

Special Board of Selectmen's Budget Presentation Meeting

January 10, 1998

Present: Dore' Hunter, Wayne Friedrichs, Herman Kabakoff, Nancy Tavernier, William Mullin
Don Johnson, and John Murray

Also Present: Sharon Summers, Finance Committee Members, Prenderville, Olmstead, Mackey,
Sifleet, Roeber, Liberty, Ashton and S. Johnston(partial attendance)

Chairman Hunter made opening remarks and gave an overview of the agenda and rules of order for conduction of the meeting.

Don Johnson read his opening remarks. The budget includes new programs such as NARA, Memorial Library and Watershed Program as well as a 3% Cost of Living increase.

Tom Mackey remarked at the completeness of the budget presentation materials.

Accounting/MIS

In MIS Sharon explained the need for retention of of VAX's and the \$75,000 for the GIS the Balance is for other programs. The increase is due to the inclusion of GIS. In accounting Jean Sifleet was concerned about the inclusion of \$50,000 to do data entry of school figures and felt to fund this would be to perpetuate the problem. It was noted that Town financial staff has become uncomfortable with signing off on documents without the knowledge of how they are accounted for and this would allow a shadow system for them to verify the numbers and things that they are signing off on. The Finance Committee expressed its desire to not have to appropriate this money and that the School be brought on line with the system used by town staff. The increase in receipts were questioned. She explained that they reflect Cobra and other refunds due the Town that are recorded in her department.

Assessors

Brian McMullen explained that his budget is level funded. No questions were asked.

Building/ZBA

Garry Rhodes was questioned about the request for vehicle replacement. He explained that vehicle is used by inspection staff in his department and that this is a replacement for a old vehicle.

Clerk/Elections

Cathy Belbin explained that the budget refelcts funds for Special Town Meetings and Override Elections. She commented that the voting machines do save money and allow for fast results of elections.

COA

Carol Lake explained that the increase in her budget is for the Van used by seniors. LRTA now requires that all repairs be done by their repairman. She is hoping on a replacement for this current van as it has high mileage.

Collector/Finance

John Murray presented the budget for Finance. He noted that it is up less than 1%. However, the upcoming election could affect the debt line. He was asked about the retirement monies noted in the Budget and explained the use of these monies.

Engineering

David Abbt spoke about proposed Sidewalk Projects and Landfill closure and noted that the Closure could not be handled in house as EPA would not allow it. He noted that he does not see any problems with the stock piling of clay concept for the landfill as it is a concept that is accepted by the State at this site. Bill wanted to see the net numbers and better costs. Don felt that we could not get the numbers at this time. As they are still in negotiations and it would depend on the contract moving forward or not.

The Finance Committee asked about Consultants, He noted that they hire specialized consultants for specialized projects.

Fire

Chief Craig said his budget requested funds for salaries for 43 career firefighters as well as other operating expenses. He has asked for funds to begin to replace the protective gear as well as a Digital Alarm System Monitor. They still have the continuing sicktime problem even after several new monitoring practices such as requiring notes, following up on absences and by not filling shifts. He said they are looking at residential and Commercial growth and how it pertains to the Fire Department including the increase in traffic. Jean asked about a plan to reduce sick time. He said that they instituted the plan last year but it was not working out as well as they had hoped. Tom Mackey asked about the status of the Police/Fire feasibility study. Don responded that it will be underway in several weeks.

Health/Nursing

The Nursing service is requesting monies from Fund Balance to begin a Maternal Health Care Program to address the trend of early hospital releases of Maternity patients. Doug also outlined the other Health Department requests for a document scanner and colorimeter Analyst. The scanner is part of the GIS program and will be available for other departments use. He also outlined the request for Watershed project to hopefully gain access to the Assabet River to increase the number of properties included in the Town Sewer districts.

They did not receive the Grant this year for the Anti-Smoking education. They however, continue to fund the smoking cessation program through Nursing Enterprise funds.

Highway/NESWC

Dick Howe announced his retirement and plans to continue to broker trash as a consultant to the Town. It is hoped to retain him on the 20 hr/week consultants position until the expiration of the NESWC Contract. He said that his budget is down due to the lack of big projects. John Murray explained the Chapter 90 expenditures. Wayne asked about Revenues. John spoke about NESWC and Monies used to offset operations. Dick explained the need for the new loader for the transfer station and Dump truck that will complete the replacement program for at least five years. His budget also contains requests for two vehicles for Engineering and Building Dept. Use.

Veterans' Services

Herman asked about the \$15,000 request. Charlie noted that it was a figure carried in the event we had any eligible veteran's that needed monetary help. It was noted that while the State reimburses 75%, they are indeed very slow with that reimbursement. He noted that they have disbursed funds to 15 vets as well as referral to other programs. He has attended several conferences about Veteran's issues. John Prendiville asked how people know what is available. Charlie has put the word out to organizations as well as through Town staff that tend to deal with citizens that might require help.

Nancy asked the status of the Town Employees being able to purchase Dental and long term disability insurance's. He noted that he has looked at these both and that the Town is "Black Listed" for LTD and that he had investigated the possibility of employees joining a group on their own as the individual Dental is too costly.

Memorial Library

Wanda outlined the request for the New Library Implementation and the need for additional personnel as the library will now be two stories and will require two desks. The construction progress is going well with a delay this past week in regard to the steel and the weather not cooperating. Several questions were asked about the Valincourt house and other questions that she deferred to Dean Charter. She reported that the temporary location is a big hit with residents in South Acton. They have continued with high patron circulation numbers.

West Acton Library

No questions, budget is lower because new Librarian is at a lower salary step and the MIS reduction is due to the Minuteman Network not being implemented. They plan to increase Tot Time and Large print editions. They are continuing to deliver books to patrons.

Manager

The two capital projects, NARA and Millenium Celebrations were discussed. The money is for seed money. They plan to use the NARA for the Millenium Celebration because of the theater and it will lend itself to bands and performers.

The Board asked about Professional Development. Don said that they had a problem with each department having a separate account. He now has combined the funds and each department retains a couple of hundred dollars so they can go to spur of the moment conferences and seminars. This has resulted in being able to send more people and do in-house training.

Mun. Prop.

Dean Charter explained duties and his requests. He noted that some of his Personnel requests had changed due to the transfer to the Natural Resources Budget. He said he would like to have the Clock repaired at Town hall, this would allow the chiming to be controlled and programmed to chime when desired. He also discussed the painting issues at Town Hall. He has also requested funds for a re-use study of 17 Woodbury Lane. Bill asked if the Morrison Land could be included. He thought not as the Morrison Home is currently occupied. The tennis courts at Elm Street he felt should be removed due to a high water problem and relocated perhaps to another location such as NARA. Nancy noted that West Acton residents may not be pleased with the relocation. Bill wanted to be sure that the CD building was painted this year and that the Town Hall lights on the tree be looked at for a better appearance. Dean outlined the plan to address the tree and will be trimming it in the spring to better shape it to accommodate the lights. He said the paint is purchased for the CD Building and anticipates the project will be completed.

The numbers for the Library that were discussed during Wanda's presentation will be prepared and brought to the Board at the next meeting of the BOS.

Natural Resources

Tom Tidman outlined the projects included in the Capital Budget. Most are tied to the NARA and Morrison Properties. They will need a building to store the equipment that will be required to maintain those properties as well as other parcels. Municipal Properties will have space for storage as well. They anticipate the need for two grounds people and a Recreation Director. Funds are also requested for handicapped modifications to the Chapel and several pieces of equipment for use by the Cemetery Division.

Planning

Roland explained that the Budget is level funded except for mileage and a request for an increase of 10 hours in clerical help. Herman questioned the High and 62 Traffic Light. He wanted to know why it was not recommended. It was explained that the light was funded partially through donations and that the request for the balance was brought to Town Meeting, which voted not to appropriate the funds to install the lights. Roland said he included it because he felt he has an obligation to present it.

Police

Chief Robinson outlined his budget. The cruiser replacement will be in the two replaced cycle and therefore that line item was decreased to reflect that. Nancy asked about the status of a Battered Women's group since the statistics illustrated a need in the community. He was also

asked about the joint fire police station. He reported that the Town Manager had sent him notice that they would be pulling the project together in the next week or so.

The Board discussed the Capital Budget process and Herman felt we need to take time to provide objectives. He also wanted to prepare for the vote and identify overall issues. Dore; wanted the commitment on \$50,000 expenditure. The board discussed voting on the warrant articles at the meeting of the 17th. The 3rd meeting would be the meeting that the recommendations for the Warrant would take place. They will discuss Volume II at the Meeting of the 20th. Bill noted he is uncomfortable with the landfill closure, the town hall projects and Elm street. He needs to have them expanded upon.

The Board closed the public session and went into an Executive Session. Herman took roll call, all ayes.

Meeting adjourned into Executive Session 2:30 P.M.



Herman
Clerk

2-3-98
Date

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