

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Newport, NH
BUDGET REVIEW SESSION
Minutes of February 8, 2010

SELECTMEN PRESENT: Virginia Irwin, Chairman; Jeffrey Kessler, Vice Chairman; Beverly Rodeschin, Gary Nichols, Elizabeth Maiola.

STAFF PRESENT: Daniel P. O'Neill, Town Manager; Paul Brown, Finance Director; P.J. Lovely, Recreation Director; Wayne Conroy, Fire Chief; Kenneth Carlton, Captain; David Hoyt, Chief of Police; Julie Collins, Planning & Zoning Administrator; Larry Wiggins, Public Works Director.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Irwin called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION: *A roll call vote was taken and passed unanimously to go into Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:2, (b) Collective Bargaining and RSA 91-A:3, II(c) Adverse Affects at 6:02 p.m. with Mr. Brown in attendance.*

A roll call vote was taken and passed unanimously to come out of Non-Public Session at 6:27 p.m.

There was no action taken during Non-Public Session.

BUDGET REVIEW SESSION: The Budget Review Session reconvened at 6:28 p.m.

Town Manager O'Neill referred to the *Detail of Town Manager Budget Cuts* distributed by Mr. Brown, stating that it showed what he has worked on the past week to get the budget to within .09 of the default budget. He said he has had an opportunity to work with the Public Works and Police Unions, who are willing to help the Town reach their budget goal. Town Manager O'Neill said they have agreed to forgo the 3% increase until June 29, 2011, which would impact the budget at a 0% increase. He said the adjustment would be made on the last day of this proposed budget year and added that he would like to see the same agreement for non-union employees. Town Manager O'Neill said they also agreed to move the increase back for the third year of this agreement. He said it was a significant concession the union employees have made and said he was very grateful. He encouraged the Board to accept this proposal.

Town Manager O'Neill then reviewed the personnel changes he was proposing. He said ambulance billing would be brought back into the Finance Department and they would use current staff to do this work. He said he is proposing that the responsibilities of the half time building inspector's position be assumed by the Fire Chief with additional training. Town Manager O'Neill said that if there is any area in the budget that they look at to add back in, that he would recommend keeping the position where it is now at some

lesser capacity. He discussed the Police Department stating that an officer has given his resignation and he is proposing not to fill that position. He said they received notice from an officer in the Fire Department who was resigning and would be replacing him with a newer recruit at a lower rate of pay. Town Manager O'Neill said that the cemetery superintendent's position plus a half time position would be eliminated and an employee who is eligible for retirement would be initiating that action. He said that one mechanic in the Public Works Department, who is eligible for retirement would be doing so at the end of this fiscal year. Due to the employee's knowledge in his field, they may call on him for some part time work.

Town Manager O'Neill read the additional reductions and stated that all the proposed changes bring the budget to within .09 of the default budget.

There was general discussion on eliminating the building inspector's position. Selectman Kessler expressed his concern for adding duties to a full time Fire Chief. Town Manager O'Neill said it would be a challenge even though the Planning and Zoning Office is slow at this time. Chief Conroy said that it all depends on the workload, but when it starts to pick up it would be difficult to make it work. Mrs. Collins said that she was concerned about cutting that position because the BOCA Code has qualifications for a building inspector. She said that Chief Conroy would have to have a lot of training to be brought up to speed with the massive amount of materials required for the job as the full time inspector and was not sure it would save money because of the time it would take and those training costs. Mrs. Collins said she was concerned that the Town would be at risk because of unqualified staff. Mrs. Collins asked that they keep the current Building Inspector, who is very qualified, on one day a week, with Chief Conroy filling in as he has been. Selectman Nichols expressed his concern because each position they propose cutting could easily be justified as being needed. He cautioned the Board not to add too much back into the budget. Selectman Maiola agreed stating that if they reconsider having the Building Inspector back, then the other departments would be able to justify their staff coming back as well.

Mr. Lovely reviewed the reductions in his budget. He said the cuts consist of maintenance items, which could become a safety issue. Mr. Lovely said they have restructured their after-school program during the winter months to combine with the basketball program.

Mr. Wiggins reviewed the reductions in his budget stating that it would come in equipment needs and road maintenance issues. Mr. Brown stated that the mechanic used for school bus maintenance would also be a savings because they would transfer the maintenance to the school. Mr. Robert Collins, Chair of the Newport School Board, said this was the first time he has heard about the transfer of bus maintenance and wondered how it would save any money. Mr. Brown stated he talked to the business administrator of the school who felt they could absorb taking on the maintenance of the busses. Town Manager O'Neill will have a discussion with the School Superintendent regarding the school bus maintenance.

Chief Hoyt discussed his budget reductions. He stated that it would come from supplies and possibly delay investigations. Chief Hoyt said they would also be tightening things up and changing some policies. He added that overtime would be cut and they would use other means to replace staff on vacation.

Chief Conroy said he has made cuts by being proactive on vehicle maintenance. He said staff that has been out sick would be replaced with a full time employee instead of the hours being covered by overtime.

Mr. Brown said that on the administration budget they would be tightening things up in all departments.

Ms. Susan Fleming, a Newport resident, asked Chief Hoyt how many officers and cars are on each shift, to which Chief Hoyt replied that it varies.

Mr. Collins asked if any thought was given to evaluating streetlights for savings. Mrs. Collins stated that she has been in touch with PSNH regarding this issue. She is expecting a report from PSNH, which would show options for the streetlights for a cost savings. Town Manager O'Neill said they have applied for a conservation grant from the State as well. Mr. Brown said they are applying for a grant for window replacement on all their buildings.

Selectman Rodeschin thanked all staff that has agreed to forego their raise for this year to help taxpayers.

Mr. Brown added that the water and sewer portion of the budget also showed a reduction and would be represented on the new budget sheets. Mr. Collins asked the Board to consider the phosphorous removal costs to be on the tax rate instead of just the water and sewer rates. Chairman Irwin said the Board has not made any decisions on that but would have further discussion on the topic. Ms. Fleming pointed out that she has had no children in school but pays those taxes in her property tax rate. She felt that the same rule should be applied here.

ADJOURNMENT: On a motion by Selectman Nichols, seconded by Selectman Maiola, *the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:37 p.m.*

The next meeting of the Board of Selectmen is scheduled for February 15, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. to discuss the budget and a regular Board meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Dufour
Recording Secretary