

TOWN OF ALLENSTOWN
Budget Committee
16 School Street
Allenstown, New Hampshire 03275

Minutes of Regular Meeting
September 29, 2011

Present at the meeting: Fern Bissonnette, David Coolidge, Jerry McKenney, Carol Merrill, Lisa Komm, Mike Frascinella, Larry Anderson, Jon Richardson, Don Chaput, Penny Touchette, and Carl Caporale

Others present: Jason Tardiff, Select Board Ex officio; Carl Schaefer for Parks & Recreation; Robert Martin, Fire Chief; Paul Apple, Town Administrator; Lynn Bissonnette, Resident; Paul St. Germain; Bob Carter, Boys & Girls Club

Absent from meeting: Tom Irzyk (Excused); Richard Caruso (Excused)

Ms. Touchette opened the meeting at 6:19 p.m.

Minutes.

Ms. Touchette began with approval of the Minutes from the September 8, 2011 Budget Committee meeting. Larry Anderson made a Motion to approve the Minutes of September 8, 2011 as written. Jon Richardson seconded the Motion. All were in favor, and the Motion passed.

Discuss Budget Cuts by Department Heads.

Ms. Touchette approached the committee with an idea to put budget cuts back into the hands of the Department Heads. She said that in an effort to level-fund the budget, she wanted to have the Department Heads review their budgets and make their own cuts, targeting a bottom line budget that is at or below default. She wanted to return that responsibility to the Department Heads (with Mr. Apple's guidance), citing that when the Budget Committee is tasked with finding ways to shrink a budget, it is highly likely that they will unwittingly reduce a line that is vital to the department, and the last place the Department Head would have chosen.

Committee members welcomed the opportunity to hand that chore back over to the Department Heads, but were concerned about how to implement it. Mr. Tardiff liked the idea, as did Mr. Apple; however Mr. Apple was concerned about time constraints and asked Ms. Touchette when the reworked budgets would be due. The next Budget Committee meeting was scheduled for one week later, on October 6, which Mr. Apple felt wouldn't be long enough for him to get together with each Department Head. Ms. Touchette elected to forego the October 6 meeting and meet instead on October 13, two weeks away.

Ms. Touchette asked the committee what they thought about assuring the Department Heads that as long as they present a proposed budget that falls at or below default, the committee will indeed pass it. This sparked a discussion about whether or not it would be wise to offer such a guarantee; Mr. Apple opined that it would be best not to. He thought it best to have Ms. Touchette inform the Department Heads as to exactly what the Budget Committee is expecting from them: A bottom line that is at or, preferably, below default; and cuts to be made by Mr. Apple and the Department Heads. Additionally, committee members wanted to emphasize the importance of avoiding any personnel layoffs in all departments.

After some further discussion, the committee (with the guidance of Mr. Apple and Mr. Tardiff) decided that promising no further cuts to any budget that is prepared as per their instructions was a good idea. Should a budget come in above default, the Budget Committee will review it and make cuts, as they deem necessary.

Mr. Bissonette made a Motion to seek Department Heads' budgets that are at or below the default budget, with cuts to be made by Mr. Apple and the Department Heads. Further, if they are able to meet the requests of the Budget Committee, the Board will honor and not further cut their budget. Mr. Caporale seconded Motion. All were in Favor, with the exception of Mr. Anderson, and the Motion passed.

Mr. Frascinella mentioned a "% +/-" column he'd seen on several of this year's proposed budgets, which is an easy reference to see what, if any, changes have been made to each line from year to year. He suggested that every department add such a column to their budget, and everyone agreed that it was a helpful feature. Mr. Apple noted this and assured them that he would have it included on every department's worksheet.

Review and Consider Approval of Proposed 2012 Budgets.

--Parks & Recreation:

Mr. Schaefer noted that there were no changes to the Parks & Recreation budget since last year, and that he was presenting the committee with a level-funded budget. Touching upon the larger numbers, he first pointed out the Summer Programs line, which is the money that they give to the Boys & Girls Club to offset the cost of tuition for kids from lower income families.

Mr. Schaefer then gave the floor to Bob Carter from The Boys & Girls Club, who spoke about the program. He said they were currently seeing about 60 to 65 kids per day during the after school program. He listed some of the things the kids typically do while there, such as work on their homework, play games, and read.

Regarding revenues brought in by The Boys & Girls Club, Mr. Carter said most of their revenue comes from grants and fundraisers, and the remainder is billed for. He went on to say that in the last fiscal year, billed revenue was \$178,000.00 and 69% of that was given out to the kids in scholarships (financial assistance).

Mr. Anderson made a Motion to accept the Parks & Recreation budget in the amount of \$31,650.00. Mr. Coolidge seconded the Motion. All were in favor, and the Motion passed.

--Fire/Forestry:

Since the Budget Committee had just voted to have the Department Heads do their own budget cuts in order to meet their defaults, there would not be a vote on the Fire Department and Forestry budgets. Chief Martin was in attendance, though, and prepared, so he briefly reviewed the budgets.

He began by acknowledging that he needed to cut \$2,000.00 from the Fire Department budget in order to meet his default. He noted that the full-time employees' 1% raise was reflected on this budget, but would be removed.

The Forestry budget was already level-funded and there were no questions from the committee. Mr. Anderson made a Motion to accept the Forestry budget in the amount of \$4,000.00. There was no second; the Budget Committee wants to allow Mr. Apple to prepare the budget as directed.

Mr. Coolidge made a Motion to table the Fire Department budget. Mr. Caporale seconded the Motion. All were in favor, and the Motion passed.

Upcoming Budget Committee Meetings/Other Business.

Ms. Touchette reiterated that the October 6 meeting was cancelled and rescheduled for October 13 at 6:15 p.m.

Mrs. Merrill asked Ms. Touchette if she would please be sure to inform the Sewer Department that there would be no pay raises for 2012. Ms. Touchette said that she definitely would let them know that when she contacted them to tell them about the developments at the current meeting, and that she would also contact the school with the same information.

Adjournment.

Mr. Caporale made a Motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Coolidge seconded the Motion. All were in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Date approved: _____

Penny Touchette, Chair
Allenstown Municipal Budget Committee