

Present: Dorianne Almann, Selectmen Rep Joan Morel, John Hartnett, James MacDonell, Lewis Major, Peter Zavorotny. Absent: Michael Carrier, Joe Conroy. Excused: Bruce Bellville, Morris Klein. Not in attendance: School Board Rep Tina McCosker.

Mr. Zavorotny began the discussion with the selectmen at 6:34pm. He told the selectmen that the budget committee had voted on a flat budget with a maximum 1% increase. Selectman Mr. Rideout asked Mr. Zavorotny for the amount; Mr. Zavorotny replied that means "\$230,000-\$240,000" out of the budget. Mr. Rideout said that for the last few years the budgets have been flat. This is true, TA Collins said. Selectman Mr. Darcy said there was a 2% increase in pay. The department heads were told the raise would be confined to 2%. Mr. Zavorotny asked if removing \$230,000 would be acceptable. Mr. Darcy replied "that's a lot of change" to remove. Mr. Rideout spoke up, saying "the police department is overwhelmed." They are working on cases going back years. Mr. Darcy said he "appreciates what the budget committee is doing" in trying to contain expenses and said guidance would be welcomed as to where the budget committee feels budgets are high.

Mr. MacDonell (who is the tax collector) spoke up, saying the tax collector's budget is based on the way Dick Shaw (former tax collector) did things. He said, "Off-hand, I can't see a place to cut." Ms. Collins said that "figures may come down, but not that much."

She said Financial Services went up--"people say they want more hours" for town departments to be open. Cemeteries also went up and the selectmen will examine why.

Mr. Darcy spoke up, saying he wants the selectmen to look at the Fire Department. The salary line increased, but hours didn't. The Highway Department "zeroed out." Ms. Collins said that Street Lighting has been paying for things that don't belong in its budget. Solid Waste Collection came down. Health went up. The town was asked via a warrant article which groups to support. Mr. Zavorotny pointed out that this doesn't mean funding has to be at the level noted in the warrant article. Ms. Morel said that a handout at town meeting as to which agencies are getting money is helpful.

Ms. Collins said the Library budget still hasn't been examined. Summer Programs budget is "way high" she said and its budget will be examined. She said one reason Summer Programs' budget is so high is due to a nine week summer program. Economic Development is self-funded. Debt Services will come down. Capital Outlay will go up slightly. TA Collins said she needs to go over the Water Department budget. When a utility operator is out on a Monday, the charge goes to the Highway Department.

The budget for the police department went up significantly.

Mr. Zavorotny said that in over simplified terms, last year the town returned \$200,000. He said that the tax collector is an issue and that it's open to debate. The police and fire departments need to be studied. The cost of oil and gas may well stay down until the end of next year.

He would like to see the Animal Control Officer as a warrant article.

Mr. Zavorotny said Health Insurance is 15% over last year. Ms. Collins said that is due to more families on the plan in terms of the police department. Mr. Zavorotny asked TA Collins if the rate increase is stipulated by the insurance company. Ms. Collins said the rate is 6.2% more than last year. Mr. Zavorotny said the Dental Plan is "very expensive." Can it be examined?

Mr. Darcy said that in the matter of salaries, they "could come down about \$10,000." Mr. Zavorotny said that the summer program and the pool need to be examined. He continued, "Speaking as an individual and not as a budget committee member, I'd like to see Community Events as an article. It comes to \$32,000. I like to think there're things we could look at."

Mr. Hartnett asked about the possibility of the custodian becoming the crossing guard. The possible savings would be about \$11,000. Mr. Gallagher said there are two crossing guards; one at Prospect Street, the other at the Town Hall. TA Collins said that the custodian does not work on Fridays. Mr. Zavorotny said that several grants supporting school-related programs are ending, including one supporting the **Hinsdale** Community Coalition. TA Collins said HCC sponsors the chili cook-off and helps the middle school pay for school trips (\$5,000). Mr. MacDonell remarked that the school is picking up some of the cost of after-school programs.

Mr. Zavorotny asked TA Collins when the budget committee will see updated copies of the various budgets. She replied that she wasn't sure. Mr. Zavorotny said the next meeting will be Jan. 6; the committee will get the budgets from TA Collins Jan. 5.

What would the town do without, asked Mr. Hartnett, if \$230,000 is cut from the budget?

Rubbish pickup, according to TA Collins. Curbside pickup costs about \$140,000. Mr. Zavorotny said he's fought to keep curbside pickup in the budget as it's helpful to the elderly. A program or programs, said Mr. Darcy. Mr. Major said he doesn't think it's fair to "throw the figure" to cut at the department heads; he thinks the budget committee should make suggestions on where to cut. Mr. Zavorotny said "\$250,000 isn't a particularly significant percentage of a \$3.5 million budget."

Mr. Darcy said the message from the budget committee "to keep the budget lean is clear."

Mr. Hartnett said there are other ways to take in money. The interest the town saw from a money market fund was \$42. The town needs to be creative in generating revenue. Mr. MacDonell said money market rates are low.

With no more business to discuss, Mr. Hartnett made a motion to adjourn. He was seconded by Mr. Major. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting ended at 7:10pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorianne Almann  
Secretary