

Present: Dorianne Almann, Bruce Bellville, Michael Carrier (arrived 7:20pm), Joe Conroy, Morris Klein, James MacDonell, Lewis Major (arrived 7:20pm), Selectmen's Rep Bill Nebelski, and Peter Zavorotny. One member of the public was present.

Mr. Zavorotny called the meeting to order at 6:30pm; TA Jill Collins was present.

TA Collins distributed a packet to committee members. She told the committee members that she's trying to arrange a meeting between the budget committee and the selectmen for Wednesday, January 20 before she began explaining the packet's contents.

The first budget in the packet was that of **First Response (01-4211.10-115)** under the Police Department followed by the **Fire Department (01-4220.10-115)**. TA Collins noted that the Fire Department budget had been reduced. The **Vehicle Allowance (01-4220.10-270)** was put back up to \$4,100. Mr. Zavorotny asked if the reduction was related to First Response. TA Collins noted that the Police Department was reduced to \$24,000 having provided no backup for its request for \$44,000.

In terms of the next budget in the packet (**Health 01.4415.20**) TA Collins informed the committee that the "request went up a minor amount." CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates **.20-831**) was added (\$500). **Southwest Community Services (.20-819)** decreased. Mr. MacDonell asked if the Red Cross "is still out." TA Collins replied a request has not been received.

The budget for the town is up 2.63%. First Response increases the budget 1.46%. The selectmen have not yet discussed the three emergency lights requested by Emergency Management; TA Collins said they will do so Monday night.

She next discussed the Capital Improvement Plan. Warrant articles are developed from the CIP. Town Hall improvement will "put away a little bit for the Town Hall" as "nine times out of 10" repairs to the building are expensive.

The committee discussed the clock tower repairs. Some members also put forth the possibility of removing the Howard clock and displaying it including in a glass-sided structure near the Community Center or in the window of the Town Hall that overlooks Main Street.

TA Collins said the Police Department's CIP included "doing something for a garage." This would involve putting down a slab and erecting a pre-fab on it.

This comment generated discussion among budget committee members. Mr. Zavorotny said the Department should use the garage on town property.

TA Collins will talk to the Police Chief on the defib units. There is some money in the Communication Fund for mobile radios.

TA Collins also said the town needs "to do something" about the fire station. She'd like to see money put aside for a new station. The current station is not ADA compliant. There is steel in the ceiling. The thought is to have a structural engineer do a thorough analysis. Whatever is done "will be a very expensive project."

Several vehicles will be put under Capital Reserve:

- Front line truck
- Brush truck
- Ladder truck
- Boat

TA Collins would like to put aside \$80,000. Mr. Nebelski thought it was \$50,000 that was put away.

Tim Giroux from the public spoke up saying the Fire Department's brush truck is 25 years old , is not four wheel drive, and can only go into the woods just so far.

TA Collins clarified that there is the possibility of a USDA grant to help with the purchase price. The warrant article would be worded to clarify that the vehicle's purchase is contingent on winning the grant.

Breathing apparatus for the Fire Department were less expensive when the original request was made. This is due to the fact newer apparatus have additional functions integrated. In 2018 the units are expected to close \$160,000.

Mr. Zavorotny asked if all units will be replaced. Yes, Mr. Giroux responded, all will be up for replacement.

TA Collins said the Highway Department is looking to replace its a truck in 2017-18. TA Collins will talk to Road Agent Frank Podlenski to clarify. Currently, \$50,000 is put aside. The vehicle will cost \$35,000 if purchased. If Mr. Podlenski waits one more year, it would be less to buy the vehicle outright rather than lease it. The Department is "still looking to do something with Monument Road."

In terms of water, TA Collins told the committee she kept the "bonds in so the impact on the tax rate could be seen." The selectmen are inclined to monthly bills for water and sewer, something that would be a change from the current practice of billing quarterly. The loan to install meters would be for five years and would be funded entirely from user fees.

Mr. MacDonell spoke up, saying installing meters would "seriously shrink read time." The Department of Environmental Services already approved \$20,000 for meter installation. The loan would be for \$60,000; given Hinsdale's situation, the town "usually qualifies for 35%."

A new cab and chassis is expected to cost about \$85,000, TA Collins noted. Fixing the cab is estimated to cost \$47,666 with the body work costing the remaining \$35,000-\$36,000.

In terms of Sewer, TA Collins said she'd left the infrastructure in the budget.

The final document in the packet was a draft of the Town Warrant. Article 22 is of a "housekeeping" nature; it closes several expendable trusts. TA Collins is working the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) to transfer the money.

TA Collins told the committee the selectmen will work on the warrant Tuesday, January 19 before meeting with the Budget Committee the following night.

TA Collins left the meeting at 7:05pm.

Mr. Zavorotny told the committee the committee there were minutes from meeting 658 January 1, 2016 to accept. Mr. Conroy made a motion to accept them as printed, was seconded by Mr. Klein, and the motion carried.

The terms of Ms. Almann and Messrs. Conroy and Major expire this year. There is one open seat on the committee with a two year term. Mr. Zavorotny reminded the committee that the last day to sign up to run is the last Friday of the month. He said Holly Kennedy had emailed him; she indicated she has had some showing interest personnel in running for the budget committee.

Mr. Zavorotny informed the committee he discussed the matter of the three signs requested by Emergency Management with the selectmen. Mr. Bellville spoke up saying he couldn't accept the budget being up by 2.6%. Summer Program is up, First Response is added to the budget, the Coordinator is up. Mr. Bellville left the meeting at 7:15pm saying he was unwell.

Mr. Zavorotny told the committee the school committee was also meeting that night; he doesn't yet "know what will happen with the school" although he did expect them to "take more out" of the budget. His guess is that the school will return to the committee with a budget that is "slightly up."

Mr. Zavorotny expressed concern about the possible effect on the tax rate should the town not get money back from the state and from the town and the school as well from items that weren't purchased. The school has recently returned about \$500,000 which is in doubt for this year. The school built in a 10% raise in insurance; the expectation is that the increase will be more than 11%.

Should money not be returned the result may well be about a \$600 increase on a \$200,000 house.

"The reality," Mr. Zavorotny said, "is the only way to get the amount down is to cut people." The Warrant Article is "still squishy." The state tax rate is down \$0.08 from last year.

Discussion moved to the number of budget committee members. Does the committee really need as many members as it's traditionally had? Fewer members could make it easier to achieve a quorum. Mr. MacDonell said the committee is "aging out" and people his age are, for the most part, not stepping forward. Mr. Conroy voiced support for more, rather than fewer, members.

Mr. Klein asked what number was being considered. Mr. Zavorotny replied, seven from nine. Having a high school student via the Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO) be part of the committee was discussed with Mr. Zavorotny agreeing to inquire about an ELO student becoming a non-voting committee member.

Timothy Girroir asked if he could address the committee; he wanted to discuss the First Response the town is looking to add.

Mr. Girroir reminded the committee about the fact the Fire Department has “put in time and money going back about 15 years” in terms of responding to emergencies. The department bought a utility truck for \$50,000/\$60,000 and purchased air bags. The Fire Department has an all-terrain vehicle, ice rescue gear, and equipment for mountain rescue. “The vast majority of the department is CPR qualified” and the Fire Department has “close to 10 responders.” The department works closely with Rescue Inc.

“The Fire Department responds to emergency calls, and now, so too, with the police,” Mr. Girroir commented.

“It blows my mind that the town hasn’t consulted with Rescue Inc.,” Mr. Girroir said in terms of developing the new First Response. “Why is the town spending \$40,000 for something that the Fire Department and Rescue Inc. have been doing? It seems to me that the Budget Committee should’ve had a meeting with Rescue Inc. and the Fire Department; for a fact, Rescue Inc. and the Fire Department were not consulted. If First Response is such a good idea, put it on the Town Warrant and let voters decide.”

Mr. Girroir noted that when he sat on the Budget Committee, “anything new went out as an article.” To “start a whole new department” without voter input distresses him.

Mr. Zavorotny responded that tonight was the first time the committee had “seen the actual numbers.” He said the Budget Committee can request First Response be a warrant; however, the final decision is up to the selectmen. Mr. Girroir said, “I ask the Budget Committee to put it [First Response] before the voters.”

Mr. Girroir ended by asking “why are we paying for coach buses?” Sports teams are taking coach buses, he told the committee; he commented that when his children played sports and the teams went to other schools to take part in games, coach buses didn’t get them there.

With no more business to discuss, Mr. Klein made a motion to adjourn. He was seconded by Mr. Nebelski. The meeting ended at 7:34pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorianne Almann
Secretary