

Special Board of Selectmen's Meeting

February 14, 2011

Present: First Selectman Gayle Weinstein; Selectman David Muller; Selectman Dan Gilbert; Town Administrator Tom Landry; Administrative Assistant Judy DeVito; Finance Director Rick Darling; Department heads; residents and members of the press.

This meeting was recorded and videotaped. The tapes are available in the Selectmen's office.

Ms. Weinstein called the meeting to order at 7:30pm

Pledge of Allegiance- The Selectmen led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board of Selectmen review First Selectman's Budget –

Ms. Weinstein did a presentation, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

100- Administration and Finance- The reduction in this budget is the reduction in hours for Joan Lewis, secretary and John Conte, Town Engineer. There is also a change in contractual services. We no longer have ADP expenses since we switched to Munis and those associated expenses are now in the Information Systems Budget.

130- Elections/Registrars- The reason for the increase is because we did not budget for ATBM referendum vote last year.

150- Legal Counsel- Instead of meeting with Town Attorney every week, we are trying to meet with her every other week. Ms. Weinstein is hoping that we can reduce the retainer budget, but we have to see how this works out.

Mr. Gilbert said if you took an average of the actual expenses for the last four years it would be \$310,000 and he felt that Ms. Weinstein was dramatically low balling what we spend historically. It was not about having the right budget number it was about having the right actual number.

160- Town Clerk- Line item 204 (Printing, Binding and Advertising) is increased because of the increase in volume.

170- Planning and Zoning- This department has a reduction in wages. The Code Enforcement Officer is being reduced to a four day work week.

185- Conservation Commission- There is a reduction in the Conservation Planner hours from .85 FTE to .80 FTE. This will make his work week consistent with land use's

reduction to a four day work week. Also reduced was the budget for training and professional development.

191- Building Inspector- There is a reduction to a four day work week for the Building Inspector and his Administrative Assistant because of the reduction in their work load.

260- Communication Center- There is a reduction in Training and Development.

280- Police Services- Mr. Gilbert said that, based on the four year average, the overtime number of \$194,343 should have about \$15,000 added to it to get it closer to the average. Chief Troxell said that there are two officers that are out with line of duty injuries and they are down a total of three officers which is not normal. Some of the overtime is reimbursed through workers compensation, but the reimbursement goes into the salary line, not the OT line. Additionally, there were several major storms that police were called in for overtime, and FEMA will reimburse for that. The number for the overtime they spent so far this year does not reflect all reimbursements. Chief Troxell feels that the \$194,343 is a good number. Mr. Gilbert said that he would defer to Chief Troxell's judgment.

300- Public Works/Highway- Mr. Gilbert felt that this number is low balled. He questioned the snow removal overtime and the line item for snow and ice control. He feels the budget is not as objective as it needs to be. Mr. Lametta said that he budgets for eight storms.

Mr. Muller said that we now have three instances where Mr. Gilbert is asking us to budget for the unknown. You should not assume that a two or three year average is more representative of reality than those charged with preparing the number based on years of experience. When you start smoothing by averaging, you are no better off with the low number or the high number. Mr. Muller said that he is not prepared to over tax the residents for the unknown.

600- Human Services- Meals and Wheels budget went from \$10,000 to \$7,000. Ms. Weinstein said that the number of households being served by Meals on Wheels is less.

700- Youth Services- Kristin Ferrara the Youth Services Director will now be working three days a week for Youth Services and two days a week for Social Services. The reason for the change is because of the increase in households being served by Social Services.

810- Library- The salary for the new Library Director needs to be put into this budget. Amy Sanborn said that there should be two computers in the equipment line and it was only showing one.

910- Parks & Recreation- Training and Professional Development was reduced.

912- Parks & Fields- The Board of Education Facilities Committee approached Parks and Recreation Commission about the desire to go to an “in house” maintenance for the school campus fields. The Parks & Recreation Commission is all for better fields. The split between Board of Education and Parks & Recreation for athletic fields and campus maintenance has been 70% from the Board of Education budget and 30% from the Parks and Recreation Budget. There is some sentiment that the Board of Education was being “overcharged” for personnel use. They shared one and half staff, the athletic field maintenance contract service and shared the independent consultant, irrigation system, Porto Johns system and plumbing and irrigation and miscellaneous repairs. At no point and time did the Board of Education pay for anything for Bisceglie or Morehouse. Even though the Town is proposing eliminating a part-time person we still need a fulltime person to maintain the Town fields and properties. The actual increase for the total Town budget is \$24,000.

970- Town/School Capital Budget-The Parks & Recreation Department has requested \$25,000 to purchase a tractor to replace a 20 year old tractor which can no longer be fixed. Mr. Ungar said that he spoke to Dan Clarke about sharing their tractor but the schools are looking for a much larger tractor. The time of need for the tractor is the same for the Town and the Board of Education. Since they are down a part-time person they really do need the tractor.

Bisceglie infield renovation for the second field. Initially they were hoping to do two fields but they did cut the request down to one and asked Weston Little League to contribute, and they have agreed to do so.

Funding for the turf replacement is something that we put every year into the sinking fund for this purpose.

Last year the Town set money aside to cover half of the High School tract seal refurbishment, so this is the other half of that payment.

Ms. Weinstein said that she was proposing this year the Town Vehicle Sinking Fund. They are trying to separate out the budgeting from the purchasing so that we can keep our budget relatively flat year over year, without big jumps in the Capital budget if we have to purchase four or five vehicles in one year. By creating the fund we can purchase Town vehicles on an as needed basis and not have to tie into a specific budget cycle. Any appropriations from this fund would have to be approved by Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance.

Ms. Weinstein went thorough the rest of the Capital Budget.

Stephan Grozinger chairman on the Planning and Zoning Commission and five of the commission members attended the meeting. He said that they were not opposed to cuts and they were not opposed to giving employees bad news. They are opposed to the way in which the cuts are proposed. Cutting back all employees to a four day week seems on its face arbitrary. It seems to be a one size fits all solution in an attempt to cut the budget.

It fails to look at the performance of the individuals involved, it fails to look at the amount and type of work that each of the individuals do, it fails to consider whether the staff member that is being cut needs to be available to the public five days a week. It fails to consider whether the employees affected are likely to leave and whether or not we could adequately replace them on a four day work week.

Mr. Grozinger said the reasoning for the cuts seem arbitrary. To suggest that the Building Department or the Land Use Department somehow should be paying for itself via permits and the approval process is simply misguided. They want the Selectman to reconsider the budget and work with them to design a budget deliberately and not arbitrarily.

Ms. Weinstein said that going to a four day work week was not arbitrary. We felt that an across the board four day week would make it easier for the public. They did consider other options such as consolidating positions. If you can consider consolidate two positions, then that person does not have a full work load. That is the reason behind all of these decisions. The work load is simply not there. Ms. Weinstein said that she was willing to reconsider the fees especially the code enforcement fees. She feels that P&Z has to be careful when talking about turning our Land Use department into a Survey Management Referral Company. Town Attorney has advised us strongly against this.

Ms. Weinstein said that she wanted to make sure that everyone of the employees still can get benefits. The bottom line is that when you look at the work load, it is way down and not consistent with a five day work week.

Mr. Grozinger said that every position should be looked at and if there is a cut that can be made without impacting service that it is made, but if it can not be done without impacting service then it should not be made.

Mr. Landry gave the Board of Selectmen and Planning and Zoning Commission some background on the Land Use department.

Mr. Grozinger said that he felt that it does not have so much to do with the level of activity but the level of availability. This budget proposal reduces availability and returns us to those days where there is an element of confusion.

Mr. Gilbert thanked Mr. Grozinger for his comments and asked that we end the discussion.

Mr. Gilbert asked if Ms. Weinstein did a five year town budget projection. Ms. Weinstein said that our Finance Director Mr. Darling does the forecasting, and it should be in the budget book. Mr. Gilbert felt that explanation was not good enough. He felt that, according to the Charter, the First Selectmen is responsible for personally creating a 2 year and a 5 year projection. There was further discussion about forecast and projections.

At 9:58pm Mr. Muller made a motion to adjourn the meeting Ms. Weinstein seconded. The vote was Mr. Muller, Ms. Weinstein yes. Mr. Gilbert no.

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Respectfully submitted

Judy M. DeVito
Administrative Assistant
Approved 03/03/11