

TOWN OF EPSOM

BUDGET COMMITTEE

JUNE 11, 2009

Present: Harvey Harkness, Chairman; Marylou Keane, Vice Chairman; Joanne Randall; Joyce Heck; Carole Brown; Tammy Vaillancourt; Mike Wiggett; David Fiorentino; Brad Keyes; Virginia Drew

Excused: Carol McGuire; Kevin Reeves

Other Attendees: Gordon Ellis; Wayne Preve; Stewart Yeaton; Mary Frambach

Carole opened the meeting at 7:03 P.M. Carole noted the Committee had to elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman.

Brad nominated Harvey as Chairman with Virginia seconding the motion.

Carole asked if there were any further nominations. There being no further nominations, Carole called for a vote. Harvey was unanimously elected as Chairman.

Carole asked for nominations for Vice Chairman.

Joyce nominated Marylou as Vice Chairman with Joanne seconding the motion.

Carole asked if there were any further nominations. There being no further nominations, Carole called for a vote. Marylou was unanimously elected as Vice Chairman.

Harvey thanked the Committee for their confidence in him as Chairman for another year. Harvey had the members introduce themselves and describe their experience.

The Committee reviewed the minutes of February 7, 2009.

Joyce made a motion to approve the minutes of February 7, 2009 as presented with Dave seconding the motion.

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

Joanne reviewed the Town Budget and expenditures to date. Joanne noted some lines were expended immediately when the budget was passed with other lines not spent until the end of the year.

The Highway Department budget was reviewed with Gordon Ellis, Road Agent. The Committee members were given copies of the Hazard Mitigation Grant funds received and information on road projects to be completed within the next five years.

Gordon discussed the work to be completed with the Hazard Mitigation Grant funds. He noted the engineering should be completed by June 18th, reviewed with Selectman Keith Cota and out to bid by July 1st. The projects should be completed by September with some roads to be closed for two or three days. The projects with 2007 funds have been completed with the ice storm damage work being completed now.

Gordon noted this is the first year the Town is not in a crisis management situation. The spring grading has been completed with the summer grading to begin shortly. Gordon plans to pave approximately 1,000 feet of River Road, with this work to prevent flood damage.

Joanne pointed out highway expenditures came from many different areas which is often difficult to keep track of. She noted they should not be afraid to ask how things are getting paid.

Joanne also pointed out 79% of the funds in the full time line were remaining as the position was vacant for two months.

Harvey noted one of the Budget Committee's priorities was road improvements. This is the first budget approved in five years. Harvey discussed the Highway Department has more resources than in previous years. He discussed the FEMA grants and other money in Capital Reserve Accounts.

Joanne requested Gordon keep the Budget Committee apprised of when projects are completed.

Gordon noted he was working on grants for 2010.

Harvey thanked Gordon for attending the meeting.

Harvey noted the second priority last year was raising the salaries for the Police and Fire personnel so Epsom was competitive. In prior years Chief Preve would train people and then a fully trained officer would leave for a higher salary. The budget passed included funds to raise the salaries.

Joanne noted the Police Department is a department that will wait until the end of the year to purchase equipment.

Chief Preve noted things are going better. One officer is in the Police Academy, graduating July 1st. He has hired a full trained officer from Pembroke. By mid-August the Department will be fully staffed.

Harvey asked if salaries are competitive to surrounding communities. Chief Preve noted some towns are equal to Epsom with others being above us. He felt next year would be difficult as he did not think he could ask for raises. Epsom is competitive with Chichester with Allenstown and Pembroke being above Epsom in salaries. Chief Preve noted the starting salary went from \$31,000.00 to \$34,000.00.

Chief Preve discussed being short two officers this year and the use of the over time line.

Harvey asked if the proposed three step salary increase was approved by the Board of Selectmen. Chief Preve said no, this year they went for a 10% salary increase and would not be going for the 8.8% each of the next two years.

Dave asked what towns were paying less than Epsom, Chief Preve said none. Police Department salaries were discussed.

Harvey wants to hear Epsom's salaries are competitive and at this point they should be competitive. He assumed next year the budget would go the next step so people would look at Epsom first. Chief Preve said that would be a tough sell. Harvey did not want to see the momentum stop.

Joanne advised Chief Preve has noted the types of crimes Epsom is seeing have changed in severity. The message has to be to let the people know what the Police Department does.

Harvey's hope and goal is this is the start of passing budgets with a focus on where the Town is at and where it wants to go.

Chief Preve is hopefully on July 1st the Police Department dispatch will be with Merrimack County Sheriff's Department. The cost will be under \$30,000.00 a year. This year the Town will owe Bow one-half of the \$59,000.00 it is charging Epsom. He discussed if he has extra money he may give more to Merrimack County due to the equipment it has to purchase.

Mike asked how the Department was doing with the cruisers. Chief Preve has purchased a new Crown Vic because Ford is going to stop manufacturing the Crown Vics.

Brad noted Chief Preve was worried about losing people if the budget did not pass, he asked if the Department has lost anyone. Chief Preve said everyone they have is happy now. Chief Preve noted Epsom is a small department and the young officers looking to advance will be looking at larger departments for that advancement.

Mike asked if officers would be returning to the school. Chief Preve noted once they were up to full staff he planned on it. Sgt. Michael took the dog to the school last week and the second graders have visited the Police Station.

Harvey asked if any of the officers are college educated. Chief Preve said at least three had an associate's degree. Harvey noted that could be another strategy for advancement.

Harvey thanked Chief Preve for attending the meeting.

The Fire Department budget was discussed. Chief Yeaton noted the salaries came in with a 12% increase. The new hire is getting \$14.50 an hour the next person \$15.50 an hour, Joel is at \$17.00 plus an hour and the Para-medical is at \$19.00 plus an hour.

Harvey asked if to fill a position is experience considered. Chief Yeaton said yes, most of the applicants for the last position had graduated from the Laconia Tech.

The Para-medical position was discussed with Chief Yeaton noting there were jobs out there for Para-medics. The number of calls the Para-medical responds to were reviewed and also the intercepts he does for other towns.

Joanne noted when looking at the budget they are only looking at the costs going out. There is income coming in also.

The second ambulance was discussed with Chief Yeaton also discussing the department's ability to potentially purchase Fire Department vehicles. They have just over \$100,000.00 in revenues. Chief Yeaton also discussed the repair lines and items that had to be repaired/replaced on vehicles.

Chief Yeaton felt the Town should be contracting for heating oil now as the price will be increasing. Joanne noted the Selectmen were looking at this item.

Chief Yeaton explained he was working on a grant for new turn-out gear (protective equipment) for all personnel.

Chief Yeaton also would like to increase the salaries for the part-time people working on Sundays.

Harvey noted the effectiveness of the Fire Department reflects what we pay for home owners insurance.

Joanne noted the Town was fortunate to have Chief Preve and Chief Yeaton.

Tammy discussed the Emergency Management grants the Town could apply for. Chief Yeaton noted many of them required matching funds and he did not have any money for this in his budget.

Harvey noted two sheets were distributed that show the revenues to date.

Marylou, as Chairman of the Trustee of Trust Funds, gave an overview of the trust fund balances.

Harvey noted with the balance in the Road Department Capital Reserve Fund the Road Agent has just under \$1,000,000.00 for road improvements. He did note not all the Capital Reserve Funds would want to be spent.

A review of who was able to expend which funds occurred. It was also noted only the interest from the Lillian Morrison funds could be spent.

Carole asked how the Ambulance Fund money was held. It is a special revenue fund held by the Town Treasurer.

Harvey asked where the funds were invested. Marylou noted at TD Bank in CD's. She attended a seminar that explained the State allows some funds to be put into a "Prudent Investor Fund" that includes some stocks and bonds. The Town would have to hire an investor for this.

Harvey reviewed the liaisons, asking if the assignments were still satisfactory. Everyone seemed satisfied.

Harvey noted the School District Reports would be presented at the next meeting.

The next meeting was set for at 7:00 P.M. on September 17th at the Town Office.

Dave suggested in September the Committee should discuss the Town's goals and let the Department Heads know what the Budget Committee's goals and objectives would be for the coming year.

Further discussion ensued with it being determined a subcommittee would meet with the Selectmen to discuss the goals and objectives. The members of the subcommittee are Dave, Brad, Joyce and Marylou. Joanne will schedule a meeting for them with the Selectmen on June 29th at 6:45 P.M.

Joanne made a motion to adjourn with Brad seconding the motion.

Harvey asked if there was any discussion on the motion, there being no discussion, Harvey adjourned the meeting at 8:51 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Bosiak
Recording Secretary