

Present: Dorianne Almann, Bruce Bellville, Michael Carrier, Joseph Conroy (arrived at 6:20 pm), John Hartnet, Morris Klein, James MacDonell, Tina McCosker, Lewis Major, Bernie Rideout, Peter Zavorotny

Mr. Zavorotny called the meeting to order at 6 pm in the Town Hall. He said the committee had to act on Article 2. It is the most expensive version of the police department. He stated the design work is not yet completed. Mr. MacDonell repeated that the article "is the expensive version" of the police station and asked what makes it so expensive. Mr. Rideout spoke up, saying the article included removing the garage that is currently on the property. Mr. Bellville said "it's too much money." Mr. Zavorotny said the town's long term debt position is good, retiring \$44 on a \$150,000 house. If the police station gets built, the expense of doing so will translate into \$28 on a \$150,000 house. Mr. Klein asked whether the figure is \$28 or \$23. Mr. Zavorotny checked his figures and replied "it's \$23." Mr. MacDonell spoke up, saying "it's \$22.33." Mr. Bellville noted the town is seeing revenues falling. With the abatements the town has, plus "what the state will do to us," the situation is not good. The town is seeing a decline in revenue. "Everything seems to be in a downward spiral in terms of growth."

Mr. Zavorotny asked for further comment and receiving none, asked for a motion. Bernie made a motion to accept Article 2 that was seconded by Mr. Carrier. The motion carried with seven ayes with Ms. Almann and Mr. Bellville voting no.

Mr. Zavorotny had the committee move to Article 4, the Water Department, with its 2013-14 budget of \$459,198. Mr. MacDonell asked about principal and interest on the department's long term debt. After Mr. Zavorotny received no further questions, he asked for a motion to approve Article 4; it was made by Mr. MacDonell and seconded by Mr. Rideout. The motion carried with Mr. Bellville voting no.

Mr. Zavorotny opened discussion on Article 7. He said the selectmen had voted to increase the amount to be added to the New Police Station Fund from \$50,000 to \$75,000. When there was no discussion, he asked for a motion to approve Article 7; one was made by Mr. Bellville and seconded by Mr. MacDonell. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Zavorotny noted "that's it for town warrants" and that the budget committee still had the school to address. He said Ms. McCosker needed to leave to vote with the school board. Mr. Zavorotny said the budget committee would remain open until she returned. He brought to the committee's attention that the selectmen chose to put \$1 into capital outlay (account 4901.01) line (on page 2). This ensures that the line is active so money can be spent. This is in case the article to buy "the property across the street" (Article 9). Mr. Bellville made a motion to accept the capital outlay account of \$1. He was seconded by Mr. MacDonell. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. McCosker returned to the meeting at 6:16 pm and told the committee that the school board had removed Article 5.

At 6:30 pm Mr. Zavorotny announced that the public hearing for the town's budget was open and that he would discuss the warrant articles.

The first article discussed was Article 2 to build the police station. He explained the project's financing: \$75,000 would come from the Expendable Trust, \$239,000 from Wal-Mart, and \$773,000 from a bond. He said the town "is in fairly good shape when it comes to long term debt." The bond will cost \$0.29 for each \$10,000 assessed. That is \$44.11 on a \$150,000 house.

Looking at three scenarios of 20, 25, and 30 years, with a bond at 3-1/4% for 20 years that translates into \$22.33 for a \$150,000 property. The police station "will only account for roughly 30% of long term debt."

Mr. Zavorotny gave a rundown of the amount and explained the accounts that yield the amount in Article 3 (3,369,439) that comprise the general operation expenses of the town. The \$689,159 (General Government) is an increase of \$5,000 over last year or a 0.72% increase. Public Safety (\$917,526) is up \$68,318 over last year (5.67%). He remarked that the "town is getting hit—the state is pushing back retirement costs."

Highways and Streets were next discussed, followed by the Water Department and Waste Water and that "gets us through Articles 3, 4, and 5."

The tax impact of Article 6 would be \$30,000 Mr. Zavorotny said and explained that the department is looking for a utility unit to give better response time. A member of the public asked where the vehicle would be kept. Chief Matuszewski explained the process by which the department's vehicles would be moved and stored to accommodate the purchase.

Mr. Zavorotny next spoke on Article 7, noting that if Article 2 passes, Article 7 would be passed over.

When he reached Article 8, he asked what year the vehicle is replacing. TA Collins replied, "2007." There is no increase in equipment with Article 7; a piece of equipment is being replaced.

Article 9 asks if the town will buy the "former vet clinic" as part of the police station project.

Article 10 requests \$35,000 for a new version of the police cruiser vehicle. The police chief who was in the audience explained that the vehicle is sized between the Escape and Explorer. This new vehicle "is much cheaper and much better on gas," the chief continued, getting "16 to 17 miles per gallon."

Article 11 asks for money for a perimeter fence around the North Hinsdale Well Site.

Article 12 seeks money to update telemetry equipment for the Water Department.

Mr. Zavorotny said Article 13 acknowledges the fact that severe storms in the past knocked out power and having a portable generator would be insurance.

Article 14 seeks to add money to the Fire Apparatus Fund. TA Collins noted the article will be passed over if Article 6 passes.

Article 15 requests \$25,000 be added to the Monument Road Reconstruction Fund. "Monument Road is a huge project we'll have to tackle soon," Mr. Zavorotny noted.

Article 16 seeks money to be added to the Highway Capital Equipment Fund.

Article 17 focuses on money being added to the Fire Department Personal Protection Equipment Fund.

Article 18 is for money to be added to the Fire Department Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) Fund.

Article 19 is for \$15,500 to continue the bus service from Brattleboro to Hinsdale. Mr. Zavorotny observed there is a level of unhappiness at the low level of ridership and awareness about the service resulting from the poor marketing job done by its sponsors, and while there are "qualms" about the long term viability, the town is willing to continue supporting the service for another year.

Article 20 seeks money to be added to the Backhoe Expendable Fund.

Article 21 reflects concerns with rising welfare costs. The town is looking to establish a trust and add \$10,000 to it.

Article 22—adding \$5,000 to the Community Center Building Improvement Fund—is something the town has been doing for several years. In addition to being used on the Community Center, the money could be used for other things, if so voted, Mr. Zavorotny said.

The initial request by charitable groups for funding means a warrant is necessary; this is the first year Big Brother Big Sisters has requested support. This is the basis for Article 23.

Mr. Zavorotny said there was a misprint in Article 6 of which the selectmen are aware.

As there were no questions from the audience, Mr. Zavorotny began discussion and explanation of the town's estimated and actual revenues other than taxes.

When those figures were addressed, "that covers all of it," and Mr. Zavorotny declared the town budget meeting closed at 6:58 pm. At 7 pm, he opened the hearing for the school budget.

He told the committee he would be working from the two documents provided by the school committee.

Mr. Zavorotny observed there are two state-related issues that are hitting town hard: Retirement costs and the fact sources of state aid are dropping.

Article 2 seeks funding to increase salaries and benefits for the current fiscal year.

Article 3 seeks up to \$50,000 to be added to the Special Education Emergency Fund. Mr. Zavorotny explained the money sought for the fund would come from unexpended funds. Special Ed costs are difficult to control and can be “very very expensive.”

Article 4 requests for up to \$50,000 to be added to the School Building Maintenance Fund.

As there were no questions on these articles, Mr. Zavorotny declared the hearing adjourned at 7:07 pm.

Mr. Zavorotny said a motion was needed to finalize the tentative approvals the budget committee had made. The motion was made by Mr. Carrier and seconded by Mr. Conroy. It passed unanimously.

Mr. Major made a motion to accept the minutes from the last meeting (618). He was seconded by Mr. Bellville. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee members signed the town and school budgets.

Mr. Conroy made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Bellville seconded. When the motion passed unanimously, the meeting adjourned at 7:11 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Dorianne Almann
Recording Secretary