

**MINUTES OF THE BUDGET HEARINGS OF MARCH 16, 2013
TOWN HALL – MEETING ROOM #1, 7:00 P.M.**

Present:

Board of Selectmen: Chair Michael O'Donnell, Sarah Hewins, Richard Ward, Helen Marrone, John Franey, Town Administrator Richard LaFond, Office Assistant Diane Scully

Finance Committee: John Cotter, Peggy Wood, Judy Fitzgerald, Andy Cardarelli, Mark Walker, Stephanie Clougherty

8:30 a.m. Robert Tinkham - Board of Health

Tinkham stated: Level service budget; same budget for years with contractual salary increases only. Town Meeting article for Cape Cod Visiting Nurses for \$11K; changed to VNA four years ago, and they have been a tremendous asset. BOH fees have stayed pretty much the same. Success of trash program has hurt the receipts slightly; transfer station loses money at SEMASS because of tipping fees. FinCom asked the impact of a level-funded budget. Tinkham said it would wipe out the operating budget if he had to absorb the union increase. The cost of the sticker is too low; sticker does not even come close to paying for itself. Two years ago the fee went from \$8 to \$10. Tinkham would love to see the Howland program adopted; 520 residents are taking advantage of it, 15-1600 using transfer station. He feels it would be great to get curbside program in town. Franey suggested the town increase the non-resident sticker fee.

Robert Tinkham - Weights & Measures

Tinkham submitted a level dollar budget.

9:00 Tom Walsh – EMS

Walsh explained: Level service budget; the ambulance service brings in more than it expends. There's a general trend of increased ambulance calls, heading towards 17% increase in calls. Budget includes a 3% increase for EMT's and Paramedics which, if approved, will be funded from the Ambulance Fund. Receipts will be sufficient to cover operating expenses. Operating account increased due to increased cost of drugs and advance life support equipment for the first time in 5 years. Cardarelli asked if he had trouble collecting bills. Walsh responded that the problem was addressed last summer when the BOS adopted a collection policy and increased the rates. Revenues are coming in at very good pace, but we haven't seen the full effect of the increase, yet. Through the end of February, he spent over \$10K over previous year. Capital request for \$42K not new equipment; just two existing lease purchases. Wood asked when he'd need to lease another ambulance. Walsh said probably 2018 as he gets 10 to 11 years out of them. Franey noticed difference in length of leases. Walsh explained in 2008 they were able to get a 10 year lease; in 2012 hoped to get 10 year, but John Adams could only get 5 years.

9:15 Gerry Farquharson – Buildings & Grounds

Farquharson explained: Department is comprised of a part-time facilities consultant, 2 full-time custodians, 2 part-time custodians, but the department is struggling since a custodian was laid-off 4 years ago. Complimented his two full time custodians for their actions during the storm in regards to the wells and plowing. No increase for department head; 20-hour summer hire included in budget which he's had for 10 years.

Requesting \$2,500 for a substitute custodian for about 5 weeks a year. Both his full time custodians have 5 weeks of vacation, as well as sick time. The intent is to offer the hours to part-time custodians as needed. LaFond explained that the staff is down 40% with Farquharson working part-time and that he had initially put in for a full time person. Cotter asked about combining services with the school. LaFond said we have an outstanding relationship with the school, but there are some union issues, and the school staff is so slight, it makes it very difficult to share.

Utilities, repair and maintenance costs are up. Operating supplies increasing because cost and transportation have gone up; this line was cut \$5K last year, now requesting to reinstate it.

Capital Outlay requests include \$30K to replace the roof on the older Ambulance Building including the front roof of the old DPW building; \$19.5K to sealcoat and repair the municipal complex; \$4.2K to sealcoat Fire Station 2 parking areas; \$5.6K to sealcoat Fire Station 3 parking areas; \$9.7K to sealcoat the library parking areas; \$36.5K for replacement of HVAC systems at the Police Station; and \$2.8K for tank cleaning at the municipal well. Cotter

asked the consequence of not doing these projects. Farquharson said the most important is the ambulance building, and he wanted to include the other half of the roof at the same time. DPW told him it was time to address the parking lots. He received an estimate for budget purposes for each section, but it will need to be put out to bid. Replacing the air conditioning at the police station has been on the capital plan for last 7 years. 911 system was put in and it has to be cooled; system is too old to carry it. He's proposed replacing 10 ton unit on existing building and putting in a split system. Will have to build an enclosure around the 911 system and dispatch area. Estimated the entire project at \$36K with about \$1,500 for electrical. If we had to do just part, definitely should do 911 area and dispatch; could get by with the other system for another year. Marrone asked if we could reuse this equipment if a new building was built? Farquharson said HVAC should be able to be used somewhere; split systems would be perfect to transfer to ambulance system. Another project is the need for new duct work where the computer systems are. If we don't do any of it; 911 system can overheat. Chief Miksch stated the plans for police station that have already been developed include the current station, so it won't be wasted. This project is high on the Capital Outlay list. Franey feels we should do a Statement of Interest for the police and fire stations. We need to make some kind of effort on the evidence room as it is not properly vented. The State passed a law that some evidence must be saved forever. Tank cleaning at municipal well needs to be done every 5-7 years; DEP asked that we put it on the budget for this year for \$2,800.

Cardarelli questioned the NCWD expense. Farquharson said he wanted to install a well for the irrigation system, but the well company said it wasn't a good idea to disturb the area. Thus, we have to pay NCWD for the water.

10 am – Chief Miksch and Sgt. Duphily – Police Department

Chief Miksch stated that his was a level service budget. Currently no change in salaries other than contractual. Do not currently have a contract, so no COLA increases shown for police. Overtime budget is like snow removal, best guess; already spent \$67K this year due to illness and injury. Miksch's own contract does not provide for an increase. Can't project what the police will get, so it's not appropriate for him to ask yet. Marrone said we got rid of the DARE program, but with increased school violence wonders why she doesn't see any requests for more officers? Miksch said that he was asked for a level budget. Marrone would like to see what it would cost to be able to take care of some of these issues. She asked if it would make a difference in overtime if a new officer was hired. Cotter stated that he went to a meeting at school where a DARE officer and an extra officer for patrolling were discussed. Miksch said a new officer would be \$55K, and the department is only slotted for so many officers; most we ever had was 18. If we want him to request it, he has a plan.

LaFond stated: a number of departments have raised the issue of needing additional help. In case money becomes available, a priority list of restoration of positions should be made including issues that come with it, union considerations, timing for police to recruit and train, etc. Good discussion, but should be done in the context of the whole organization, though police should be the priority. Part of the issue, we're looking at a rock bottom budget just to maintain level services, even with a zero increase for the school. If we weren't projecting to keep money off the table for capital building projects, we could consider it. There's a consensus that there's a need, but it's another discussion for another night.

Ward feels it needs to be studied. LaFond agrees with Miksch that every town is different, and that we need to be careful comparing basic town statistics. LaFond said if we are having a discussion about needs involving the school department, we need to discuss it with the School. Miksch said for the past four years, they've applied for a grant to replace officers, but the grants seem to be going to the cities. Miksch said he did not ask for additional people because he was directed to do level service.

Also, Dispatchers contract provides for a 2% increase, and one dispatcher earned longevity. Training line going up due to planning for two large training sessions for tasers; 8 hrs minimum for everyone in the department.

Cotter stated spending appears less than it should be. Miksch said he spends sparingly until later in the fiscal year in case salaries require some transfer. Officers are given a voucher for uniforms, so by June that line will be wiped out. Miksch said 90% of department needs new vests, and he applied for a reimbursement grant that will pay 50%, so that money will also be spent. Clougherty asked about grant money. Miksch said grants for police are virtually non-existent, but the grant for 911 training is coming, as well as the vest grant.

Articles for capital requests include weapons and gear for \$19K. Looking to purchase Smith and Weapon 45's which were developed for military police and are ambidextrous. He's going in with an estimate for 20 weapons which are purchased off State bid list. Hoping for a trade-in of current weapons. Officers will need a

familiarization period; uses new ammunition. Weapons are 20 years old; most departments replace in 10 years. If he can get bid low enough, he would buy more tasers.

Requesting two cruisers per cruiser replacement program, every 7 years or 155K miles. Two 10 year-old Crown Vics to be retired; one has a possible life span, one will be a parts car. Crown Vic police interceptor utility models are no longer available, thus will have to buy everything new for the new sedans. Can't recycle anything but radios and radar units. Walker said there are 17 vehicles and 15 officers. With officers out, you basically have cars sitting. Miksch explained the cars have specific purposes; out of 17, four are unmarked cars; 13 patrol officers in marked cars. Car replacement program is part of the budget.

Originally requested \$11,500 for new server software and computers, but did not include after talking to Capital Outlay.

10:40 Ellen Blanchard – Assessors

Blanchard stated that staff salaries include contractual increases and longevity only. Blanchard included the Selectmen's sub-committee's recommendation for re-classification of the Director of Assessing position at the direction of the Town Administrator. O'Donnell said that reclassification was not on the days' agendat.

Capital Outlay request for \$30K reduced to \$20K for a new or gently-used vehicle to conduct inspections; feels the current vehicle is dangerous.

11:10 BREAK

11:40 Jean McGillicuddy – Town Clerk

McGillicuddy said the clerical salaries reflect contractual step increases, and she put in 2% for the Town Clerk, which would be taken up at Town Meeting. McGillicuddy: seminar & training is up to send staff member to N.E. Town Clerk association which the new town clerk will need to get certified (applied for scholarship, so it may not be needed); printing costs have gone up; extra \$800 for a new time stamp which is over 10 years old, already repaired once; dues & membership up because if you go to NEMSI, you need to be a member. Passports have been taken over by the Library which is good because revenue stayed in town.

Jean McGillicuddy – Elections

McGillicuddy stated that salaries are up due to extra elections this year; if not used, will be returned to general fund. Town election is April 27th, and the special senate primary is April 30th. McGillicuddy leveled operating expenses as best she could but postage increase necessary for census and absentee voter mailings; operating supplies includes coding of packs for election machines, though State will give back \$1200. She uses senior work-off people during election time whenever possible.

12:05 Bill Halunen & JD Kelly

Halunen explained that the proposed budget is a little higher because of a capital piece of equipment and a wish list for a laborer. All salary increases are contractual. Halunen hasn't been on a step and grade schedule in a few years. Other Professional Services raised \$5K due to increased tree work. Other Purchased Services pays for line painting and police details which are always increasing. Increased food allowance to buy pizza for MCI work crews; expect a lot of cleanup will be needed this year. Requested a laborer due to two retirements last year. Capital Outlay request is to replace one of the one-ton dump trucks, but will keep current vehicle for other uses as long as maintenance is not too high. New one will be used for plowing; old one will be used for trash and chipping. Next year, working on Rt. 58 project, going well with the State, at 75%, maybe by November will be hearing more from them. Need to get temporary easement going, but don't see much more work before it's ready to go out to bid. Also, overlay to do on Tremont Street and Meadow Street in line for pavement. If no more snow, not in too bad shape, currently \$150K over budget. Marrone said that last year Halunen mentioned retiring and said money will be needed for buyout, but she didn't see it in this budget. Halunen responded that he wants to see Rt. 58 project to completion. Cotter said Operating Supplies running under budget. Halunen said the drainage job will include pipes, gravel, cement, road signs, and equipment rentals, so he expects to spend the full budget.

12:25 Carole Julius – Library

Julius stated: most employees at top of their contractual wage scale. The state expects book budget to be 16% of budget. Each year, Julius puts it in the budget (Reference Material), but it is lowered by the Town Administrator. Passport income goes into the revolving funds, and it's used for books to make up the difference. Computer expenses cover just the network: voice notification for holds and overdue material, calls on phone and text messages are all covered by this line item. The library is very busy; 80K people came through the library last year. Julius is amazed at the computer use. Wood asked why the library is closed on both Monday and Saturday on long weekends? Julius explained that she would owe Saturday people comp time which would cause other staffing problems. Trustees decided to close Saturday and holiday Mondays to resolve that situation. Julius would like the Asst. Director/Reference Librarian (a non-union position) to get a small grade increase, so she can take on some supervisory responsibility in the mornings at the library when Julius is at the COA. LaFond said if you ask both boards as to sharing a department head that both the Library Trustees and COA would agree that the situation is working well but the COA would want a little more time from the Director. LaFond feels an increase for the Asst. Director would allow Julius to spend more time with the COA functions and solidify the consolidation of the position.

12:40 pm Carol Julius – COA

Julius: admitted a mistake in her initial budget submission. Karen Gregory's hours increased from 12 hours to 15 hours, but she made a math error. That position has been terrific and the seniors love her. Expenses are pretty much the same. Increase in telephone is the internet line, previously paid from data processing budget. Former Town Accountant John Adams advised that this should reflect in the COA budget thus it appears to be an increase. Marrone asked if the number of seniors was up from that reported last year? Julius said the new census showed about 6,000 thus the Town receives more money from State.

Julius was requesting a new position of Office Assistant to answer phones and produce the newsletter. LaFond said previously there was a full time Director and Administrative Assistant and that he discussed with COA to see what their needs were as they moved forward, so now trying to fill those rather than just replace over \$100,000 in salary without thinking about the needs of the department. Julius said she's not replacing the previous position that was eliminated. This is a new job with a different job description at a lower level. In response to Marrone question about senior volunteers Julius said they already use senior work-off people and volunteers, and senior work-off is a great supplement to what they do.

Fitzgerald asked why the food pantry was no longer open on Saturday. Julius said only two people showed up so it wasn't worth staffing. It is open Tues-Wed-Thurs 9-11am, and the same person is there each day which allows for monitoring. LaFond said the Meals-on-Wheels revolving fund does not pay the bills, and each year John Adams had to do a fund transfer. Everything that comes in goes into the revolving fund, and the entire \$12K will be used. Julius stated that she doesn't think a full time director is the best bang for the buck; but that the new part time help, if approved will help as she needs bodies in the building to do things.

1:10 Chief Weston, Deputy Germaine

Weston provided a simplified power point budget presentation. He stated: that a 2003 report shows only 1.3% of town budget is appropriated to the Fire Department, which is by design; \$37/person is dedicated to Fire. \$11K payroll was expended during storm; normally \$3K is used for storm coverage. They applied for about \$14K in reimbursement, and also a reimbursement for Sandy, but it will not be seen in this fiscal year. The department prides themselves on taking on projects to save the Town money, such as refurbishing an ambulance, and painting of Station 2. This year, there are six grants totaling \$136K. This is a level service budget. Deputy Eric Germaine is still responsible for covering two positions since Deputy Weston retired. Germaine is paid straight time for 45 hours. The Chief's contract does not have an increase this year. The Deputy has a step increase with a three-year phase in. The Firefighter's salary line covers 73 officers and firefighters; don't know each year how much will be required as it is driven by activity. This year is final implementation year of his Wage and Benefit plan. Goal was to get average firefighters pay up to \$16: \$1/yr. for 4 years which is a \$5,000 increase in budget. Committee will continue, but no plans at this point on moving forward. Also, included an overtime increase of \$1K for snowstorms and for dispatcher after 45 hours worked. Full and part time dispatchers are getting a 3% increase. Operating account is up \$3K. The "I Am Responding" system, a tracking system on GPS that allows tracking at the stations, was purchased with a grant. The funding for it is running out, thus need to incorporate it into the budget. Still

holding off on second deputy position. Work is overwhelming, but he hasn't figured out how to fund it yet, thus not moving forward at this time.

The Chief continued: Capital Outlay request for \$44,500 is to replace the command car which is 10 years old. Carver EMS has requested the command car; applied for a grant for \$116K for new fire hoses, etc., but had previously requested \$50K just in case. Another \$50K will be required next year. Weston said they just found out they received the grant, thus he will be pulling that article at town meeting. He praised Germaine and resident Irene Winkler for their hard work on the grant. He will need to ask Town to match 5% from the matching funds account. Also, requested funds through Capital Outlay to rehab water tanker for \$40K as he feels they could get another 10 years out of this tanker.

To date, operating budget is stable, but close; they operate on \$69K. The hurricane, arsonist, and blizzard cost \$20K. A lot will depend on how they get through brushfire season with regard to whether or not he will need additional funds for FY 2013. Weston said he's proud of the department, and appreciates the support they get from the Board and community. Franey commented on the 2003 chart and the fact that the comparison communities may include benefits and retirement plan in their information. Weston pointed that with the Length of Service Program (LOSAP) upon reaching 20 years of service, firefighters receive \$200 a month for life. It's fully funded and a great retention tool. Every year, Weston has been telling the Boards that FY2015 will be the start of replacing the front line engines. The need is there, but need a financial plan to do it. Right now leasing apparatus, but the next 3 trucks are 20 years old. He wants to replace them in order and wants them to be identical; previously, these engines were bought one year apart. Weston is asking for their support and help with a financial plan. LaFond said there's a large chunk of debt falling off in FY 2015 (approx. \$300K) which should present an opportunity for financing.

1:40 pm – Ken Morrison – Veterans

Morrison reported: Veterans' services continues to be able to help the veterans and survivors in the Town of Carver. First page of handout shows annual benefits going back to 2003: \$75K in 2003 to over \$200K in 2013. 2nd page shows veterans benefits for 2013. He expects to ask for \$10K transfer this month or early April, and is expecting a \$27K overrun. Wood feels we should increase his budget request to be more realistic. LaFond agreed to look at it. 75% comes back to the Town through state reimbursement. In 2002, there were 12 clients, now there's 30-32, possibly because the State is publicizing more. O'Donnell feels we're at the tip of the iceberg with Iraq veterans. Cardarelli, asked, and LaFond confirmed, that said if the budget was increased, and not used, it would go back to the general fund. Franey asked what the lag time was with the 75% reimbursement. Morrison said lag time is a year, but every three months the Town gets a disbursement. Franey asked about using a revolving fund and funding the 25%, but he doesn't think any other towns do that.

Morrison's goal before he retires is that the boys and girls scouts placing flags on graves is perpetuated.

Finance Committee motion to continue budget hearings to March 26th; motion approved.

Motion by Franey to put non-binding question on the ballot to lower the CPA tax from 3% to 1%, seconded by Marrone. Hewins asked why non-binding and stated that it has no impact and may only lead to confusion. Ward asked why not just put it on the Town Meeting warrant as that was the proper legal process? Vote 3 in favor, 2 opposed (Hewins & Ward).

Motion to adjourn at 2:10 p.m. by Franey, seconded by Ward. Vote unanimous.