

Ashland Budget Committee

Minutes

January 9, 2014

Members Present: Mark Scarano, David Ruell, Fran Newton, David Toth, Mardean Badger, Ingrid Heidenreich, Sandra Coleman, Jeanette Stewart, Norm DeWolfe (alternate), Renee Liebert (alternate)

Members Absent: Christine Cilley (excused, with notice)

Town Office Representatives Present: Paul Branscombe, Brenda Paquette

Others Present: Steve Felton, Eli Badger, Pam Heidenreich

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm.

TOWN BUDGET

Paul Branscombe and Brenda Paquette ---

- Presented an updated list of salaries/wages for town employees. The previous list was incorrect, as the numbers were based on percentages of prior budget numbers, rather than on the base salary of each employee. Union employees are getting a 1.07% increase, which goes into effect on April 1. Therefore, salaries for the 2014 budget are based on the old rate for 13 weeks, and then 39 weeks at the new rate. The corrected salary figures have not been approved by the Board of Selectmen yet, but the Budget Committee will insert them into the budget at tonight's meeting.
- The correct figure for the Solid Waste District dues is \$1,741.
- Paul Branscombe said that CCS will meet at the end of the month with anyone who is interested in further understanding of their services and fees.
- Police Department computers are separate from the town office. Added \$3,520 to the PD line #4210-10-432.
 - Motion by David Ruell, second by Jeanette Stewart, to approve PD Computers \$12,520. Vote 5-yes, 3-no.
 - Motion by David Ruell, second by Fran Newton, for PD Computers default \$12,520. Vote 5-yes and 3-no.
- Several other changes on the new salary sheet were explained.
 - Welfare assistant is currently paid out of administrative line, and will now show on a separate line.
 - Deputy Town Clerk shows no change in pay, but will now be put on a separate line.
 - Secretary for BOS will now be on line #4150-20-115 (FIN Office OT).
 - Brenda will add Police Dept Overtime to her spreadsheet (\$12,000).
 - Majority of the corrected figures went down.
- Brenda has to reconcile her figures with the Town Treasurer and Town Clerk. Treasurer has to reconcile her figures with bank. Brenda will be monitoring spending. Brenda wants to work with the reports we have been seeing. Mark indicated we are interested in suggestions for best practices going forward.
- Mark will meet with Brenda on Monday at 1:30 to review budget numbers.
- Discussion ensued regarding cash flow and reports.
 - Dave Toth expressed his concern about not receiving cash flow reports, questioned if we will have enough money to pay bills, and stated his opposition to the practice of granting substantial contract raises without looking at revenues. He stated that he finds it hard to vote for a budget without knowing cash flow condition.
 - Brenda responded that she will have very accurate numbers after the budget process; any current figures would only be estimates.

- After the budget is passed, Brenda will create a separate budget line for each warrant article.
- Brenda is now doing the warrant and the MS forms, rather than the Town Clerk.

Jeanette Stewart asked to respond to statements from the previous night's meeting regarding town payments to the school. Mark indicated that we have a lot of other business to deal with tonight. Jeanette left at 6:30, and Norm DeWolfe took her place at the table.

Sandra Coleman expressed her support of Dave Toth's statements and stated that the Budget Committee has the authority via RSA's to request statements from the governing body. Mark indicated his interpretation is that Brenda currently does not have the time.

The Committee then went through the budget to correct salary figures, vote on lines/sections previously skipped in both 2014 Budget Committee recommendations and default budget. Appropriate changes were made where needed in FICA, Medicare and retirement amounts.

Motion by Norm DeWolfe, second by David Ruell, to change ER Clerk salary to \$21,048. Vote 5-yes to 2-no. No change in the default figure.

Motion by David Ruell, second by Fran Newton, to approve Election & Register total \$36,223. Vote 4-yes, 1-no, and 2-abstentions.

Motion by David Ruell, second by Fran Newton, to approve Financial total \$312,321. Vote 5-yes, 1-no, and 1-abstention. No change in the default figure.

If there is a change in Planning Board and Zoning Board secretaries, the stipend in the budget will remain the same. Personnel changes are a management decision.

New Police Department Salaries total is \$250,835, with no change in the default \$255,843. PD Overtime adjustments made to FICA, Medicare and retirement.

Motion by David Ruell, second by Fran Newton, for Police Department total \$558,230. Vote 3-yes, 2-no, and 2-abstentions.

Motion by Norm DeWolfe, second by David Ruell, for Police Department Default total \$564,677. Vote 5-yes, 1-no, and 1-abstention.

New Fire Department Salaries total is \$108,350. Adjustments made to FICA, Medicare.

Motion by Fran Newton, second by David Toth, for Fire Department total \$202,249. Vote 4-yes, 0-no, and 3-abstentions. (Ingrid's abstention due to her Fire Department job.)

Motion by Norm DeWolfe, second by David Ruell, for Fire Department Default total \$203,320. Vote 5-yes, 0-no, and 2-abstentions. (Ingrid's abstention due to her Fire Department job.)

Motion by Fran Newton, second by Mardean Badger, to change Building Inspector salary to \$7,412 and resulting Building Inspector total to \$11,709. Vote 3-yes, 2-no, and 2-abstentions.

Public Works HA salaries change to \$150,737 and default \$149,611.

Motion by Fran Newton, second by Mardean Badger, for Public Works total \$226,620. Vote 3-yes, 2-no, and 2-abstentions.

Motion by David Ruell, second by Norm DeWolfe, for Public Works Default total \$224,166. Vote 5-yes, 1-no and 1-abstention.

Mechanic Salary change to \$46,551.

Motion by David Ruell, second by Fran Newton, for Town Mechanic total \$77,530. Vote 4-yes, 1-no, and 2-abstentions.

Motion by Norm DeWolfe, second by Fran Newton, for Town Mechanic Default total \$77,443. Vote 5-yes, 1-no, and 1-abstention.

Transfer Recycling Salaries change to \$24,419. Solid Waste District dues change to \$1,741.

Motion by David Ruell, second by Mardean Badger, for Transfer Recycling SWD total \$149,150. Vote 4-yes, 1-no, and 2-abstentions.

Motion by David Ruell, second by Norm DeWolfe, for Transfer Recycling SWD Default total \$137,448. Vote 5-yes, 1-no, and 1-abstention.

Welfare Assistant added for new Salary total \$7,840.

Motion by David Ruell, second by Fran Newton, for new Welfare Salary line \$7,840. Vote 4-yes, 2-no and 1-abstention. The new Welfare total is \$63,690 with no change in the default.

Motion by David Ruell, for Parks & Recreation Director salary change to \$24,307, with no second, so the motion died. No other changes in Parks & Recreation.

Ingrid Heidenreich asked if performance evaluations have been done for employees. Norm DeWolfe responded no.

New bottom line:

Budget	2,659,588	2,524,392 Default
Warrants	<u>259,149</u>	<u>259,149 Default</u>
	2,823,744	2,783,541 Default
Revenues	2,823,744	2,823,744 Default
	- 94,923	+ 40,203 Default

Motion by David Ruell, second by Fran Newton, to approve the Estimated Revenues \$2,823,746 as presented. Vote 4-yes, 1-no, and 2-abstentions.

There was no motion to approve the total budget. Some are still concerned that the budget is too high.

Norm DeWolfe noted that his abstentions have been based on the fact that the Board of Selectmen has not yet voted on the adjusted salary lines.

SCHOOL BUDGET

Motion by David Toth, second by Sandra Coleman, to accept the 2014-2015 School Budget and Default as proposed. Vote 6-yes, 1-no, and 0-abstentions.

Motion by Sandra Coleman, second by Fran Newton, to accept the 2014-2015 School Revenues as proposed. Vote 6-yes, 1-no, and 0-abstentions.

Sandra asked if the budget included any raises for non-union personnel. No raises were included, only a 3% pool.

Motion by Fran Newton, second by David Ruell, to recommend School Warrant Article 2 (Officers salaries). Vote 6-yes, 0-no, and 1-abstention.

Article 3 (budget) was already approved.

Motion by Fran Newton, second by Sandra Coleman, to recommend School Warrant Article 4 (School Safety, Security & Facilities Maintenance Trust Fund). Vote 6-yes, 0-no, and 1-abstention.

UTILITIES

Steve Felton was asked how the utility budgets were handled last year. He stated that we have to approve the bottom line numbers, as we are responsible for them.

WATER AND SEWER

Motion by Fran Newton, second by David Toth, to approve the Sewer Expenses (appropriation) total \$303,655. Vote 5-yes, 1-no, and 1-abstention. (Norm DeWolfe abstained as he was not involved when the utility information was presented.)

Motion by David Toth, second by Fran Newton, to recommend that the Sewer Department conduct a complete financial analysis, including gathering recommendations for going forward. Vote 7-yes, 0-no, and 0-abstentions. Mark Scarano will communicate this recommendation in a letter to the Department.

Motion by David Ruell, second by Fran Newton, to approve the Water Expenses (appropriation) total \$178,548. Vote 5-yes, 1-no, and 1-abstention. (Norm DeWolfe abstained as he was not involved when the utility information was presented.)

The same recommendation will be forwarded regarding financial analysis of the Water Department.

ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT

Motion by David Ruell, second by David Toth, to approve the Electric Department Revenues \$3,130,150 and Electric Department Expenses \$3,105,968. Vote 5-yes, 1-no, and 1-abstention. (Norm DeWolfe abstained as he was not involved when the utility information was presented.)

Committee members commented that the Electric Department has greatly improved in putting funds away for the future and that the basic infrastructure is in good shape. A concern was expressed about the new billing system project, especially in regards to the length of time and additional expense in getting it operational. Another concern was expressed about the need to consider new technologies and best practices for the future.

UTILITIES – DEFAULT BUDGETS

The committee reviewed the Sewer, Water and Electric Department budgets to set the default amount for each line.

Motion by Fran Newton, second by David Toth, to accept the Sewer Department Default Budget. Vote 5-yes, 1-no, and 1-abstention. (Norm DeWolfe abstained as he was not involved when the utility information was presented.)

Motion by Fran Newton, second by David Toth, to accept the Water Department Default Budget. Vote 5-yes, 1-no, and 1-abstention. (Norm DeWolfe abstained as he was not involved when the utility information was presented.)

Motion by Fran Newton, second by David Toth, to accept the Electric Department Default Budget. Vote 5-yes, 1-no, and 1-abstention. (Norm DeWolfe abstained as he was not involved when the utility information was presented.) (Ingrid Heidenreich stated that she cannot vote for the default Electric budget as correct default amounts cannot be set on lines because salaries are not separated from other job expenses.)

LIBRARY BOND

David Ruell and Mardean Badger explained the background of the bond issue (petitioned warrant article) for purchase of the Old Elementary School for use as the Town Library.

OTHER BUSINESS

The Town Budget Hearing starts at 7:00 pm on Wednesday, January 15. The Budget Committee will meet at 6:00 prior to the hearing.

A motion was made by Fran Newton, second by Ingrid Heidenreich, to approve the Minutes of January 8 as presented. The vote was unanimous in favor.

A motion was made by Fran Newton, seconded by David Toth, to adjourn at 8:59 pm. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Minutes by Mardean Badger