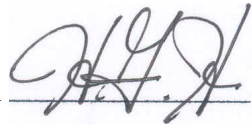


Approved as amended



TOWN OF EPSOM

BUDGET COMMITTEE

DECEMBER 18,2008

Present: Harvey Harkness, Chairman; Marylou Keane, Vice Chairman; Carole Brown; Larry Yeaton; Brad Keyes; David Fiorentino; Mike Wiggett; Kevin Reeves; Joyce Heck

Excused: Joanne Randall; Larry Caraway; Carol McGuire

Other Attendees: Nancy Wheeler; Patrick Connor; Barbara Noonan; Peter Aubrey; Val Long; Cheryl Arvanitis; Mary Frambach; Gary Perry; Nancy Claris; Brian Beaverstock; Keith Cota

Harvey opened the meeting at 7:00 P.M.

Harvey noted their primary agenda item for this meeting would be the school budget. He read a letter from Alice Noyes requesting the band line have \$500.00 reinstated into it so the band could perform for Memorial Day services and a concert at Old Home Day.

Nancy Wheeler informed the Committee, per Larry Yeaton's question of the previous meeting, there was \$191,000.00 in outstanding taxes from the June 2008 billing. There is \$745,000.00 outstanding from the current billing. Nancy has made the revisions requested at the last meeting; she received the approved BCEP costs and has included the updated figures. Nancy has also included the updated Police Dispatch figure of \$59,885.00. Nancy revised the salary lines to reflect a 4.2% COLA. She had a draft MS7 which she explained.

Gary Perry - Parks & Recreation Department

Harvey noted there were questions regarding some line items.

Larry Yeaton asked if some of the work would be completed with grants that required matching funds. Gary confirmed this saying they have 5 years to complete the work under the Dredge and Fill Permit from DES. Per FEMA they will require \$140,000.00. Gary noted what occurs upstream will affect the work.

Kevin asked if the town did not receive the grant, would the money be spent. Gary confirmed this, noting they hoped to encumber the funds if they are not spent in 2009. Gary will check to see if the funds can be encumbered if not spent.

Larry asked what other improvements were planned for the park. Gary hopes to rebuild the gazebo, add on to the bunker bathrooms and work on the cooking area.

Kevin asked what needed to be done to the bathrooms. Gary noted they would like to expand and add on to them.

Harvey asked Gary to estimate the value of the volunteer work completed at the park. Gary felt about \$500,000.00. Harvey asked in what time period, Gary said this was his 6th year as a Commissioner. Harvey asked the amount of town money put into the park; Gary noted approximately 20% of the value. Harvey thanked Gary saying they were doing a great job.

Val Long - Library Trustees

Val noted some of the information previously given to the Budget Committee was inaccurate; she had a sheet with additional information. Harvey said the Committee would address this after the School Budget presentation.

Patrick Connor - School Budget

Mr. Connor noted the lines highlighted in blue were items they could not adjust. He also distributed a default budget, tax impact information and a Report Card for the school. Mr. Connor noted the difference between the default and proposed budget was \$40,000.00. Of that \$27,000.00 was computer items. Mr. Connor noted the School either cut lines or kept them the same unless a need to increase. He explained the budget as proposed.

Larry asked the number of computers to be replaced; Mr. Connor said 30 desktops and 15 laptops. Larry asked the number of computers in the school; Mr. Connor noted there were 2 in each classroom and approximately 48 on the carts.

Carole asked what the tuition to other districts was; Mr. Connor noted it was the Pembroke Academy tuition.

Larry asked the need for the additional Nurse Days; Mr. Connor said for summer work for children coming into or leaving the school to complete records. The guidance lines allow for similar additional days.

Mr. Connor noted for school events after school hours they are required to have people present with CPR and first aid training.

Mr. Aubrey noted most schools; including Epsom, is losing money for food services. They can't control the increased costs or parents that do not send in money for children to eat.

Mr. Connor noted they tried to make the budget as trim as possible. Technology was the only area they could cut. The master agreement is the major difference increase. Mr. Aubrey explained the default budget.

Brad noted the number of high school students was increasing by 15 students, he asked about the remaining school population. Mr. Connor said it was fairly consistent at 440 students.

Kevin asked the number of years in the Master Contract; Barbara noted the teachers have 2 years remaining with support staff having 3 years remaining.

Discussion occurred the fuel was locked in at \$3.44 gallon.

Carole asked what the Federal reimbursement was toward special education, Mr. Aubrey noted it should be 40% but they were only getting 10 to 12%. Barbara noted Epsom was looking at a group with other districts to sue the government due to unfunded mandates.

Mr. Aubrey noted revenue had increased \$332,000.00; explaining the items. He noted the current law increases the State's share of education costs. Harvey asked based on the numbers how much needed to be raised by taxes. Mr. Aubrey said \$4,202,613.00, a decrease of 60 cents.

Larry noted special education costs had been decreased, asking if it could increase. Mr. Aubrey noted it could if a child moves into the district.

Harvey noted, all things remaining equal, the school budget was \$288,058.00 less.

Mr. Connor reviewed the School Report Card. Harvey noted Epsom was the lowest of the SAD for pre pupil costs.

Barbara noted the school is neat and clean compared with other schools in the district. Harvey noted people feel the school is hospitable toward community events.

Harvey asked Mr. Aubrey what the testing results were from Pembroke Academy and if they could obtain the data. Barbara noted they could get the overall standings, but it could not be broken out by towns.

The Committee took a break from 8:18 P.M. to 8:25 P.M.

Val Long - Library Trustees

Harvey indicated they would have the Library Trustees reconfirm their information. Val distributed the fact sheet and reviewed it, noting they have 2,100 patrons. She noted they have 6,600 people who use the library other than patrons. They expect the usage to increase due to the economy.

Val understood the Budge Committee cut \$8,000.00 from the budget. She noted the Trustees could choose where to cut, but the Committee had recommended cutting the legal line and \$5,000.00 from programming. She understood the

COLA is now 4.2%. Harvey noted both Larry Yeaton and he had reminded the Committee the Library Trustees have contracts with the employees. Dave asked who signs the contracts. Val noted they were signed by the Trustees and employees.

Discussion ensued as to what items would be cut from the Library budget. Harvey asked how often programs are held for toddler and young children. Nancy Claris noted they have story time twice a week and toddler time once a week. Other areas would also be affected.

Harvey asked about the legal expenses with Larry suggesting they encumber the funds this year and pay the invoices next year. Val noted the money has been expended in 2008 with no money in the budget. The trustees had put the money in the budget to protect themselves.

Marylou asked if the town COLA was reduced could they reduce their salaries. Val noted the Library increases were less than the Towns last year. Larry suggested contracts should not be signed until after a budget is passed. Harvey asked if contracts had been signed for next year. Val said not yet but they need to do this before January 1.

Larry noted the Committee was trying to get the budget reduced so it would pass. They have tried to cut everywhere, noting if there is a default budget the Library would lose \$10,000.00.

Val understood, but did not know where to remove the \$8,000.00. She did not want the Budget Committee to have misconceptions about their usage of the money. Larry did not think anyone questioned that.

Larry asked if the Library purchased its computers through the school. Val noted they get good prices through the technician they use.

Harvey asked the Trustees to give suggestions as to cuts and what amount they could live with. Val noted they could live with \$8,000.00 but they would not like it.

Cheryl Arvanitis noted they understood the cuts but do not like them. She felt the \$5,000.00 in programming would hurt.

Discussion ensued regarding the Trustees need for an attorney for the lease of the old library building.

Val noted the Trustees respect what the Committee was trying to do and they understood the Budget Committee's concerns.

Harvey noted he had done some work since the last meeting. Harvey noted Larry Yeaton had asked for the basis for the 5 year reassessment and discussed the information he obtained. Harvey distributed and reviewed the full value tax rates for the State he obtained !Tom DRA. He had done a comparison with other area towns, noting they would be referring back to this when the Committee does further discussions. Harvey had current inflation figures through November, excluding increases for food, energy and farmers.

Marylou discussed the e-mail she had from Joanne regarding legal fees.

The Committee reviewed the minutes of December 4, 2008. They reviewed and amended the minutes and changes submitted by Joanne.

Larry made a motion to accept the minutes as amended with Kevin seconding the motion.

Harvey asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Harvey called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Harvey discussed the subcommittee to get information to the voters had met regarding strategy. Mike runs his own business and has found a flyer was the best way to distribute information. Mike noted for about \$75.00 per 1,000 they could get the information into the Suncook Sun. There are 2,500 subscribers in Epsom.

Harvey has asked Penny Graham to design a flyer; she is willing to do this. Harvey suggested they talk to the Board of Selectmen about sending a flyer out before the deliberative session and before the March vote. Harvey asked Keith his thoughts. Keith noted it was a tool to get the information out. Harvey noted he spoke with someone in another town who said their Selectmen send a flyer out each year.

Several people were willing to donate money toward the flyer. Harvey noted as the flyer would be paid for by private citizens it could say it was approved by the Budget Committee, but paid for by private citizens.

Keith thought the approach was good. He felt it should be posted on the Website and at some local businesses. Brad suggested using the bulletin boards at the Circle Restaurant and the Library.

Harvey asked if the Committee would like Mike, Dave, Brad and he to come up with the information for the flyer, there was a consensus for this.

Discuss as to what should be included occurred. Dave felt they should do some ideas as a Committee. Ideas mentioned include a pie chart, note that the Budget Committee was trying to keep increases to 10% or less, being sensitive to economic situation, finalized budget and something about default budgets the last 4 to 5 years. Also something about

the Police and Fire Department salaries being below other towns and an explanation of Warrant Articles and their cost impacts were suggested.

Larry noted he had asked for the last 4 to 5 years Police and Fire Department salary comparisons with other towns and years of experience, he has not received that information. He also noted what Joanne said regarding town employees not receiving salary increases was wrong, they have received COLA's each year.

Harvey requested people call him if they have additional ideas.

Harvey asked if they would be adjusting the school budget. Mike would like to see something for high school transportation. Discussion occurred this should be done as a Warrant Article.

Kevin noted he will not be available on January 8th.

Having another meeting before January 8th was discussed. January 3rd at 9:00 A.M. was chosen.

Carole discussed Marylou had asked about putting \$10.00 in the mosquito line. Carole noted if the Town has an epidemic outbreak, it would have to pay for all costs and be reimbursed later by the State at approximately 25% of the costs.

The next meeting is set for January 3rd at 9:00 A.M. at the Town Office.

Larry made a motion to adjourn the meeting with Mike seconding the motion.

Harvey asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Harvey called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Harvey adjourned the meeting at 9:31 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Bosiak
Recording Secretary