

Town of Newington, NH
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 12, 2018 Town Hall

Chair John Lamson called the meeting to order at 7:14pm

Present: John Lamson, Chair, Brandon Arsenault, Vice Chair, Katherine Latchaw, William Wright, Sandra Sweeney, Alan Wilson, Jamie Belanger, Jennifer Kent Weiner, Mike Marconi-Selectmen's Rep, Ted Connors, Chair Board of Selectmen, Ken Latchaw, Selectman, Mike Bilodeau, Police Chief, Brenda Blonigan, Police Commissioner, Conservation Commission Co-Chair, Jim Weiner, Cemetery Trustees; Cosmas Iocovozzi and Peggy Lamson, Finance Director, Cindy Saklad, Martha Roy, Town Administrator and Eleanor Boy, Recorder.

Amendments to the December 5th minutes were discussed. J. Lamson asked that an amendment be made to clarify that \$5,800 will be added back to the Radio Maintenance line in the Fire Budget, but the bottom line of the Fire budget will remain the same. J. Kent Weiner didn't remember the conversation about consolidating like items in the budget.

B. Arsenault didn't think that legal fees were in that conversation. J. Lamson remembered the conversation to be about the departments only funding their legal line if they have a specific need in the coming year. Unanticipated legal expenses would be in the Selectmen's budget. J. Lamson suggested that this item will be clarified when the Budget Committee reviews the Selectmen's budget.

J. Kent Weiner moved to approve the minutes of December 5th, 2018 as amended. Katherine Latchaw seconded the motion with all in favor.

Conservation Commission Budget Review:

Co-Chair Jim Weiner presented the Conservation budget to the committee. The bottom line requested by the Selectmen was \$12,642.

J. Weiner pointed out that the Conservation Commission has reduced its budget significantly over the last couple of years. The Conservation Commission has increased their consultant expense line in 2019 because they want to have their wetland's consultant, Mark West, map out the location and name all the water bodies in Newington that flow into the bay. The Selectmen had reduced the legal line to \$1, but the commission would like it to be \$1,000. J. Lamson asked what the legal line would be used for. J. Weiner said they aren't sure because it is hard to predict what is coming in the next year.

J. Lamson asked that the community education line be reduced from \$1,000 to \$600, and that the additional \$400 be added to the Selectmen's recommended sum for the legal line (of \$100.) for a total of \$500. This would mean the bottom line of the budget would remain at \$12,642..

S. Sweeney moved to tentatively approve the Conservation budget of \$12,642. B. Arsenault seconded the motion. J. Lamson called for a vote and all were in favor.

Cemetery Budget Review:

S. Sweeney moved to tentatively approve the Cemetery budget of \$27,565. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.

Alan Wilson is the chair of the Cemetery Trustees and a member of the Budget Committee.

The Cemetery Trustees hired John Frink as the Cemetery Sexton in 2018. They signed a three-year contract with John Newick for landscaping. B. Arsenault questioned why the town and cemetery have separate vendors for landscaping. He thought that it would be more cost effective to have the same crew do both while it was in

town. P. Lamson explained that historically the service has always been separated. This was bid out in 2018.

J. Lamson called for a vote on the Cemetery Budget of \$27,565. All were in favor.

Police Department Budget Review:

B. Arsenault moved to tentatively approve the Police Department budget of \$1,731,530. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.

Police Chief Mike Bilodeau presented the Police budget to the committee.

The number one complaint by residents to the Police Department is the speeding in Newington. The department needs to purchase new radar equipment in 2019. The current equipment is old and unreliable.

J. Lamson pointed out that the 2019 budget is 6.7% more than last year, which is quite an increase. J. Lamson asked the Police Chief to go back and cut more.

The committee questioned why the employees were getting a 3% COLA increase and a step increase. M. Roy pointed out that the federal COLA was 2.8% for 2019. It is important to keep pace with the other departments in surrounding towns so Newington can retain their employees.

J. Kent Weiner asked if the Town could get a benefit comparison for several surrounding towns, Greenland, Rye, Dover and Portsmouth.

J. Lamson questioned the \$95,000 budgeted for overtime. Could the department use part time employees to fill these shifts and save on overtime? Chief Bilodeau explained that a full-time shift has to be filled with a full time officer. Chief Bilodeau explained that as soon

as the two new officers get through the academy by mid-year then his overtime should decrease.

Discussion ensued about hiring part time officers, the limited availability of part time officers and the ability to retain the part time officers.

S. Sweeney questioned why there was so much discussion about the Police Department's overtime line, when the Fire Department's overtime line is twice as much and there was no discussion about it.

C. Saklad pointed out that she believes the FICA may have been miscalculated in the Police budget. There could be a significant reduction in their budget.

The committee asked the Chief to go back and reduce his budget.

B. Arsenault asked why the Police expenditures are low for 2018. The Chief explained that the department has major expenditures coming up in December and the salaries line is low because of long term experienced officers being replaced by younger less expensive officers.

B. Arsenault moved to amend the motion to tentatively approve the Police Department budget of \$1,708,205. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion with S. Sweeney opposed and all others in favor. The Chief will prepare a recommendation memo to the Committee of where he recommends the cuts to be made.

Emergency Management Budget Review:

B. Arsenault moved to tentatively approve the Emergency Management budget of \$19,107. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.

Police Chief Mike Bilodeau presented the Emergency Management budget to the committee. There is an increase in the budget due to

the hope of hiring someone to pursue state and federal grants for the department.

J. Lamson called for a vote on the Emergency Management Budget of \$19,107. All were in favor.

M. Marconi moved to adjourn at 9:32pm. S. Sweeney seconded the motion with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

**Eleanor Boy
Recorder**

