

**ASHLAND BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING  
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2014  
ASHLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
5:30 PM**

**MINUTES**

Chairman David Ruell called the meeting to order at 5:35 PM with a roll call.

Present: David Ruell, Dave Toth, Mardean Badger, Norm DeWolfe, Christine Cilley, Jamie Lyford, Harold Lamos, Sandra Coleman

Alternates Present: Fran Newton, Rene Liebert

Absent with Notice: Mark Scarano

Others present:

Paul Branscombe, Patsy Tucker, E. Badger, J. Gleich

Minutes: October 6 minutes were reviewed. N. DeWolfe noted that he should have been listed as present. N. DeWolfe moved to accept the minutes as corrected. D. Toth seconded the motion and they were approved unanimously.

October 16 minutes were reviewed. N. DeWolfe moved to accept the minutes as written. H. Lamos seconded the motion and they were approved unanimously.

**TOWN EXPENSES**

**Tax Collector/Town Clerk:** P. Tucker provided the committee with the tax collector trial balance as requested. She noted that currently, 94% of the taxes have been collected from the first issue without credits. Including credits (those that pay ahead), the number is 95%. She noted that this level is normal for Ashland and other towns of the same size. Some choose not to pay. In the future, credit cards may be able to be used for taxes.

P. Tucker made comments on the ER Clerk as follows: The committee noted some confusion on the narrative for retirement, specifically on the percentages listed. P. Branscombe explained that the number depends on the group. Executive is group 1 and group 2 consists of teachers, police department, fire department, etc. N. DeWolfe explained that the three numbers are a percentage for the first and second half of the year plus the average.

ER Clerk Salary: - Default budget figure listed may be too high given that there are fewer elections (1 vs. 4) next year. The same comment applies to the ballot coding figure.

The Tax Collector expenses were updated by the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to \$2,700 at a recent meeting. The \$4,100 figure is incorrect.

*J. Lyford reminded P. Branscombe that he would like hard copies of the finance reports. The folders of those how need paper copies are marked with a "P."*

**Executive:** P. Branscombe made the following comments: He noted that the health insurance figure has decreased since he has changed his plan from a 2-person to single. In addition, the employee contribution will increase from 7.5% to 10% next year.

Administrative Assistant explanation is that the base salary figure reflects a 13-week salary at current levels and 39 weeks at the new rate. The decrease in overtime is a result of moving her responsibilities as welfare assistant to a new line in General Assistance.

The website figure has increased given that additional pages cost \$75 each. The number of email recipients has increased. Each new one costs \$2/month. Hosting remains the same.

The Executive Administrative Assistant line may change if the position becomes union. Paperwork has been submitted to request this change.

Computer expenses include VPN (\$890 per year per contract with CCS), which was not included in the budget last year but should have been. There have been some wiring issues at the town hall and police department, which need to be corrected/upgraded next year (\$1701). Telephone expenses are going down with the addition of BayRing. The Booster Club still has FairPoint, but this will be converted to BayRing as well in the coming year. This is our second year of a three-year contract. The Copier expenses increase because of usage. The contract has 2 more years remaining.

CIP expenses are included in the Executive Printing line as well as in General Expenses. Reductions were based on history.

LRPC dues are contractual. The actual number is based on the invoice for \$1833.

Executive mileage expenses are lower since the TA is no longer driving, at least until the end of the year.

P. Tucker noted that the Restoration of Books expense at \$1000 would be combined with the same amount encumbered from the current budget to meet the total cost of about \$2000.

D. Ruell commented that the Budget Committee expense increase is to hire someone to do minutes since it has been problematic to get them done.

**Taxation:** This is the first year of the 4-year revaluation cycle and is a contract. The expenses include Vision software for assessing property, which is \$5000 annually. The tax map expense will also be combined with an encumbered \$250 from this year's budget.

**Legal expenses** include an additional \$5000 for a likely FairPoint abatement for the utility poles.

**General Government:** General repair includes lighting (\$7000) and heating (\$8000) upgrades, but no carpeting, which was cut by the BOS. Water and sewer rates may increase next year, so this figure may need to be adjusted once new rates are known. Paul noted that he hopes to submit a grant for lighting rebates in November. S. Coleman noted that "Repair" should not cover upgrades. A suggestion was made to adjust the line description to include upgrades for transparency.

**The Joint Loss** committee (management and department heads) meets four times per year. The \$1500 expense was determined by looking at history. The expenses are incurred occasionally for safety equipment as a result of inspections, so it is unpredictable. The TA will provide a narrative to explain the expenses and or plan.

**Cemetery Trustees:** The expense is for trustee expenses such as occasional mileage reimbursements (e.g., conference attendance), research if needed, etc. The committee is Sherry Downing, Mike Mishrall and Ernie Paquette (per write-in). In the future, trustees may need to find land for a town cemetery should Green Grove fill up.

**Insurance:** P. Branscombe noted that we just received an invoice from Primex for \$23,657 due in January for Workman's Compensation, Electric Department share will be \$2,620 and Water and Sewer share will be \$215. The town portion will be 20,822 for which Paul will ask the BOS to amend the line accordingly. There may be an increase in Property and Liability Insurance, which is currently not budgeted. Selectmen are still working on the line for Health Insurance for Retirees.

*(D. Ruell left the meeting at 6:30 because of a prior commitment for the Historical Society meeting. D. Toth chaired the meeting at this point.)*

No changes are in the budget for Health Officer, Animal Control and Building, Plumbing and Electrical Inspectors for next year.

**General Assistance:** The stipend for the assistant is a new line. The expenses were formerly listed as overtime for the Executive Assistant, currently Pat Crowell. This stipend should be included in the default. The general assistance line, while lower than last year's budget, is budgeted for next year much higher than what has actually been expended this year because the demand is unpredictable. Legitimate claims must be paid.

**Conservation Commission:** The increase in funds (\$1000 to \$3000) is for a natural resources inventory.

**Debt Service:** Expenses have decreased because some loans were paid off, specifically the defibrillator and fire engine. Therefore, the default budget will decrease. Next bond payoff completions are not for several more years.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

Jim Gleich reviewed expenses and made the following comments:

- The salary increase request was to return the position to full time. The BOS recommended the hours should be increased but only to an average of 29 hours, full time in the summer and part time during the school year. In 2014, full-time hours stated in June. J. Gleich would like to start the full time hours sooner in the year to provide more time for the setup of the campground.
- Fuel expenses recommended by the BOS were based on actual usage.
- The telephone expenses are higher since the Booster Club is still on the FairPoint contract. They will switch to BayRing next year and will therefore incur installation charges.
- J. Gleich informed the committee that Alex Ray may donate one of the portable bathroom facilities that were used during the construction of the Hooksett highway welcome centers. If this occurs, there will be some sewage dumping charges incurred.
- The vehicle expense should increase to \$1 to leave the line open. Water and Sewer has donated a truck to the town for any department to use as needed. Some fuel changes may need to be applied to the Parks and Recreation Department if they use the truck.

- Building expenses may include updating lighting and installation of gutters (~\$10 per foot). Jim noted that there is an existing encumbrance of \$2100 for the kitchen renovations, which have been completed. He plans to ask the BOS if he can use this money to apply to the much needed floor refinishing this year. He has been told that the floor has a  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch thickness and we can expect that the refinishing will last 10-15 years.
- The campground expenses will remain fairly constant. He said that two lots will open up next season, but there is a wait list so he expects the empty lots to be filled. He informed the committee that it has been three years since the last rate increase.
- Campground improvements expenses may include a new roof. The expenses include the addition of ledge pack.
- Summer program salaries may include paddleboat renting if Parks and Recreation is successful at obtaining the Meredith Village Savings Bank community grant. They have applied for a grant purchase about 5 boats. He may also be using credit cards for admissions, snacks and rentals next year.

Land Use Expenses will be reviewed at the next meeting (October 30) with E. Badger and S. MacLeod.

Respectfully Submitted,

Fran Newton