

ENFIELD BUDGET COMMITTEE (EBC) MINUTES (Unapproved)

Thursday, December 12, 2013
DPW BUILDING 6:00PM

Members Present: Annabelle Bamforth, Sam Eaton (Vice Chair), Shirley Green, Gayle Hulva, Paul Mirski, Doug Pettibone (Chair), Lori Saladino, Janet Shepard, Dave Stewart

Excused: Fred Cummings

Others Present: Steve Schneider (Town Manager), Tim Taylor (Fire Ward).

The meeting opened at 6:07 PM.

Administrative:

A motion to approve the draft December 7, 2013 minutes was made by Gayle Hulva and seconded by Janet Shepard. The minutes were approved with one change to correct the on-call time period for the F.A.S.T squad.

New Business: Departmental Spending Plans Reviews

Steve Schneider passed out an updated draft budget (dated 12Dec2013)

The plans for the Fire Department, Regional Associations and Cemeteries were reviewed.

4220 Fire (2013 Budgeted, \$86,700; 2014 Request, \$113,140, up 30.5%). Fire Ward Tim Taylor presented the 2013 summary to date and the spending request for 2014. Taylor is also an assistant Fire Chief.

Before reviewing the 2014 proposed budget, Doug Pettibone summarized aspects of last year's review for the benefit of Taylor who was not present at that meeting. Pettibone stated that it was a 'rough' meeting for all involved because despite several requests beforehand to receive an advance copy of the draft budget, the budget committee (BC) only received a copy of immediately before the presentation. This put the BC at a disadvantage because it made a responsible review very difficult. It was also learned that all three of the Fire Wards had not reviewed the budget that was presented and so the budget request was not 'official'. This year was an improvement in that the budget was signed off by all of the Fire Wards, however the BC did not receive a copy of the draft plan until two days prior to the meeting which left little time for the BC to consider it.

Therefore, Pettibone made two formal requests of Taylor and the Fire Wards. One, he asked that in the future the draft Fire budget be submitted to the BC no later than the end of October of the upcoming budget year, and that the budgets be approved by all Fire Wards beforehand. All other departments routinely meet this request of the BC every year, and is in accordance with NH statutes governing the municipal budgeting process. Two, he asked that according to the Sunshine Laws of New Hampshire, the Fire Wards, as an elected governmental body, hold regular business meetings with advance public notice, and that the meeting business be documented in the form of minutes that would be posted to the Town website. This has not been done before. Pettibone also stated that the improved accountability and transparency would be to the benefit of the Fire Wards because they cannot afford to be perceived as being secretive. Having posted meetings and recorded minutes will allow the BC and Enfield voters to attend their meetings and/or follow the business of the Fire Department throughout the year. The BC was informed that the Fire Wards did hold a meeting to approve the 2014 spending plan and that minutes were drawn up accordingly. The BC was told that these minutes will be posted to the Town website. Taylor acknowledged the comments and said he would do all he can to work with the other Fire Wards to meet these two requests. The BC appreciated his willingness to develop a more transparent department and also appreciates the service of the Fire Department to the Town.

Taylor reviewed 2013 activities of the department and the spending plan for 2014. He said that 2013 was a very busy year for the department. There have been 163 calls to date. Staffing remains at 23 firefighters out of the Union

Street station and 10 out of Enfield Center. Thirteen firefighters took a boating class and were certified on the new boat obtained by the department. Two firefighters completed 116 hours of training to achieve Level 2 firefighter status.

Most of the requests for the line items in the plan are similar to last year. The amount requested for salaries increased significantly, however, by about 30% (\$40,000). This is due to a proposed increase in the pay for the firefighters who go out on calls. It was pointed out that no raises have been made since the late 90s and it is the belief of the Wards that the pay scale could become a retention issue. The firefighters' pay scales are lower than the F.A.S.T. squad but the increase would take them higher. It was also pointed out that the firefighters are only paid if they actually go out on calls and do not get paid if they respond to their pagers, go to the station for the call but the call is cancelled. With the new insurance reimbursement policy for F.A.S.T. squad transports, 'On-Call' time is now paid at a nominal rate for its members. There was general agreement that a salary increase is quite justified but that the level of that increase would need to be taken in the context of the overall Town budget. Schneider will obtain comparative firefighter pay scales for similar towns in NH.

Another line item of note is vehicle repairs where \$15,000 is requested (vs \$9,000 last year). Most of this increase is for repair of the ladder rack on a truck (\$4000) which can now cause interference with lower storage compartments on the truck when deployed. The amount requested for clothing (\$10,000 vs \$8,000) is mostly for new firefighting coats and pants (\$1800 each). Taylor indicated that the department reuses apparel whenever possible but they do have a definite lifetime and can wear out which then becomes a safety issue. An increase for New Equipment is also requested for 2014 (\$24,650 vs \$14,135). This is mostly for 4 new radios and pagers (\$13,500) to replace old units but also \$1200 for new LED traffic warning signs for greater visibility, \$3000 to outfit the new rescue boat, \$1250 for new roof mount spot lights for 5 vehicles that do not have this feature, and \$4500 for replacement fire hose.

Lori Saladino noted that frequently the Fire Department waits until the end of the year to spend the appropriations for clothing and new equipment. Of note, the Thermal Imager approved at Town Meeting last year was not ordered until recently despite the replacement being described as 'critical' to the safe and effective operation of the department at fire scenes. Taylor indicated that changes in the manufacturer's specs of the instrument and the uncertain availability of backup piece if repairs were needed caused part of the delay, but acknowledged that having someone in the department dedicated to seeing the purchase through as a priority would have reduced the delay. Pettibone noted that when such delays occur, credibility becomes an issue as to how critical the piece was after all. Based on the rationale presented last year, it should have been purchased right after Town Meeting.

Steve Schneider noted that a new internet data provider has been chosen for the Town and the two stations will be soon hooked up with a 5Mb connection. A new phone system will also be installed with the rest of the Town's departments.

The BC thanked Taylor for his time and cooperation, and for the thorough review.

4197 Regional Associations (2013 Budgeted \$48,509; 2014 Requested \$42,512, down 12%). RA subcommittee members, Sam Eaton (subcommittee Chair), Shirley Green and Annabelle Bamforth reviewed all of the funding request applications from the nonprofits with Dianne Heed (Director, Enfield Human Services). The subcommittee is recommending that all of the agencies that the Town supported in 2013 be funded in 2014, with the exception of West Central Services that did not submit an application this year. The BC generally agreed that the individual dollar requests be granted. The total amount of the requests meets the Town policy to target total support for all agencies to be equal up to 1% of the general fund budget. A request from the American Red Cross was not recommended because it was concluded that the other nonprofits were in greater general need for the Town's support. The local agencies that are being recommended for support have a solid track record of providing meaningful benefits to Enfield residents in need.

4195 Cemeteries (2013 Budgeted \$2,200; 2014 Requested \$1,500 down 32%). Dave Stewart, a Cemetery Trustee, reviewed this plan for the committee. He noted that there are 23 cemeteries in town and that the state mandates that the towns maintain their cemeteries. In 2013, the big tree at the Shaker Cemetery that threatened to fall on the gravestones was removed at a cost of \$5400. This was fully funded by a cemetery reserve fund. Stewart noted that the current request was low and he requested an additional \$500 be added to be on par with last year. Paul Mirski made a motion to do so and was seconded by Sam Eaton. The motion passed unanimously.

Miscellaneous

Revaluation and Impact on the Tax Rate: Schneider reviewed the impact that the 2014 Town-wide property revaluation will have on the tax rate. He indicated that we should expect the total town valuation to drop by about 8% from about \$555 million to \$510 million. This will cause the tax rate to correspondingly increase in order to raise the same amount revenue needed for the Town to conduct its business. On average, the actual dollar amounts in municipal taxes paid by the individual property owner will not change, unless the change in valuation of a given property is higher or lower than the average change for all of the taxable properties. A 2% increase in Town appropriations for 2014 would normally require an increase in the rate from \$6.14/\$1000 valuation to \$6.26/\$1000. However, with an expected 8% drop in property valuation, the tax rate needed to raise that same amount of money would be \$6.80/\$1000.

Schneider passed out an updated revenue sheet for the committee's information.

Assignment: Pettibone gave an assignment for committee members to come prepared next meeting to give Schneider specific feedback on line item adjustments. We will go through the budget department by department so the BC's specific recommendations will be considered as he decides how to bring the budget within our target of up to a 2% increase in appropriations.

Old Business: None

Public Comment: None

The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 PM. Our next meeting takes place Thursday, Dec.19, 6:00PM @ DPW and will discuss the CIP plan, and review specific recommended adjustments in the 2014 plan.