fund) ***Gail Klanchesser moved to recommend – Larry Wahl seconded – motion passed*** (with Cliff Abbott noting the amount was too low.)

Article #14 (Adding \$40,000 to SCBA Fund) ***Gail Klanchesser moved to recommend – Larry Wahl seconded – Motion passed – (Cliff Abbott opposed)***

Article #15 (Adding \$15,000 to Fire Dept Vehicle Fund) ***Gail Klanchesser moved to recommend- Helen Maldini seconded – motion passed unanimously.***

Article #16 (Establish a Cap Res for Major RoadWork and to raise \$25,000) ***Gail Klanchesser moved to recommend – Larry Wahl seconded – motion passed unanimously.***

Article #17 (Establish a Cap Res for Mott Pond Drainage Improvement Fund and to raise \$10,000) ***Larry Wahl moved to recommend. Gail Klanchesser seconded – motion passed unanimously.***

Article #18 (Raise \$16,800 for Conservation Commission’s Mapping of Wet Lands ½ acre or more) ***Gail Klanchesser moved to NOT recommend this warrant article with Jack O’Reilly seconding.*** Larry Wahl feels it should be defeated as well. Jack O’Reilly went on to say that there is no requirement mandating us to do this as he spoke to Mark West – Wetland’s Consultant – Gail Klanchesser spoke of the existing Planning Board mapping. Chairman Al Smith said there are no requirements in the RSAs but went on to say that if you do this, then all the restriction will apply and says the passage of this article will place too many restrictions on the land owner and should be defeated. ***Motion passed unanimously.***

Article #19 (Add \$15,000 to employee severance fund) ***Gail Klanchesser moved to recommend. Helen Maldini seconded. Motion passed unanimously.***

Article #20 (Add \$20,000 to ambulance/major medical equipment fund) ***Gail Klanchesser moved to recommend. Gail Pare seconded.*** Larry stated that he felt \$10,000 would be sufficient. Jack O’Reilly stated originally they had asked for \$20,000. Selectmen brought it down to \$ 15,000. ***Motion passed with Rick Stern, Larry Wahl and Cliff Abbott voting against.***

- Article #21 (Add \$14,000 to municipal bldg fund) ***Gail Pare moved to recommend – Gail Klanchesser seconding – motion passed unanimously.***
- Article #22 (Add \$10,000 to Recreation field maintenance fund) ***Larry Wahl moved to recommend – Gail Pare seconded – motion passed unanimously.***
- Article #23 (Add \$5,000 to Fire Dept Communications Fund) ***John Lamson moved to recommend. Gail Pare seconded.*** Chairman Smith did not support this article. It was stated that some of these funds will be for repeaters. Larry suggested that next year each department speak of their proposed warrant articles in front of the BudCom. ***Motion passed with Chairman Smith opposing.***
- Article #24 (Adding \$5,000 to Cemetery Fund) ***Gail Klanchesser moved to recommend. Helen Maldini seconded.*** Chairman Smith noted on what a nice job the stone wall turned out to be. ***Motion passed unanimously.***

Article #6 is now taken up again for discussion (Bond for \$525,000 for Land Acquisition) It was stated that now we could potentially be looking at approx. \$12,000 play for consideration for amendments to warrant articles and operating budget if BudCom does not recommend Article #6 AND the town votes it in. If someone from the floor then recommends that the Fire Department budget be given back the \$68,600 cut by the BudCom, DRA would then come in and disqualify Warrant Articles #19 - #24, so placement and order of the warrant articles is very critical.

After much discussion, the order of the warrant articles was changed.

Chairman Alfred Smith called for a vote on Article #6. ***Motion failed to recommend Article #6 2 – 8.*** Jack O'Reilly and Gail Pare were for the motion to recommend, all other members were opposed.

Chairman Smith was thanked for his many years of service and for the fine job and dedication. This sentiment was echoed throughout the room by both the Budget Committee and Selectmen.

Jack O'Reilly moved to adjourn at 3:35 pm. Cliff Abbott seconded. Motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Beatrice Marconi
Administrative Assistant