

**Minutes of the
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting
Held on October 13, 2016**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, October 13, 2016 at Campbell High School, One Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

PRESENT: C Couture, (Chair), K Douglas (Vice Chair), C Pascucci, J Bourque, D Miller, A Cutter, R Keating, K Bourque (Selectmen's Representative), B Bourque (School Board Representative), T Brown (Town Administrator)

Absent:

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Couture called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

● **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

2. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

3. REVIEW/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

There were revisions or additions to the agenda.

4. REVIEW/ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

● **October 6, 2016**

MOTION: by Mrs. Douglas

Move to approve the October 6, 2016 minutes

SECOND: by Mr. Miller

Vote: 7-0-1, with Mr. Bourque abstaining

The motion carried.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

Mrs. Couture announced the Budget Committee received vehicle schedules from the town, library budget information, propane estimates, and updated spreadsheets from Mr. Cutter.

6. BUDGET REVIEW

● **Town Budget**

Police Department 4210.1

Chief O'Brion presented the 2017 Proposed Police Department budget of \$1,686,617, with an increase of 148,850.

Salaries

Chief O'Brion reported the increase in the Salary line is due to a contractual issue, but the new Captain's salary will be approximately \$300 less; Officers' Salaries are based on the union contract and two officers will attain degrees next year; Special Officers includes the resource office and detective.

Mr. Miller asked if the \$12,000 increase is driven by contract or a change in hours. Chief O'Brion indicated that Officer Donnelly's salary contains a 3% increase.

Mr. Bourque asked about the status of the new hire. Chief O'Brion reported that a background packet has been started for one of the candidates.

Chief O'Brion reported there is a change in Overtime as there is an officer being deployed for six months. He explained that the officer's half-time salary will be used for overtime for the officers that will fill in while he is away.

Mrs. Couture asked if it is difficult to find a temporary officer. Chief O'Brion indicated it is very difficult to find a temporary or part time officer. He noted that MRI advised to stay away from part time officers unless they are retired or have several years of experience.

Mr. Cutter commented there is a significant increase in all the overtime lines (overall). He pointed out even if you subtract the overtime money for the deployment, the increase is still significant. Chief O'Brion indicated that the overtime serves to keep two man coverages when officers go on vacation or are away. He commented substantial amounts of hourly rates have increased with promotions. He noted we cannot have two man, 24 hour coverage as we are not at that level. Chief O'Brion indicated the MRI study states we need 3 additional police officers to reach that level and he cannot guarantee additional officers will offset the overtime line.

Mr. Cutter commented this is the number one increase in the budget. He indicated if there were going to be a significant reduction in the budget, this would be understandable. He expressed he is struggling with how we balance the need to the community with this inflated budget.

Mr. Pascucci commented \$17,000 is for the deployment. He indicated we cannot reduce the budget from the overtime line because it is dictated from prior decisions (i.e. the contract recommended by the Budget Committee). He noted it is dependent on the number of officers. Mr. Pascucci commented this number will continue to grow based on decisions made last year and those that will be made this year.

Mrs. Douglas referenced the hours assigned to the sergeants and corporal and asked for the reason for the large increase in hours. Chief O'Brion explained that calls to service are one major reason (i.e. car accidents with serious injuries, domestic investigations, heroin deaths) and a supervisor is needed on duty to ensure things are handled properly.

Mrs. Douglas asked if there was an increase in the number of calls. Chief O'Brion indicated that arrests increased substantially and there have been a number of heroin deaths.

Mr. Keating commented that violent crime in Litchfield is 7.3 per thousand and these men and women do a phenomenal job. He indicated Litchfield is stuck between two major thoroughfares of drug traffic and police need to be able to perform follow up investigation, which can necessitate more officers. Mr. Keating noted drug crimes have increased significantly and we are looking to charge the people that are supplying the drugs, which is an arduous process requiring many man hours. He commented that one can say the numbers have spiked, but society has changed. He indicated there are calls on weekends, so either hire 3 or 4 additional police officers or pay the overtime. He noted the Chief and the department are doing a good job with what they have.

Mr. Cutter commented this meeting is the one he looks forward to the least because he does value the service. He indicated if you look just at the numbers, however, it is a massive spike increase in the budget. He asked if the town would be better served with more officers in the budget and less overtime.

Mr. Keating commented that in years past it was the philosophy to cut someone early in the morning, resulting in one officer patrolling the area, and that is bad business. He indicated you cannot have one officer taking care of all that occurs.

Chief O'Brion provided an example of a burglary call that was received and there was only one officer on duty. He indicated the officer had to call for assistance from another town whose police department did not know where the street was located, all the while the burglary is occurring. He commented it is dangerous for the officer to go on the call alone.

Mr. Keating commented to give the Chief the tools to do his work.

Mr. Bourque asked how many more officers it would take to operate properly. Chief O'Brion indicated he would need two additional officers, but does not believe that would be approved.

Mr. Bourque asked how much overtime would decrease. Mr. Pascucci commented overtime would decrease, but we would be spending more for the additional officers and equipment, which is expanding services.

Mrs. Couture commented before the Committee speculates on whether there is a savings, the Chief needs to do his calculations.

Chief O'Brion commented additional officers give more flexibility to cover shifts.

Mr. Cutter asked if there has been discussion to place additional officers on the warrant. Chief O'Brion indicated there have not been any discussions. He commented the MRI report gives him guidance and direction. He noted with one additional officer you will not see a significant reduction in overtime, but with two additional officers you will see a larger reduction in overtime.

Mr. Pascucci commented if two additional officers will reduce overtime, why put them on the warrant.

Chief O’Brion commented you will not see instant gratification for the new officer as that officer will not be on duty until next October because of training.

Mr. Keating commented that logistically one officer would be the better option at this time. He indicated that although there is a need, we have to put it on the warrant.

Mr. Miller asked how does this major increase affect the budget being approved? He indicated to temper it we have to look at overtime across the whole budget.

Mrs. Couture inquired why the Captain overtime is increasing. Chief O’Brion commented the Captain covers when someone is out or for major crimes.

Overtime Court

Chief O’Brion reported the prosecutor has done a great job keeping overtime down. He commented our arrests currently are at the total of last year’s and we have 2.5 months to go –

Overtime Training

Mrs. Couture commented that current expenditures indicate this account is spending lower than expected. Chief O’Brion indicated that officers are registered in classes and all the money in that account is spent.

Community Detail

Chief O’Brion commented that the increase in this line reflects coverage provided for school events, community events and other community details for which have never been charged.

Contracted Prosecutor Services

Mr. Brown reported the contract has recently been signed and this line has not had an increase for a few years. He indicated the town is trying to get all contracts and insurance policies in line. He noted this contract is for 15 months.

Software Support

Mrs. Couture asked about the increases. Chief O’Brion indicated that this line contains costs for IMC police record management software, WatchCam cruiser video system maintenance, and Nexis legal software.

Child Advocacy Center

Chief O’Brion indicated these professionals provide a valuable service for child victims. He explained there are ways to interview a child victim and these trained professionals wear an ear piece so that police officers or attorneys [in another room] can ask questions.

Dues

Chief O’Brion indicated that the Hillsborough County Chiefs Association and the International Association of Chiefs of Police provide savings of courses for our officers. He commented that they provide notification for trainings directly from the organizations. He noted when you provide training for officers it is a retention tool.

Mrs. Couture asked about the increase in office supplies. Chief O’Brion indicated the amount is based on what we have been spending.

Vehicle Repairs & Maintenance

Mrs. Couture commented there is a significant increase in this line. Chief O’Brion indicated the tire line item is captured in that line.

Mr. Keating asked about non-warranty repairs. Chief O’Brion indicated the warranty is 3 years or 100,000 miles. He commented that two engines were replaced under warranty and one that was not under warranty.

Mr. Cutter commented Uniforms and Accessories have increased. Chief O’Brion indicated two new dispatchers were hired and those items are contractual.

PD Ammunition and Supplies

Chief O’Brion indicated the increase in this line is due to tazer cartridges as the police department is required to actually fire the tazers. Sergeant O’Donahue explained they have to fire two tazer cartridges per year and the cost has increased. He described the ammunition officers carry.

Equipment Purchases

Chief O’Brion commented the increase in this line is due to the purchase of 7 new bulletproof vests. He noted they have a lifespan of five years.

Cruiser Purchase

Chief O’Brion commented if the Budget Committee is interested in 2-1-2 cycle, this is the year to budget for it. He indicated there are four front line cars and they are all under warranty. He explained if we budgeted for two new cars for next year, we could use the car with the lower miles as a supervisory car. He noted with the purchase of two new cars we would increase the fleet from four to five vehicles.

Sergeant O’Donahue explained we rotate our shifts every four months. He commented the midnight shift tends to put less mileage on the cars. He indicated we try to rotate and put different officers in different cars. Sergeant O’Donahue noted they look at the mileage and trending and see where it goes. He commented there are some overlapping shifts and the cars run for several hours. He indicated it would make things more efficient to have that additional car and allow for the vehicles to have more down time.

Chief O’Brion indicated the brand new vehicle that is currently under warranty will be out of warranty in 10 months.

Sergeant O’Donahue commented 126,000 miles on a police vehicle is different from your personal vehicle. Chief O’Brion explained that officers are opening doors, using blinkers, and operating the vehicles all day long. He indicated if repair is needed we have to do it and keep our officers safe.

Mr. Miller asked how rotating the front line vehicles affects the Chief of supervisor vehicle. Chief O’Brion indicated that the cage, radar, weapon system, and storage containers are removed. He noted that some of the cages can only be moved once or twice as they are plastic and degrade.

Mr. Miller suggested it may be possible to swap car 6 with the Chief’s car and keep it under warranty.

Chief O’Brion commented it is cost prohibitive and the down time on those vehicles is three months.

Mr. Cutter agreed that this would be the time to implement the 2-1-2 cycle.

Support Services 4210.5

Chief O’Brion presented the 2017 Proposed Police Support budget in the amount of \$149,458 with a decrease of \$1,594.

Mrs. Couture asked why two dispatchers are budgeted. Chief O’Brion indicated one dispatcher retired and another was hired at a lower rate. He commented Mr. Bennett will fill in for coverage. He noted a State Trooper supervisor dispatcher was hired who provides coverage when others are on vacation.

Mr. Miller asked why dispatchers receive 40 days earned time. Chief O’Brion indicated it is in the labor contract and all days are combined (i.e. vacation, sick, personal).

Mrs. Couture asked about the dispatch service line item. Chief O’Brion indicated coverage is provided by Hillsborough County weekdays from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. and 24 hours on weekends and holidays.

Animal Control 4414.1

Chief O’Brion presented the 2017 Proposed Animal Control budget in the amount of \$15,556 with an increase of \$139.

Mrs. Couture asked if the animal control officer is a police officer. Chief O’Brion indicated he is not a police officer.

Mrs. Couture asked about veterinary services. Chief O’Brion indicated if someone is bitten by a wild animal, that animal has to be taken to Concord to be tested for rabies.

Mrs. Couture asked why pants, shirts and boots were budgeted under supplies. Chief O’Brion indicated the animal control officer has a uniform.

Personnel Administration 4155

Mr. Brown presented the 2017 Proposed Personnel Administration budget in the amount of \$90,289 with an increase of \$17,989. He indicated that short term disability plans will be provided for all employees; social security taxes and medicare taxes are based on current deductions; and as of July 1, 2017 NHRS employer share contribution will increase. He commented the wage plan implementation is included; unemployment and workers compensation are just estimates at this time.

Mr. Miller asked when short term disability begins if an employee starts using it. Mr. Brown indicated the waiting period is 7-8 days and it covers 60% of the employee’s wages.

Mr. Miller asked why longevity was moved to the salary lines. He commented you cannot see the breakdown. He indicated he would like to see the breakdown of longevity across the budget.

Mr. Brown indicated that longevity is budgeted throughout the salaries. Mr. Kevin Bourque indicated that a breakdown would be provided. Mr. Brown noted we can go back into the budget and add the longevity breakdown in the appropriate salary lines.

Mr. Miller asked how many people have reached longevity. Mr. Brown indicated only a handful of employees are receiving longevity.

Mr. Pascucci commented this is a smaller budget than the police budget and has the same percentage increase (approximately 17% or 18%). He indicated it is a lot of money. Mr. Brown commented we can look at the last completed audit and project for year end. He indicated Mr. Pascucci is referring to accrued time.

Mr. Pascucci commented there is nothing this Committee can do about it, but he does not want the Committee to be ignorant of it. He indicated we really owe \$100,000 plus that is not in the budget that we will have to pay. He suggested budgeting for the accrued time.

Mrs. Couture indicated the warrant article for the accrued time failed. Mr. Brown explained we have a Compensation Expendable Trust; however, people retired and we had to pay them what their entitlement.

Mrs. Douglas commented language should be included in the contract that when an employee is approaching retirement and plans to leave they have to provide ample notification.

Mr. Miller suggested working on a policy for advance notice of retirement or employees that are leaving that have accrued time.

Parks and Recreation 4520.1

Mr. Brown presented the 2017 Proposed Parks & Recreation budget in the amount of \$85,339 with an increase of \$5,542. He indicated there is a decrease in custodian wages due to a change in staffing and the ability to use the custodian assigned at the town hall/police station who agreed to work five hours in the recreation budget at a lower rate. He noted that electric costs are based on actuals, propane costs decreased due to a price decrease, the prisoner program will be used for repairs and maintenance, portable toilets are budgeted at actual expenditures, there is a small increase in general supplies, filed maintenance increased due to a new contract, and program expenses increased due directly to the Easter Egg hunt.

Revenues

Mrs. Couture indicated Revenues will be deferred to the October 20 meeting.

- **VOTING : TOWN BUDGET**
 - **Town Budget**

Road Agent 4311.1

There were no changes suggested.

Highways & Streets 4312.1

MOTION: by Mrs. Couture

Move to reduce Line 140, Overtime-Workmen, to \$15,000 for a reduction of \$1,000

SECOND: by Mr. Miller

Mrs. Couture indicated her motion is based on historical spending.

VOTE: 8-1-0

The motion carried.

Mrs. Douglas asked why the Highway Manager's hours increased to 40. Mr. Brown indicated the Highway Manager worked 40 hours per week last year.

Mrs. Douglas commented on Line 380, drivers were paid \$25 per hour last year. Mr. Brown indicated that was the wrong information.

MOTION: by Mr. Miller

Move to reduce Line 635, Vehicle Fuel, to \$10,000 for a reduction of \$1,000

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

Mr. Miller indicated that the decrease would still leave \$2.50 per gallon budgeted.

Mr. Brown commented in talking with fuel suppliers it was mentioned that many towns are looking at locking in prices. He indicated the town pays on a cash basis and suggested it may be time to look at a fixed contract for the next 12 bumps.

Mr. Pascucci commented there are “bumps” every year and it is better to choose one method and be consistent.

VOTE: 9-0-0

The motion carried.

MOTION: by Mr. Miller

Move to reduce Line 686, Salt Purchase, to \$81,000 for a decrease of \$8,199

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

VOTE: 8-1-0

The motion carried.

MOTION: by Mrs. Couture

Move to reduce Line 573, Road Maintenance Improvement, to \$23,000 for a reduction of \$2,000

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

Mrs. Couture indicated she is basing the reduction on historical expenditures.

Mr. Brown indicated this is the line Mr. Pinciario uses for maintenance of unplanned roads and culverts that need to be replaced. He noted these are very important funds and all the money budgeted this year will be used.

Mrs. Couture commented in previous years we have not spent what was budgeted. Mr. Brown indicated he plans to stay on top of the infrastructure.

VOTE: 3-6-0

The motion failed.

Mr. Miller asked about Line 578, Catch Basin Replacement. He commented that currently the expenditures show not much has yet been spent. Mr. Brown indicated more invoices are to be received.

Mr. Miller asked for the typical cost for replacement. Mr. Brown indicated it can cost \$2,500 to rebuild a catch basin.

MOTION: by Mr. Miller

Move to reduce Line 610, Supplies, to \$5,500 for a reduction of \$1,000

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

Mr. Miller indicated the reduction is for mailbox replacement. Mrs. Couture commented that it is notated that the replacement of mailboxes had been included in this line. Mr. Brown indicated \$1,000 has always been budgeted for mailbox replacement. He commented Mr. Pinciario needs more for mailboxes and there is an additional \$1,000 for tools the town does not have for Mr. Pinciario to use for the replacements.

VOTE: 5-4-0

The motion carried.

Information Technology 4150.2

Mrs. Douglas asked about the increase for Police and Fire internet. She commented last year the amount was lower. Mr. Brown indicated these are proposed costs.

Mrs. Douglas commented last year the Police Department cost was \$243 and the Fire Department cost was \$145. She asked if there is a difference between this year and last year.

Mrs. Couture commented that was old information because they are budgeting the same thing.

Mrs. Douglas commented last year a lower amount was budgeted for domain filter services and this year there is an increase. Mr. Brown indicated last year Mr. Brunelle was looking at a 3 year contract with some discount, but this year the town did not go with a 3 year contract. He commented there was much questioning about the contracts last year.

Mr. Miller asked why Cisco maintenance was lower. Mr. Cutter noted that detailed information was sent.

Mrs. Couture commented that the town moved from three hardware vendors to a single vendor. Mr. Miller indicated that is not what the detail states for this line item. He commented it is not very clear detail.

Planning Board 4191.1

There were no changes suggested.

Zoning Board 4191.3

There were no changes suggested.

General Government Buildings 4194.1

MOTION: by Mr. Miller

Move to reduce Line 635, Gasoline, to \$35,000 for a reduction of \$4,375

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

VOTE: 7-2-0

The motion carried.

MOTION: by Mr. Miller

Move to reduce Line 410, Electricity, to \$16,100 for a reduction of \$500

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

VOTE: 7-2-0

The motion carried.

Cemeteries 4195

There were no changes suggested.

Health Agencies 4415

Mr. Brown indicated that Health Agencies will be placed on the warrant.

Fire Hydrants 4220.9

Mrs. Douglas asked how expansion of 42 hydrants will affect the budget. Mr. Brown indicated hydrants installed this fall will be picked up next year.

Mrs. Douglas commented this budget should be enough for one year. Mr. Brown agreed, but added if everything stays the same.

Code Enforcement 4241.2

There were no changes suggested.

Health 4411.1

There were no changes suggested

Conservation 4611.2

There were no changes suggested.

Mr. Brown reported that the tax rate should be set next week and once set, we can start calculating the tax cap. He indicated the Board of Selectmen are working on the default budget as well.

Mr. Pascucci commented he heard the Board of Selectmen discuss that the police budget almost hit the cap. He indicated that is not accurate because the cap is not about dollars.

Mr. Brown commented the cap is not that complicated, but there are many moving parts. He indicated once we know the tax rate, valuation and revenues we will compare it against last year's net appropriation (budget plus warrant articles). He noted the difficult part will be if the budget and warrant articles exceed the tax cap, then it will be the Budget Committee's responsibility to come up with a budget that supports the tax cap.

7. REPORTS

• School District

Mr. Bourque reported that the School Board forwarded the calendar for their budget work session and encouraged the Budget Committee to attend.

- **RSA 32:22; Review of Expenditures**

8. MEMBER INPUT/NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Couture mentioned that she created a school district budget review calendar based on what was forwarded.

Mrs. Couture commented last week there was a discussion about philosophical concerns about where the town is spending money to reallocate. She indicated the Budget Committee's job is to make sure the budget is justified. She recommended if a member has a complaint about a specific account, that member should go to the Board of Selectmen. Mrs. Couture commented if you do not think the dollars are justified, you have the right to vote in the negative; however, if you are philosophically opposed you need to express that to the appropriate board.

Mr. Pascucci believes that is what occurred when the Budget Committee voted to reduce the money out of the Town Clerk/Tax Collector budgets. He commented every explanation is philosophical.

Mr. Cutter commented we are challenging dollars based on what our town needs.

9. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

10. ADJOURN

MOTION: by Mrs. Douglas

Move to adjourn the meeting

SECOND: by Mr. Cutter

VOTE: 9-0-0

The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 pm

Next Meeting: Thursday, October 20, 2016

Recorded by: Michele E. Flynn, Recording Secretary