

BOARD of SELECTMEN BUDGET MEETING – FEBRUARY 25, 2010

Lounsbury House, 316 Main Street – 3:00 PM

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, B. Manners, (via telephone), D. Masters, J. Plock

Agenda

- 3:00 Library Budget
General Budget Discussion
- 4:30 Parks & Recreation Budget
- 5:00 Golf Course Budget
General Budget Discussion

R. Marconi called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and contacted Barbara Manners in Cancun, Mexico via cell phone.

Library – Chris Nolan and Peter Authier and Karen Allen, Library Board members were in attendance as well as Kevin Redmond, Town Controller.

Looking at a 2.4% increase over previous year which was flat last year relates to a \$40,000 increase in budget. Salaries increased 2.5%; were not increased at all last year. Two part-time and one full-time employees were laid off. Benefits were changed to defined contribution plan. Self checkout was instituted in the library which cuts down on the number of personnel needed. Fines increased from 10 cents to 25cents per day (this went into effect July 2008); email notifications regarding overdue items was instituted (saves on postage). However, this decreased the amount of overdue fines collected. The new website is much more user-friendly. Users can pre-select books, many other great functions. Health insurance increased 19%; this is beyond our control. Open to HSA concept. Development increased from \$132k to \$157k. We anticipate a \$96k increase in revenue which would offset the cost of the Development Director who is meant to focus on annual fundraising.

R. Marconi stated the Town is headed in the HSA direction. May be a one-time reduction in health insurance savings for the Town. Increases are inevitable; this would lower the starting point. Plan would not be voluntary.

Discussion ensued about abatement of Webster Bank property taxes—verified that this building is not included in the grand list.

Dayton Program Room rentals range from \$15/hour for not-for-profit to \$25/hour for-profit business use. R. Marconi asked whether the Library would consider closing on Sundays. Chris Nolan stated that it is the most busy day of the week transaction-wise. B. Manners asked whether the Library would consider staggering weekday hours (currently many working people can only go to library on Sundays). For example, open 12-7 several days of the week or 10-4 to accommodate working people. Karen Allen

responded we should look at meeting the needs of the user. Much activity exists with pre-school programs in the mornings as well as after-school; often waiting lists.

To achieve a reduction of \$40k, the library would have to look at cutting staff again. Could the library hold operating expenses at current level? In lieu of charging for programs which the Board had asked of the Library, we present the Development Director to bring funding back to the Library – a prudent move. A. Bodner stated if the revenue line were adjusted to \$140k, the amount the development director would generate, the increase to the budget would be flat from the Town's perspective for next year.

\$20k increase in technology is reflective of the self-check machines, the copier that sees extremely high usage, licensing, (hardware, software, support) etc. A breakdown on technology was requested with the possibility of adding to the capital budget.

Recess 4:05 to 4:15

Parks & Recreation

Parks and Recreation Commission members in attendance included: Phil Kearns, Barbara Dobbins, Dave Thaxter, and Evie Bottali. Board members requested breakdown of true Recreation expenses vs. Parks expenses. With revenues falling off at the recreation center, we want to find out where the true costs of the department fall. J. Plock questioned why Parks and Recreation staff maintain school grounds. This was taken over from the Board of Education several years ago; outdoor maintenance of the buildings was not being prioritized properly. Discussion ensued about the Barlow Mountain pool; what does Wilton BOE pay for use of Wilton Y pool? Eileen Cipolla, Parks and Recreation Accountant, responded they pay the same amount as RHS. Parks and Recreation and Ridgefield Aquatic Club have a three-year agreement not to raise fees higher than CPI index. This agreement will expire this year.

J. Plock asked for the net cost of Parks and Recreation? For next year, it will be \$915k per Phil Kearns. R. Marconi stated 4-5 years ago the number was approximately \$400-500k. The direct cost for the BOE grounds maintenance is \$349,779 not including administrative costs. If this is removed from the net, the # is \$699,558.

2008-09 net cost to Town was \$934k because current economic situation. 1.7% increase in expenses & a 4.6% decrease in revenue. \$64,000 increases.

Projecting 8% increase next year. Projecting an overage of \$157k for the 09/10 fiscal year. Phil Kearns stated Parks and Recreation is working on a contingency plan to address the shortage – the budget committee is currently working with staff. Revamping summer camp, fee increases. No discussion of surcharge for each member. Gina Carey, Parks and Recreation budget subcommittee member, commented on frozen expense spending, coming forward with worst-case projection, trying to put together a plan that doesn't impact the service that members expect. The wellness membership option was offered to members, many took advantage of it. Out of town memberships are down proportionate to all memberships; 8.6% of all recreation memberships are out of town and they pay a premium for membership.

Camp revenues are accounted for in the fiscal year in which they fall. There has been some freezing of funds as related to groundskeeping. Do you get reimbursed for special education camp members from

the BOE? The answer is no. Nor does Parks and Recreation get reimbursed from the state or federal government for special needs children camp programs.

D. Masters stated that the Town cannot afford this type of deficit. What will it take to end with a balanced budget June 30, 2010? A. Bodner asked about whether Parks & Recreation has looked at cutting hours as an alternative. P. Kearns stated it was considered, but it is a slippery slope when this approach is taken.

R. Marconi asked if the numbers generated from February membership are available on March 1, the BOS would like to see them. Yes, they will be available. Trying not to tack on \$50 increase for wellness memberships. If we are not careful, a 15% decrease in membership will wipe out any added revenue.

J. Plock asked about asking the BOE taking care of school grounds maintenance again. R. Marconi stated the BOE could be asked on Tuesday night.

B. Manners stated that revenue seems to cover programs; the shortfall comes from the services they provide—to the schools, to the fields, etc.

P. Kearns discussed capital—a total of \$367,400. \$275,900; \$209,600 is for vehicles and equipment, \$42,000 is for parks and fields safety improvements (includes Playground Road field fence, suggested by the Insurance & Risk Management Committee); building repairs/improvements \$24,300, co-funded projects \$91,500. This capital helps us maintain competitive programs. Some capital items are for items used on school building and grounds maintenance. Discussion ensued about the policy for trade-ins for old vehicles.

Utilities are higher at Barlow Mountain pool; Eileen Cipolla addressed this issue. The Board of Education bills Parks and Recreation for utilities and their rate is slightly different than the Town's. A. Bodner asked whether a good hard look has been taken by Parks and Recreation at utilities. R. Marconi suggested a meeting with utility companies to discuss consumption at Town Hall and Parks and Recreation.

A. Bodner asked about the breakdown of buildings that are included in utility costs. They are: Yanity Gym, Barlow Mountain Pool, and the maintenance shed on South Street. Energy costs decreased as a result of replacing lighting,

Golf Course

Frank Sergiovanni was present as well as Golf Committee members Ed Tyrrell, Marlene Gerhardt, Al Fazi, and Todd Kolb. Frank stated his salary line increased slightly due to contractual obligations. All other lines remain flat, resulting in a 0.11% increase. Golf range remains flat.

Golf course maintenance increase of 3.01% reflects utility increases. Rounds are down for this year due to the economy as well as weather-related incidents. Decrease of revenue is \$70k and this will be realized through personnel cuts. Discussion ensued about the number of personnel required to run the pro shop.

A challenge right now is drainage due to the elevation of property. A top dresser would be used to address this problem. Cart paths are not something that we will be addressing as a capital item; it

appears in operating. How many days do you lose when cart paths are not passable? Do you lose revenue as a result? R. Marconi asked whether the Town public works could take care of this? Frank Sergiovanni will meet with Peter Hill to discuss this option.

The current year operating budget is less than \$1M, does not include benefits and debt service on the golf course—there are only two or three years left on that. The golf course will realize approximately \$100k in revenue, not taking into account capital. The golf cart fee will increase \$1. The competition with other golf courses is intense.

R. Marconi moved and A. Bodner seconded a motion to adjourn at 6:15 pm. Motion carried 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Gannon Lionetti