

**TOWN OF DEERFIELD
MUNICIPAL BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
December 2, 2014
MINUTES**

Call to Order

6:30pm - The meeting was called to order.

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Chairman Verville asked all to rise and pledge allegiance to the Flag.

Moment of Silent Reflection

Roll Call

Present: Kevin Verville, Chairman; Harriet Cady, David Carbone, Karen Cote, Jeff Kelley, Carol Levesque, Fred McGarry and Brendan O'Donnell Members; Maryann Clark, School Board Rep; Andrew Robertson, Select Board Rep

Absent: Jim Spillane, Vice Chair

Also Present: Jan Fois, Finance Director, Penny Touchette, Assessing Department

Approval of Minutes – Tuesday, November 25, 2014

Motion: M. Clark moves to approve the minutes as written

Second: Selectman Robertson

Vote: Yea 10, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Schedule Update

Chairman Verville noted that the second Public Hearing snow date set for January 19th conflicts with Martin Luther King Day. As School and Town Offices are closed on that day he suggested moving the date to January 16th. There were no objections, the meeting schedule will be amended and reposted.

Discussion and Review of the 2015 Town Budget

As context, Chairman Verville spoke that he had researched the CPI and rate of inflation on the Federal Reserve websites. Nationally, inflation is expected to be roughly 1.6% from 2014 to 2015. The Town budget, as presented, represents a 6.9% increase over the same period. The default Town budget would be a 2.8% increase. Should voters approve the 2015 Town budget as presented and all Warrant Articles a 14.6% cost increase over 2014 would be realized. The default budget with all Warrant Articles represents a 10.5% rise. He voiced his concern with the budget as presented, noting that the Committee would have a difficult time convincing voters to approve a 6.9% versus 2.8% increase, and encouraged members to seek areas of savings in order to make the budget more palatable to voters.

Municipal Budget Committee - \$859

Motion: F. McGarry moves the amount of \$859

Second: B. O'Donnell

Discussion: H. Cady asked whether Chairman Verville had changed from the Concord Monitor to the Union Leader for Public Notice postings. Through her work as Supervisor of the Checklist she has found the latter's rates to be much lower and she feels the Union Leader is the paper of general circulation in Deerfield. Chairman Verville has not yet looked into the cost of each, but has no issue with one versus the other. Selectman Robertson noted that the Select Board recommended no changes to this budget as submitted.

Vote: Yea 10, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Revaluation of Property - \$176,708

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves the amount of \$176,708

Second: M. Clark

Discussion: Selectman Robertson described that the large increase over 2014 is in the Contract Appraiser line which reflects a climb from \$55,000 to \$146,025. Increases are also seen in the Part Time Employee, Postage, and Maintenance and Vendors lines. H. Cady has written to Steve Hamilton with the Municipal Assessing Services with questions on this contract and has not yet received a response.

Motion: H. Cady moves to table discussion until Tuesday, December 9th

Second: K. Cote

Vote: Yea 9, Nay 1, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Legal - \$23,572

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves the amount of \$23,572

Second: M. Clark

Discussion: Selectman Robertson spoke that this budget was unchanged from 2014. There is no real way to know what will come before the Town for legal cases. Generally this amount has worked well. H. Cady asked whether there are any pending cases, Selectman Robertson answered no, none that he was aware of.

Vote: Yea 9, Nay 1, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Personnel Administration- \$75,716

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves the amount of \$75,716

Second: M. Clark

Discussion: Selectman Robertson spoke that Performance Pay is the only component of this budget where the Committee could take action the rest is fairly static based on various contracts. H. Cady asked how many employees were covered by this expense. Selectman Robertson referenced the backup materials and J. Foisy specified that it includes 19 Full Time, 25 Part Time, 4 On Call (Highway, Welfare Deputy and two Police) and 29 Stipend employees for a total of 77 employees.

Vote: Yea 9, Nay 1, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Town Hall - \$36,108

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves the amount of \$36,108

Second: M. Clark

Discussion: Selectman Robertson spoke that the primary increases to this budget are seen in the Maintenance line as the Town intends to paint and do work to the shutters as well as service the heating system. The contract for rubbish collection has increased 25%. Selectman Robertson thought there was a need for additional pickups in the contract, while H. Cady recalled conversation that the dumpster was rarely used. Selectman Robertson will clarify with Mark Tibbetts. C. Levesque asked who handled the cleaning at the Hall adding that she feels a more thorough job needs to be done especially in preparation for the 250th Celebrations in 2016. Selectman Robertson responded that the work is done by Mark Tibbetts and the cost would fall under the Government Buildings budget.

J. Kelley referenced the backup materials that included a quote from Therriean Roofing, Selectman Robertson confirmed that the information was in reference to work done on the side entrance of the GBW Building and should be in the Government Buildings portion of the budget.

C. Levesque asked the age of the furnace in the building and whether there are any plans to replace it as it can be noisy and disruptive during meetings. Selectman Robertson answered that it is from the late 80's and that there are no plans at present to replace it.

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves to table discussion until Saturday, December 6th when Mark Tibbetts will be available to answer detailed questions

Second: C. Levesque

Vote: Yea 10, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Cemeteries - \$21,452

Motion: H. Cady moves the amount of \$21,452

Second: Selectman Robertson

Discussion: Selectman Robertson noted the largest increase was \$5,000 to shield the Trust Funds for use in maintenance and care of the cemeteries this year, specifically for tree care. H. Cady feels that the Committee needs to recommend additional funds for the Cemeteries planned care. C. Levesque voiced concern with the inconsistency of maintenance levels between cemeteries. Selectman Robertson agreed to bring the matter up with the Select Board, but added that the Board relies on the recommendations of the Cemetery Commission. If this is the amount the Commission has indicated they need, the Board of Selectmen is careful not to overextend its authority.

Vote: Yea 10, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Motion: H. Cady moves that the Committee recommend to the Select Board a Warrant Article be submitted for 2015 to establish a Cemetery Trust Fund and fund it up to a certain amount each year based on the recommendations of the Cemetery Commission.

Second: C. Levesque

Discussion: Chairman Verville expressed concern with the vague dollar amount associated with the motion. Selectman Robertson encouraged members to speak with the Cemetery Commission regarding their long term planning for the properties in town. H. Cady clarified that the intent of the motion is to formally request that the Select Board speak with the Cemetery Commission to determine if a Warrant Article and addition of a Trust Fund is appropriate.

Vote: Yea 9, Nay 1, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Advertising/Regional Association - \$3,732

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves the amount of \$3,732

Second: M. Clark

Discussion: H. Cady spoke that this is the only Municipal Organization in the State allowed to charge dues and she is increasingly concerned with the lobbying done by this organization for legislation that runs against citizen's issues. J. Kelley concurred with Ms. Cady's statements, though his line of work he routinely sees the lobbying done by the Southern NH Municipal Association and feels it is wrong for citizens to pay for aggressive work at the State House that often does not represent the views of all. Selectman Robertson responded that the Select Board has considered this view, but feels that that the benefits of the legal counsel and training the Town receives as a member outweigh the cost of the dues. He classified it as a calculated exposure the Board feels is appropriate to take at this time. H. Cady countered that she believes much of the same legal advice and workshops would be available through Primex, the Town's Insurance Provider, at no cost.

Chairman Verville asked what percentage of the Associations budget was spent on lobbying efforts and whether the group solicits input from member Towns on legislation. Selectman Robertson did not have an immediate figure relating to the Associations budget, but confirmed that Deerfield is given a list of platform topics and asked for its position. M. Clark confirmed that the NH School Board Association operates in the same way. Chairman Verville asked how often the lobbying of the Association lines up with the votes of the Town, Selectman Robertson could provide no hard figures, but added that the Association solicits input at various points through the Legislative season. J. Kelley expressed that he questions whether it is appropriate for Municipalities to be in the business of hiring lobbyist, adding that with so many members making up the Association, many being larger communities, that it cannot be exclusively representing Deerfield. H. Cady cited a standing RSA providing that public money

cannot be used to lobby on contentious topics and cited several court cases where Municipalities were being challenged for such spending.

B. O'Donnell asked what some examples of the legal services accessed are? Selectman Robertson responded that there have been several instances where, instead of engaging the Town Attorney at a cost of \$120/hour the Select Board has been able to ask questions of the Association's Legal Counsel. He restated that the Board feels the number of times this occurs more than justifies the dues of approximately \$3,700. K. Verville attested that whenever he has sought the advice of the Associations legal counsel the response has been timely and helpful. Selectman Robertson added that, as a member, the Town access many Municipal training sessions in the areas of accounting, trustee of the trust funds, committees, etc. H. Cady spoke that it costs \$135 to attend the annual conference and that as an attendee she found that the people voting on the platform topics are Employees of their respective Towns, not elected officials.

Vote: Yea 7, Nay 3, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Ambulance - \$10,500

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves the amount of \$10,500

Second: M. Clark

Discussion: This is a contractual amount. Selectman Robertson spoke of the excellent services received from Raymond Ambulance. H. Cady asked whether the number of times the ambulance was sent to Town was available, Selectman Robertson answered the Rescue Squad keeps incident records that would include that data, and he will request it of Cynthia McHugh.

Vote: Yea 10, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Animal Control - \$10,922

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves the amount of \$10,922

Second: M. Clark

Discussion: Selectman Robertson spoke that this budget is level funded from 2014 and that Cynthia McHugh is the Town's primary Animal Control Officer.

Vote: Yea 10, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Patriotic Purposes/Memorial Day - \$300

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves the amount of \$300

Second: M. Clark

Discussion: Selectman Robertson spoke that the primary expense in this line is the cost of placing flags on the Veteran's graves on Memorial Day. B. O'Donnell asked why the amount spent for 2014 was \$0, J. Foisy answered that the Town had not received a bill from the Legion. H. Cady asked what the process for picking up the flags was. Selectman Robertson will ask the Cemetery Commission what the typical timeframe is.

Vote: Yea 10, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Heritage Commission - \$600

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves the amount of \$600

Second: M. Clark

Discussion: Selectman Robertson spoke that the Heritage Commission operates its own revolving fund, much like the Parks & Recreation Commission.

Vote: Yea 10, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

250th Anniversary Celebration - \$10,000

Motion: Selectman Robertson

Second: M. Clark

Discussion: Selectman Robertson spoke that the hope is that this amount will not have to be used, the Celebration Committee is optimistic that its fundraising efforts will cover the majority of the costs of the event, however the Select Board felt it prudent to budget this seed money to get the ball rolling and as a fall back in case fundraising is not as successful as hoped. H. Cady asked, if the fundraising reaches \$10,000 and the money is returned to the Town, what becomes of it? Selectman Robertson responded that residents could expect that, short of a Town emergency requiring use of the General Funds that the money would be returned to the tax payers. C. Levesque added that with the 200th Anniversary fundraising efforts were over and above expectations, resulting in additional money being returned to taxpayers.

Vote: Yea 10, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Forestry Commission - \$6

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves the amount of \$6

Second: H. Cady

Discussion: Selectman Robertson updated the Committee that a management project is currently taking place on the Dowst Cate forest that the Board anticipates will generate revenue for the Town. The Select Board is considering putting forward a Warrant Article that would create a fund for proceeds from timber harvests on Town owned land. Chairman Verville asked what has historically been done with the revenue. Selectman Robertson answered that there has not been much harvesting done, in some thirty-five years members could recall only one previous cut. The intent with creating the Fund would be to create a mechanism whereby revenue can be used to offset upfront costs of conducting a survey, creating a landing site and access road, etc. This is based on advice given by the Town's auditing committee. J. Foisy added that establishing a fund would provide a better tool for the Forestry and Conservation Commissions to manage the forest and it is expected the language would include a cap on the amount able to be set aside. Selectman Robertson closed by saying that the harvest is not a commercially driven undertaking, but is being carried out for the health of the forest.

Vote: Yea 10, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Tax Anticipation Note

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves the amount of \$1

Second: M. Clark

Discussion: Selectman Robertson informed the committee that to date more than \$2 million of the tax warrants had been collected for this billing cycle.

Vote: Yea 10, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Supervisor of the Checklist - \$4,837

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves the amount of \$4,837

Second: M. Clark

Discussion: C. Levesque asked about the change in the mileage line from \$0 to \$100. H. Cady responded that multiple trainings for new members have resulted in several trips to Concord. In the previous budget that expense was taken from the Wages and Training/Workshops lines. She added that the Supervisors of the Checklist will be adding a new laptop to the Equipment line. The reduction of the budget from 2014 was contributed to the lack of State and Federal elections being held in 2015.

Vote: Yea 9, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Executive - \$7,461

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves the amount of \$7,461

Second: M. Clark

Discussion: Selectman Robertson referenced the backup materials that show the makeup of this line.

Vote: Yea 10, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Chairman Verville will update the agenda for Saturday's work session and re-post. In advance of that discussion, member Jeff Kelley asked why the Part Time Employee line of the Transfer Station budget was greater than that of the Full Time Employee. J. Foisy answered that the Part Time Employee line included three employees and that the Full Time line is for one person at 20 hours/per week, a percentage of the time Rick Pelletier spends as Supervisor.

School Budget Update None

Old Business None

New Business

Selectman Robertson informed the Committee that the Town Administrator Michael Wright submitted his resignation and the Select Board meeting the previous evening. Jan Foisy will be covering his duties during the interim.

Citizens Comments None

Adjourn:

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves to adjourn the meeting of December 2, 2014

Second: M. Clark

All in Favor – Motion Carries – Meeting Adjourned @ 7:53pm

Next Saturday, December 6th @ 9:00a

The Minutes were Recorded, Transcribed and Respectfully Submitted by Katie Libby.
Pending Approval by the Municipal Budget Committee