

Present: Dorianne Almann, Bruce Bellville, Joe Conroy, Michael Carrier, John Hartnett, Morris Klein, Lewis Major, and James MacDonell. Excused: School Board Rep Tina McCosker and Peter Zavorotny.

The Budget Committee met with the selectmen at 6:30pm with Mr. Hartnett as chairperson. He told the selectmen the Budget Committee had deducted the Animal Control Officer's salary and wanted to discuss the matter with them. Selectmen Bernie Rideout said "that position has always been there." A person to fill it has just stepped forward. Selectmen Wayne Gallagher said the ACO would work part time and would receive a vehicle allowance. The person has the training for the job.

Mr. Rideout said the person (who is a vet tech in Brattleboro) has a pick-up truck and crates. Police Officer Dave Eldridge spoke up, saying last year the Police Department received 293 ACO-type calls. Mr. Gallagher said the ACO would handle "bites by unlicensed dogs" and see to "animals being quarantined." The ACO will be able to determine what shots the animal has had and be able to follow up on unlicensed dogs. Mr. Gallagher said "it's difficult to place a sick dog in the back of a police cruiser." Mr. MacDonell said there are so many unlicensed dogs in town that the Town Clerk asked for a note to be stuffed in the tax bill reminding people to buy a license for their dog.

Ms. Almann asked several questions, including how many of the 293 calls were emergencies, why does the town now suddenly feel the need to fill the position when it's been unfilled for years., why can't ACO-type calls continue to be handled the way they have been over the last several years?

Mr. Klein asked why not put the ACO position as a warrant?

Town Administrator Jill Collins said the town had an agreement with the Budget Committee to leave the position in although no one had stepped forward. Mr. Bellville said he wanted to discuss whether or not it should be a warrant. TA Collins said that if the position isn't funded "the town can take money from elsewhere in the town" to pay for it.

Mr. Major said he supports the police and "a million dollars is a pretty good budget for a town this size." Winchester's Police Department is less than \$600,000, Mr. Major said. Mr. Gallagher spoke up, saying that Blue Cross, retirement, and life and health insurance aren't part of the Police Department's budget in Winchester.

Mr. Conroy said he doesn't want people to "lose sight of the fact people are having a hard time." Using himself as an example, he said that two years ago he was making an excellent salary. Now he's living on \$1,200/month. Mr. Hartnett asked if there's a job description for the ACO. Yes, replied TA Collins. The ACO salary is be \$15,918.

Mr. MacDonell made a motion to approve Article 2 of \$3,640,872 and was seconded by Mr. Major. Mr. Hartnett asked for comments. Ms. Almann said she is not in favor of the ACO. She said as a tow official town's people talk to her and ask her questions. She said she hasn't been asked by anyone as to why the town doesn't have an ACO or when will the ACO's position be filled. Mr. Bellville asked by how much the town's budget is up. To percent, TA Collins replied.

Mr. Hartnett asked for a vote. Four yea's and four nay's (Ms. Almann and Messrs. Bellville, Conroy, and Klein). Mr. Hartnett cast a yes vote and Article 2 passed.

Article 3 had a \$13,000 capital outlay in the wrong place. Mr. MacDonell made a motion to accept Article 3 (\$479,212 for Water Department operations). He was seconded by Mr. Carrier. The motion passed unanimously.

Article 13 to use \$3,000 from the undesignated fund to cover principal for the Historical Society was next discussed. TA Collins read a letter from the Society requesting the money. The letter detailed various activities the Historical Society sponsors. Mr. Bellville pointed out the people aren't attending many of the events. Mr. Major made a motion to accept Article 13. He was seconded by Mr. MacDonell. Article 13 passed with one no vote (Ms. Almann).

With nothing further to discuss with the selectmen, Mr. Hartnett asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. MacDonell made the motion, was seconded by Ms. Almann, and the meeting ended at 6:57pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorianne Almann
Secretary