

TOWN of RIDGEFIELD – BOARD of SELECTMEN
BUDGET MEETING – FEBRUARY 10, 2011

TOWN HALL/LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM – 7:30 P.M.

REVISED/APPROVED MINUTES

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription.

In attendance: R. Marconi, A. Bodner, M. Kozlark, B. Manners, D. Masters
K. Redmond, Director of Finance

Agenda

7:30 Highway Department Budget

8:45 Parks & Recreation Budget

General Budget Discussion

R. Marconi called the Budget Meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Highway Department Budget

The following individuals came forward to discuss the proposed Highway Department's budget for Fiscal 2011-2012:

Peter Hill, Public Works Director
Ellen Rossini, Office Manager
Barb Molto

Peter Hill reviewed the various capital requests:

Asphalt Recycler - \$55,000

Cold packs are very expensive and do not last when replacing existing asphalt. This recycler makes about 2 tons of material. They went to New Milford to see a demonstration and were most impressed. It looks like a small cement mixer on a trailer and runs on diesel fuel. You feed it with old asphalt, old curbs and add some shingles (shingles add additional oil to the mix). The hot asphalt then can be poured into wheelbarrows trucks for distribution. One can also repair catch basins in the winter. P. Hill feels that they may realize additional savings besides for patching. He feels the department could save up to \$13,000 on patching material which could then be subtracted from operations costs. It is a "marvelous piece of equipment!"

3 11' Plows - \$28,500

The department is working on replacing all of their plows by purchasing each year three "high discharge" plows, plows which lift higher. They have been especially glad to have had some of these high discharge plows this winter. P. Hill indicated that Ridgefield has almost 500 roads totaling about 190 miles of roads which need to be plowed. "No two storms do you fight the same". In a storm, they treat with salt up to 2 inches of snowfall, and then start plowing. They take out the centers of the roads first and then do the centers again. If it is still snowing, they then do the sides. This results in 4x in covering the 190 miles. The average life of a plow is about 10 years. The cutting edge of the plow is what has to be continually changed.

Re Build Grader - \$40,000

The existing 1977 grader needs to be re-built. This is a piece of equipment which is not used every day. There are two dirt roads in town which are continually re-graded. The grader will also cut thru ice if needed. A \$40,000 investment will keep the grader running for the next five years.

Loader (replace '87 CAT) - \$148,000 (Less \$8,000 trade-in)

The '87 model needs extensive work. It would be costly to bring it back from a safety standpoint – it is severely rusted. A machine can be leased for \$10,000/year.

Mack Dump Truck – R600 - \$175,000

It is a '96 model and can be passed on to Parks & Rec – put a new body on it. Otherwise, it is an automatic with low mileage and is in pretty good shape. This can replace the Parks & Rec old Ford.

Dump Truck with Plow - \$60,000

This replaces a '97 model – marked for five year replacement

Service Truck Utility Body - \$48,000

A service truck is needed that will house a crane so repairs can be done on-site. Can carry on-site a welder and compressor.

Road Maintenance

Last year they did 8 miles of repaving with a cost of \$500,000. These repaved roads should last 12-15 years depending on the traffic load. The repaving process involved a mill and overlay reclaim process; a total regarding, grinding up of existing asphalt and then putting down 1 ½” binder and 1 ½” topcoat. This year, they are asking for \$900,000 for repaving. If the cost is \$75/ton and they do a 1 ½” to 2” overlay, they can then repave about 6 miles of road. There is a wish list for roads the department would like to resurface. This list can change once there is a thaw and they see what the roads look like after this severe winter. A. Bodner stated how there had been a ten-year plan for the roads; instead we are doing less and less since the price of oil keeps going up. We need to do a new plan for the next five years.

Mamasco Lake - \$35,000

The dam has a problem – there are some issues at this location that need to be addressed.

Operating Budget Costs –

Operating costs are basically flat. Patching is down to \$13,000; costs of vehicle fuel and equipment fuel – there is no change in headcount and salaries are flat. Highway maintenance is being kept flat as well.

Snow Removal – If nothing else happens, we will have about \$100,000 in the snow removal budget. It costs about \$43,000 for 500 tons of salt treatment. We currently have a stockpile of about 800 tons and they hope that will last. About 100 tons is used for each storm. They normally order in 500 ton increments. A. Bodner asked if we should raise the \$185,000 allotment? The answer was that we do not know yet. In 2010, we spent \$384,000 on materials (mostly on MagicSalt). 2010 materials were paid out of the town aid road fund. The new Governor's budget numbers will be out on the 16th. The hope is to hold fast on ECS funding, but then cuts will have to affect something else. Ridgefield gets \$180,000 in town aid for roads. This may well be cut down. We have been using MagicSalt for two years now and not including sand as before. Do we have an average cost for the year? The cost this year is \$338,000 to date.

Tires and tubes are going up by about \$5,000. We have cut down spending on chains and have been putting on studs instead on recaps. This costs about \$100/tire. We take the studded tires off in the warm months

Diesel costs for seven months – this budget year to date = \$29,000 and \$4,500 for fuel.

Snow removal by the contractors – budgeted costs for this item always goes over. Outside contractors are not called in unless we really have to. We use our 16 trucks and not 20. Contractors cost \$75/hour plus a readiness fee; this amounts to about \$400/truck including insurance. We carry a large policy when plowing. We are \$12,000 over budget now and in 2010, we were over by \$30,000. We maybe need to additional dollars to this category. We should lump all snow expenses together – not spread snow removal out among different departments.

Andy Bodner asked, “What about scrap metal?” R. Marconi responded that we are paying more for it but the process is less trouble – closer to \$48,000. Environmental recycling is gong down to \$10,000 from \$20,000. State mandates that environmental recycling be free. It was suggested that there be a meeting with Anton to discuss scrap metal.

Waste oil is being picked up for free if not contaminated.

The Board of Selectmen expressed a “big thank you” to the Highway Department for all their efforts this year with snow removal.

Board of Education – Paul Hendrickson, Business Manager and Joe Marits came forward to discuss proposed asbestos removal program for Summer 2011. P. Hendrickson indicated that the BOE is still working with Johnson Controls – their recommendations and numbers will be ready for the next budget meetings in March.

Re asbestos removal, the Farmingville gym was done this past year. This coming summer will be the second part of three sections of asbestos removal. Next summer, all will be done. D. Masters asked if two parts could be done at one time? The answer was no. It is a timely process and it takes all summer to do the planned one-third. This summer will be the final phase for Veterans Park also. Next would be Scotland for 2012-13. The priority order is based on the condition of the tiles.

R. Marconi indicated that the sign-off on the school roofs will occur tomorrow, February 11th and the BOE will receive a copy.

Parks & Recreation Department

Paul Roche, Director of Parks & Recreation, and Phil Kearns, Chairman of the Parks & Recreation Commission, and Gina Carey and David Thaxter, members of the Commission, came forward to discuss their department’s budget requests.

Phil Kearns stated that Parks & Rec is proposing a 1.46% increase for Fiscal Year 2011-2012. They have been “right sizing” revenue for the current fiscal year and are up to \$2,742,000 in revenue. They are down -8.91%. They have cut costs wherever possible and hope to recover the shortfall with four more months of this fiscal year to come. They have allocated “bodies” differently. Some of the personnel in the Rec Center are now listed under Administration. The Rec Center shows an increase this year in net cost to the Town.

R. Marconi commented on how revenues are down with a gap of \$210,000. Is a bigger gap expected? They are showing \$1.9 million in revenue and expenses. The gap seems larger for this next fiscal year. P. Roche responded that they are looking at a higher deficit this year, but there has been an increase in non-revenue producing areas. The Rec Center is subsidizing other recreation expenses such as the Halloween Parade, snow removal, grounds maintenance. Their revenue projected numbers were too high. Revenue is not down that much but down when compared to the high budget numbers. They have been hurt by the

all-day kindergarten program. Eighty-five different groups use the Rec Center and they are not all revenue-producing groups. R. Marconi asked if expenses have been cut enough in keeping with the revenue numbers? B. Manners stated how the Rec Center serves Ridgefield's entire population. The pool is in "the black" this year which is wonderful! Maintenance of the school grounds costs \$400,000. They look wonderful since Parks & Rec took them over but perhaps it is time to share the cost.

Andy Bodner stated how the Rec Center is available to all those who pay. It "doesn't carry itself" – perhaps we need to find a model that carries itself. D. Masters pointed out that economic times have cut the Parks & Rec Department short – plus the all-day kindergarten program has impacted day-time programs. The Rec Center is also open as a shelter if needed. They provide community service for no charge such as parties and functions for seniors.

R. Marconi responded that the job of the BOS is to see that dollars are being spent as efficiently as possible. It is important to identify trends.

P. Roche responded that the Parks & Rec Department has cut greatly on staff, but only so many positions can be cut. Lifeguards are needed at the pools. They have their mission to provide recreational facilities and opportunities to all Ridgefield residents. Out of 6,007 members of the Rec Center, 460 are non-residents.

Their big capital request is the Spray Bay project. The Town's half would be \$167,500 with the balance raised thru fund raising. The proposed Pavilion at the Rec Center would cost \$52,000. The pavilion has been planned for five years and will cover the patio area at the back of the Rec Center building. The pavilion will provide a three-season extension of the building. The Parks & Recreation Department feels this is a good year to ask for the Spray Bay and the Pavilion projects because they are aware of some big capital expenditures coming up ahead – redo of Ballard Park and the Wellness Center. It would then be awhile before they could request dollars for the Spray Bay and Pavilion again. They also have small capital requests for plowing and mowing equipment. D. Masters commented on the original Ballard Park initiative and how many of the "Daddy's" put the equipment together. The redo of Ballard Park could be done again with volunteers instead of a bonding initiative.

General Discussion

The Board of Finance has requested that nothing from Fund Balance be put into the budget proposals for the 2011-2012 Fiscal Year. R. Marconi indicated that we will know better in March what will be coming in from the State. Health costs are forecasted to be up 13-15%, Parks & Rec is down in revenue, and fund balance was used for the 2010-2011 budget.

R. Marconi moved and D. Masters seconded a motion to adjourn the Budget Meeting at 9:50 p.m. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson