

6-Budget Committee Minutes 01/17/2007

Hopkinton Budget Committee
Final Minutes
January 17, 2007

Present: Karen Irwin, Chair, Patrice Gerseny, Barbara Unger, Danny Coen, David Lancaster, Bob Carpenter - Contoocook Village Precinct Representative, Tom O'Donnell - Hopkinton Village Precinct Representative, Marshall Rowe - School Board Representative, Peter Russell - Selectmen Representative.

Absent: Jane Bradstreet

Chair Irwin opened the meeting at 6:35 pm with a review of the minutes of the meeting 01-10-07 Tom O'Donnell moved to accept, seconded by Bob Carpenter. Clarifications to the minutes were discussed. All were in favor of the amended minutes, the minutes were accepted.

Hopkinton Village Precinct

BC member Tom O'Donnell, Hopkinton Village Precinct representative, began the evening presentations. He handed out the Budget Form for Village Districts, MS-37. Mr. O'Donnell gave an overview of the responsibilities of the HVP, stating that it is made of two parts, the water precinct and street lighting. A few items were missing from the handout due to a change in personnel. The document as submitted to the committee has been accepted in its present form by the entire precinct commission. A brief discussion followed. BC member Coen asked if all of their needs were met within the current budget. Mr. O'Donnell replied with a yes.

Contoocook Village Precinct

BC member Bob Carpenter, Contoocook Village Precinct representative, reviewed the CVP handout which included a Budget Analysis and a copy of the draft of the precinct meeting to be held March 20th at 7 pm in the Community Room of the Library. Mr. Carpenter reviewed the items listed in the analysis along with 4 warrants. A brief discussion followed. BC member Coen asked if all of their needs were met within the current budget. Mr. Carpenter replied with a yes.

Library

Elizabeth Levy presented the budget for the Library referring to documents given to the BC at the January 4 meeting. Ms. Levy began by stating that she reduced the cost of oil she had previously given to the committee. The cost shown now is the same as the town has for the 07 - 08 year. Ms. Levy review included, staffing, custodial duties, computer upgrade and items that are now contracted services. Chair Irwin requested descriptions of everything in the revenue generating fund. BC member Coen asked the process for using an outside contractor instead of Building and Grounds. Ms. Levy stated that Bobby Carruthers had been mowing and the town gave a quote of \$2,000 to do just mowing. BC member Rowe asked if there was a trustee policy on amounts of contracts. Ms. Levy didn't believe there was anything written, but thought that it would have to be a large amount to go out for competitive bid. BC member Russell advised that Herm had asked several people if they were interested and Mr. Soucy was interested with the correct insurance. A brief discussion followed. BC member Coen asked if all of their needs were met within the current budget. Ms. Levy replied with a yes then stated maybe more materials.

Town

BC member Peter Russell, Selectman representative, presented the budget for the town. Mr. Russell prefaced his review by commenting on the recent fire at the Slusser Senior Center and thanking the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator Ed Wojnowski and Finance Director Bob Blanchette for keeping the budget the same. Mr. Russell explained the 'meat of the budget' as: **1)** Adding 1 FT EMT for Ambulance; **2)** Adding 1 seasonal person to Buildings & Grounds; **3)** Adding a PT Program Director for the Recreation dept.; **4)** Removing the FT Assessor position; **5)** Adding a consultant in place of an Assessor; **6)** Moved responsibilities for Code Enforcement to the Fire Dept, John Pianka; **7)** A savings in the Police Department – Chief Wheeler is now PT and is salaried; **8)** Hopkinton Community Center closed on July 1 and Columbia Hall is now home to Rob Mattes – Rec. Director and Marilyn Bresaw – Human Services. On the revenue side, Mr. Russell advised tipping fees were being increased gradually and the selectmen are looking at increasing the fees for building permits, all other revenue sources mentioned were reported on the 'conservative side'. Mr. Russell gave an overview of each of the 32 town departments referring to the 'Big Book' where BC members could find further information and deferring questions from BC members to the department representative present at the meeting. Wage increases were anywhere from around 2% to 10%.

Town Administrator Wojnowski responded to BC member Lancaster's inquiry about expenses by saying that they, the town, are being more careful about spending.

When reviewing legal, BC member Coen noted that expenses for legal were under funded. The amount funded in '04 was \$50,000 the actual amount spent was \$87,000; in '05 the amount funded was \$100,000 with the actual amount spent was \$206,570; in '06 the funded amount was \$50,000 and the actual amount spent was \$81,736. He asked which lines were affected, where did the money come from? Finance Director Blanchette stated the money was made up from department operating budgets. Mr. Russell advised that the selectmen do not anticipate legal activity from Bio Energy this fiscal year.

When reviewing Recreation, BC members questioned why the summer camp program was not self funded. Mr. Mattes, Recreation Director, stated the revolving fund cannot be used to pay salaries. It can be used for everything else including equipment. A suggestion of raising the camp fees to cover the salaries would cost the participants around \$350 per week up from \$125. Mr. Mattes said that when he came to Hopkinton the camp fees were raised and enrollment decreased. The Recreation Department budget includes the some of the Slusser Center budget as well as Columbia Hall.

BC Member Coen asked the department representatives if the '06 budget met their needs – most answered yes. Herm said that work on Putney Road didn't get done because they ran out of time.

Public Comment

Stretch Kennedy commented on the athletic fields and the Dam at Kimball Pond.

Scott Flood asked about the new assessing arrangement.

Selectmen Russell responded saying it is a consultant with a 5 year contract in one year increments costing \$39,600 per year and the contract can be discontinued at the end of any year.

Mr. Flood asked about the Senior Center cost of \$33,000 including personnel costs.

Selectmen Russell and Rec. Director Mattes said the \$33,000 is based on 12 months of activity and there are no personnel costs, current employees will be transferred to the Center as needed.

Tom Congoran asked if the town got competitive bids for the assessing contract.

Selectmen Russell advised that it did go out for bid,
Mr. Congoran asked if the families receiving reduced camp rates were qualified.

Mr. Mattes said his department uses the same scale as Human Services.

Selectmen Carr said the current fee charged is competitive or maybe just under what other camps charge.

Mr. Congoran asked if they would consider a sliding scale. It was agreed that that could be possible.

Joyce Andrews asked why the increase in tipping fees couldn't happen all at once.

Selectmen Russell advised that Henniker went up all at once but the Selectmen decided last year that a gradual increase would be better for Hopkinton. This year they decided to accelerate the schedule.

Ms. Andrews expressed concern on the budgets presented.

Selectmen Russell said that it is the Selectmen's responsibility to provide essential services. Selectmen Carr continued with an explanation of the recreation budget

Scott Flood asked about the tax rate.

Selectmen Russell reminded all that the rate is going down \$.01 from last year. The tax rate amount is \$4.33 in '06 - '07 to \$4.32 this year '07 - '08.

Town Wrap Up

Selectmen Russell advised of no new warrant articles and no new bonds items this year.

BC member Rowe reiterated that the projection for revenues is very conservative and there would be a high probability that revenues will be above projections. Would the amount in excess of the million dollar reserve be used to pay down debt? Selectmen Russell responded saying that \$200,000 of the fund will be used on a yearly basis to offset the tax rate and the remainder would be used to pay down long term debt.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Beth Clark
Secretary