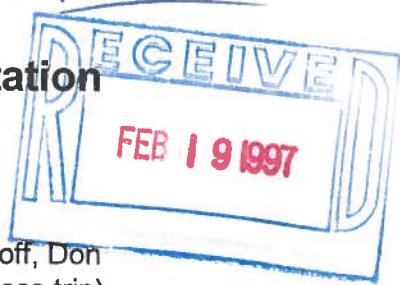


T. Clark

## Special Board of Selectmen's Budget Presentation Meeting January 11, 1997



Present: Nancy Tavernier, Dore' Hunter, Wayne Friedrichs, Herman Kabakoff, Don Johnson, John Murray (William Mullin was absent due to an extended business trip)

Also Present: Sharon Summers, Finance Committee Members, Steinhilper, Miller, Prenderville, Mackey, Sifleet, Roeber, Johnston

Chairman Tavernier made opening remarks and gave an overview of the agenda and rules of order for conduction of the meeting. She also noted that she was looking forward to having the Board of Selectmen vote the final budget at the January 21st meeting.

Don Johnson read his opening remarks. The budget plus warrant articles as submitted by him represents a 2.05% increase and is below the guidelines established at ALG.

Tom Mackey remarked at the completeness of the budget presentation materials. He did however ask that he be given additional instruction on the construction of the Pie Chart as he was having trouble tying back to it. John Murray will contact him to assist in this matter.

Resident Eileen Efferson of Nagog Woods came before the Board to voice concern of the construction of sewers and the cost. She had just purchased a home in Nagog which already has its own treatment facility and she was not willing to pay for sewers she would be not be utilizing.

Tom Mackey on behalf of Chairman David Steinhilper expressed his gratitude for the amount of detail in the two volumes of materials prepared by town staff.

### Accounting/MIS

Finance Committee asked about contractual obligations and installation costs of the public terminals. There is no cost for the terminals as they are used terminals. And that under the State Procurement regulations all contracts are bid competitively according to the law.

### Assessors

Herman questioned moving the history of a line item, does it follow. The answer was no. Mr. Prenderville asked about COLA formula. Don explained that it is agreed usually at ALG and prior to the beginning of the negotiations with the bargaining units.

## **Building/ZBA**

Garry Rhodes explained that the ZBA budget is level funded. The revolving fund pays for salaries for inspectors. He is requesting funds for a temp. Clerk 16hr./wk to be paid out of the revolving fund. Herman asked if he foresaw any increases in fees for inspections. Garry replied no. Sidney questioned a revolving fund for permit fees. They have done over 1,800 permits and of those 64 were new houses. He feels that that is a sign of a good economy.

## **Clerk/Elections**

There will be no State Election this year so the request has been adjusted. However it does include monies for an override, Special Town Meeting and Election.

## **COA**

Carol Lake is requesting a part-time staff person to cover the Center during lunch when it has the most number of seniors requiring assistance. Currently, if Carol is out and her other parttime person is not there, the center is left unattended. The COA Van fees are fixed by LRTA, and Carol noted that they can no longer repair the Van at the Town DPW due to a change in Policy at LRTA which makes the repairs more costly. The Board noted she has a good case for the part-time person to provide coverage.

## **Collector/Finance**

Don Johnson presented for Tony Rassias. Herman questioned the increase in the budget. It was noted that the increase was because a Director was finally hired and was drawing a salary. John Prenderville asked about Debt. Mr. Miller asked about health insurance costs and what was being done to control it. Don noted that the Town had been doing a good job controlling costs and increases and would expand further at an Executive Session to discuss Health Care issues. The Fin Com asked about 401K's and other retirement programs, the Town provides a 457 Plan with no contribution paid by the Town.

## **Engineering**

The request for Windsor Ave Study was questioned. Tom Mackey asked about inclusion of projects in the Capital Budget. The Board noted they move them into the budget, it is a political issue. Herman asked about the total for Windsor Ave. It is \$66,000. They asked what professional design funds were and what they were used for. David explained they are for Traffic and other consultants which with their expertise gain approvals at a greater rate. He talked about the 62 Traffic light not approved at Town meeting and that it remains on the Master List. John Prenderville asked about a master list for other projects and what part he would be playing with regard to sewers. He replied he would be doing layout as requested. Sid Johnston asked about the Hayward Road Intersection Salaries. David explained that they are for consultants work not staff salaries. They hire specialized consultants for specialized projects.

## **FIRE**

Chief Craig said his budget requested funds to replace the current 1991 ambulance with 65,000 miles. They have tried to focus on the significant overtime issue and they have tried to focus on the reduction by requiring notes, following up on absences and by not filling shifts until less than 10 are working. It seemed to work until flu season. They have considered scheduling issues and should be considered at next negotiation session. Town Manager not supporting the funds for staff replacement coverage, they are back to 50% shift vacancies. Dore' Hunter asked about the trend of sick time when they had added the additional personnel. It remains the same. It was noted that when buy back incentives are in place in other communities, it cuts down on the use. Mr. Miller asked that the sick time be compared to other town units vs. Other communities. They are requesting a lot of sick time. Dore' asked about regionalization of ambulance services. Chief Craig said they have not discussed it right now, they currently participate in regional ALS from Emerson and mutual aid. In response to Herman's question, the reason for the request for two Dictaphones is that 2 units are cheaper than 1 dual head system. John Prenderville asked about 911 and joint dispatch function. They are seriously discussing the feasibility study to handle both police and fire. Town Meeting approved needs assessment funds for police/fire and how we deliver these services will be looked at. Tom Mackey asked about the status of the feasibility study. Don responded it is underway. The funds for the additional gas meter will provide a simpler unit. They currently have had 40 requests for use. Mostly to measure Carbon Monoxide levels.

## **Health/Nursing**

The Nursing service is requesting monies from Fund Balance to begin a Mentoring Program relating to Social issues. Nancy noted the need for drug and alcohol counseling. Herman questioned past RFP issues, Doug replied that they have worked the issue out. The funds for the three year program would come from Fund Balance. Rehta asked the fund balance. \$437,000 as of today's date. Sid asked for beginning, debts, credits and final balances. John Murray will provide, although it was noted that that information is already contained in the quarterly reports. Herman asked about the funds for accreditation. They felt that since 3rd party payers are required to keep the program so successful, and that accreditation will be needed to keep us eligible in the future, it was felt that it was a good action to take.

John Prenderville asked about the equipment required to carry out the notification of pumping. Doug said we are now trying to reduce the pumping from 3 to 2 years, and it is supported by the Enterprise Fund. The Grant was noted and Doug said they are applying again, we have received \$75,000 already.

## **Highway/NESWC**

Dick Howe explained that we now have a new recycling plan in place that accepts 1-8 plastics. Herman asked about infrastructure. Mr. Miller asked about vehicle replacements and possible replacement schedule to reduce the highs and lows. They will be putting them on a schedule when the new module is added. Dick noted however, that Mack Trucks have a longer life than other commercial vehicles. NESWC fees will

be covered without a cost increase in sticker price through the length of the contract. Sidney noted that it had been a good use of the Fund Balance and wanted to congratulate the Board of Selectmen.

### **Veterans' Services**

Herman asked about the \$14,000 request. Charlie noted that it was a figure carried in the event we had any eligible veteran's that needed. It was noted that while the State reimburses 75%, they are indeed very slow with that reimbursement. Sid asked why we could not put this money into a Revolving Fund. He was reminded it was not allowed under statutory laws, and that the State is averaging a 3-5 year late payment schedule.

### **Memorial Library**

No new hours or new personnel request are included this year. Herman asked about the school usage charges, where did we stand? It was noted that it was a moot issue now, that it was only a concern during the minimum spending for Ed Reform, and was now a non-issue since we are over Foundation Budget. They have collected \$32,000 in fines and lost book fees. Sid asked about the interlibrary loan costs. Wanda said that there are no real costs except staff and telecommunication and it is covered in the Minuteman agreement. If a library charges for a loan, the cost is passed on the patron.

### **West Acton Library**

No questions, budget is lower because new Librarian is at a lower salary step.

### **Manager**

Herman asked about the Business Outreach funds being taken out. He was concerned that we needed to include it. Nancy felt that if a project came up, it could be handled under the Bottom Line Budget. Legal costs were questioned, the consensus was that it did not need to be studied again, the review by Mr. Alpert did not uncover any substantial issues. Don said that he did not know of any large cases coming up. However, he did note that labor contracts would be coming up for renegotiation this year.

### **Mun. Prop.**

Dean Charter explained duties and his requests. Herman asked about the 15% increase. Dean said it was from moving the Groundskeeper in to the budget and the cost of painting town hall. He was asked about street lighting expansion. Don said he was not supporting because it is a 20 year commitment and last year alone, \$119,000 was spent on street lighting, we have not added any additional lights for over 20 years. Herman asked Dean to figure out how many lights he could install with the funds requested and where he would install them. John Prenderville asked about the costs differences in the Voice Mail, why we needed it and why we did not have cost to lease it.

Wayne Friedrichs responded that the was against leasing, leasing is an option if you don't have money. Mr. Miller felt the figure was too high and what the objective was in the request. Don Johnson reminded them that the phone system links 9 buildings and over 100 lines.

## Natural Resources

Tom Tidman outlined that the increase in hours for the secretary was due to increased hours and anticipation of her doing more Conservation and Recreation tasks as NARA comes on line. He also requested funds for 4 lateral files, these monies would come from Cemetery Trust Funds. On the Natural Resources side, the Morrison land is an issue that will be going before Town meeting and NARA will continue to require time.

## Planning

Herman asked about the \$75,000 for Master Plan Consultant. \$20,000 of It is needed for the Economic Development portion. Dore' felt the benefits of the Economic Development Plan of attracting business was great and felt the plan was a great awareness raiser.

## Police

Chief Robinson outlined his budget. The Finance Committee asked about the implications of the proposal by the Union for the Quinn Bill. The Department currently has an educational incentive benefit in the Contact which awards officers for degrees and is paid yearly to the officers based on the levels of education they have achieved, based on that level.

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2/18/97  
Date

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