

Present: Dorianne Almann, Joe Conroy, Mike Darcy (selectmen's rep), John Hartnett, Mo Klein, James MacDonell, Lewis Major, Tina McCosker, Peter Zavorotny. Excused: Bruce Bellville and Michael Carrier.

Mr. Zavorotny called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. He said TA Collins had sent him a note outlining changes the Selectmen had made to several budgets and several additional budgets they had approved. These items were covered later in the meeting.

He reminded the committee that one of the budgets needing completion is that of the Police Department. Mr. Darcy spoke up and said that the department's incomplete salary line was now finalized: \$43,000. He said the selectmen are not happy with the over time, but the explanation provided by the chief was acceptable.

In terms of the school's budget, the salary line takes a big jump when the SRO's salary is added. Originally the position was funded by a grant and money from the school; the school and town each paid \$7,000 with the grant covering the remainder.

Mr. Klein asked the police department's special detail; Mr. Darcy replied special detail costs are 100% reimbursable. He went on to explain the police department's scheduling system provided for holiday pay; for so many weeks, an officer works the first shift, then the second, then the third. There are 11 or 12 holidays. Mr. Klein asked if a differential exists for second and third shifts. Yes, said Mr. Darcy. He said the selectmen had tentatively approved the Police Department's budget.

Mr. Klein asked about a \$10,000 line item in the PD's budget. Mr. Darcy said it is for vests. He explained that the almost \$5,000 for radio repairs is for equipment upgrade.

Mr. Zavorotny brought the committee's attention to the Building Inspection (4240) budget. The original budget was \$36,848; TA Collins gave the figure as \$36,345 so the amount needs clarification.

Health Agencies and Hospitals (5676) has a budget of \$56,676: Two additional organizations to which the town makes a contribution are on the list, thanks to passage of the warrant articles last year. Mr. Darcy talked about a list of groups to which the town donates being provided to voters. Mr. Klein asked if this information could be handed out during elections. Mr. Darcy said this is a good idea and that he'd look into it.

Mr. Zavorotny said the summary from TA Collins listed the Municipal Pool at \$33,414. The last report the committee has lists a total of \$29,664. This will also need to be clarified. This budget has not been approved by the Selectmen.

When discussion turned to the Water Distribution and Treatment (4341), Mr. Darcy spoke up, saying the selectmen increased the department's budget feeling the original amount for electricity was low.

The budget for Wastewater Treatment (4326) was increased \$7,496 (to \$314,633). Mr. Darcy told the committee the increase was due to sludge removal. He said a second pump at the facility will need to be replaced (the first one was replaced last year).

Mr. Klein asked how the facility is working. "Fine," Mr. Darcy replied. He said that \$10,000 was budgeted for the replacement pump. Last year, a pump was purchased for \$8,000; he hopes the town will be able to buy the pump this year for less money than budgeted.

Mr. Zavorotny recapped, saying
\$972,345 was budgeted for the Police Department (4210)
\$50,676 for Health Agencies & Hospitals (4415)
\$469,794 for Water Distribution and Treatment (4332)
\$347,455 for Waste Water Treatment (4326)
then asked for a vote.

Mr. MacDonell made a motion to tentatively approve these budgets, was seconded by Mr. Conroy. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Klein asked when the committee will see the warrants. Mr. Darcy replied that the selectmen haven't seen them.

Mr. Zavorotny reminded the committee the next meeting will be January 15; he will email the committee should he receive revenues from TA Collins.

Mr. Hartnett asked if this is a negotiation year for the school. It is not, replied Mr. MacDonell. It is likely that a warrant to add more money into the capital reserve for repairs will be brought forth. Mr. Klein asked if a survey has been done on the schools in terms of maintenance, explaining the value of a PMS (preventative maintenance schedule). Mr. Conroy said that a PMS for the school is in place.

Mr. Zavorotny said that he thinks warrants for a new cruiser, money for work on Monument Road, and for safety apparatus are likely.

At 7 pm the committee got up to meet with the school board.

Dr. Crisafulli gave a short overview of the budget, noting that the Business Manager (Tom O'Connor) had put together a handout for the budget committee that he passed out. Mr. O'Connor said that the percentage of adults in town with a BA or better is 13.6%

compared to the state average of 32.4%. Hinsdale's median household income is \$46,514 compared to the state's median household income of \$63,033. Also, the number of people in town with a college degree is less than half the state's average; the poverty rate is double the state's average. The number of rental units in town is double the state's average. "We have a transient population that is suffering economically."

Dr. Crisafulli said the school framed its budget to meet the needs of the population and "as part of being a comprehensive school." The school board tried to "come in with a budget as slim as possible" reflecting decreased enrollment, a decrease in staff (one less elementary school teacher), reduced SPED staff (a coordinator and administrative person), and custodial reductions. A full-time SPED director and librarian are needed, however. He reminded the budget committee that New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) will be in Hinsdale as part of the schools' accreditation process, an expensive undertaking.

This is the last year of the \$125,000 Drug-Free grant.

Mr. Zavorotny asked if it was known what the state will do. No, according to Mr. O'Connor.

Mr. Zavorotny noted that last year the school returned \$250,000 to the town.

Everyone on the school board with the exception of one member was in agreement on the school's budget (of \$11,985,367). Dr. Crisafulli said that the school has seen a series of retirements. This has resulted in the town being able to hire younger staff for less money. When the school didn't find staff, "creative ways" to meet the need were found. This school saw a special needs placement costing \$175,000 and two such students went over to Brattleboro.

Mr. Hartnett asked, "How do we attract people to town?" raising a discussion on Hinsdale's taxes. School board member Angela Schill asked what Hinsdale's tax rate will be this year. Mr. Darcy replied that by the week of January 13 the selectmen will know how much of the undesignated funds will be used to reduce taxes, thus determining the tax rate. Mr. Hartnett observed the "community is rich in people" and that "we need to work to keep the tax rate down" to watch out for residents. He said he feels the number of support people is high for a school with 300 students; there's a person for Drug and Alcohol, two guidance counselors, an assistant principal, and an SRO.

Mr. Zavorotny said the dam situation is not yet settled, but he "doesn't see anything big happening in terms of the tax rate."

Dr. Crisafulli said the school "still has two costly repairs" related to the high school's roof it must address. Three of five sections are done, but one of the two remaining sections will be costly due to the number of vents. He doesn't want to bring additional warrants.

He moved to a discussion of the drug situation in the Hinsdale school system, spending several minutes reading bleak statistics that compared the drug situation in the town's schools to the states. This raised a discussion about the drug and alcohol counselor whose position has previously been grant funded being hired by the school.

When Mr. Zavorotny asked if the budget committee was ready to make a motion to approve the school's budget. Mr. Hartnett made the motion. It was seconded by Mr. MacDonell. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Zavorotny asked what warrant articles the school board plans. The two sections of the roof will cost at least \$200,000 Mr. O'Connor said. In response to Mr. Klein's question about the life expectancy, Mr. O'Connor said this year saw "lots of problems with motors", including getting hit by lightning. He said the school board is "trying to avoid bringing heavy warrant articles" to the town.

At this point the budget committee left the meeting with the school board.

Mr. Zavorotny reminded the budget committee that members should plan on meeting at 6:30 pm on Wednesday, January 15 unless he advises otherwise as there may not be enough new information to warrant a meeting.

With no more business to discuss, Mr. MacDonell made a motion to adjourn. He was seconded by Mr. Major. The meeting ended at 8 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Dorianne Almann
Recording Secretary