

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

BUDGET COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting – November 27, 2007

Budget Committee members Harvey Goodwin, Lucien Lizotte and Debra Whitney were present. Chairman Goodwin called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m.

The Administrator reported that Brent Paradis submitted his resignation from the Budget Committee due to his winter work schedule. Mr. Paradis expressed interest in serving on the Committee again at a later date. The Moderator is seeking a replacement Budget Committee member.

By invitation, Police Chief Steve Campbell met with the Budget Committee to discuss his proposed 2008 Budget. The majority of the discussion centered on funding for the regional prosecutor. Bennington's share of cost for the regional prosecutor is projected to climb from \$12,913 in 2007 to approximately \$19,872 in 2008. Chief Campbell reported the most recent estimate is \$18,500, although another meeting is scheduled December 4th with Town Officials from Bennington, Antrim and Deering.

At the suggestion of the Board of Selectmen, Chief Campbell added \$2,500 to his Budget for the expansion of the evidence room. The Budget Committee voted to remove this cost from the Police Budget with the expectation that the construction cost would be paid from the Expendable Building Trust Fund.

Also included in the 2008 Police Department Budget is \$2000 for the purchase of imaging software. The expense was deferred from the 2007 Budget. Chief Campbell reported that the Department's computers are three years old.

The Budget Committee voted to table the Police Department Budget until the Committee's joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen.

In his capacity as Emergency Management Director, Steve Campbell introduced the newly created Emergency Management Budget to address natural disasters and homeland security issues. Campbell reported the Town is sorely lacking in emergency supplies, i.e. road closure signs, cones, warning devices, etc. A \$4,000 line-item was created to allow purchasing of the much needed safety supplies. Additionally, a mileage line-item has been created to reimburse personnel for their gasoline expense to attend training – some of which is mandated and other opportunities that are informational. Discussion included the need to inventory the supplies and designate someone to keep track of their whereabouts. The Committee approved the \$4,250 Emergency Management Budget.

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Fire Chief Joe O'Brien met with the Budget Committee by invitation. Chief O'Brien dispensed packets of information to support funding for most fire and medical/rescue line-items. The Fire Chief reported that the Fire Department recently received notice that they are the recipient of a \$33,000 grant for the purchase of ten sets of firefighter gear and a gear washer.

The Chief reported a \$1,474 increase in Fire Mutual Aid Dispatch, a \$500 increase in supplies, \$1,000 increase in training, \$2,500 increase in equipment replacement, \$2,000 increase for radio repairs, \$300 increase in gasoline, \$1,000 increase in vehicle costs, and a \$500 increase in heating oil. Proposed for 2008 is a new \$2,500 line-item for firefighter gear and clothing. Line-items decreased were \$700 in telephone expense since Comcast now provides internet service at no cost, \$8,147 for the radio lease now that the lease has ended, and \$5,000 from computer & software since this was a one-time purchase in 2007. By mutual agreement, \$1,880 was transferred from the radio repair line-item to equipment replacement to adequately reflect the purchase of four new pagers. Included in the vehicle line-item is \$1,500 for the installation of "911 seats" that were purchased for 4M2 in 2005. Chief O'Brien volunteered a \$1,000 reduction in the firefighter gear and clothing line-item. At the conclusion of their meeting, the Budget Committee removed all funding for the gear line-item since the Fire Department is receiving new gear under the grant.

Regarding the Medical/Rescue Budget, proposed increases were as follows: \$500 for medical supplies, \$1,000 for training, \$1,000 for equipment replacement and \$500 for vehicle maintenance. The fuel appropriation was transferred to the Fire Department Budget since fuel for all vehicles is blended into one statement. By mutual agreement, \$700 was cut from the equipment replacement line-item and \$750 was cut from the vehicle maintenance line-item.

Frustration was expressed by all during the review of the Medical/Rescue Budget. As proposed, annual funding for medical scenarios – including the Ambulance Budget – totals \$17,000. Additionally the Town has been funding a capital reserve account for the replacement of the rescue vehicle. The 2009 projected cost for replacement of this vehicle is approximately \$150,000. Finally, those transported by the Antrim Ambulance receive an invoice for the emergency medical services when transported to a medical facility. Chief O'Brien further reported to the Committee that most of the Fire Department's medical equipment/supplies carry expiration dates and are often discarded for this reason, even though not used.

The Budget Committee voted to table the Fire Department and Medical/Rescue Budgets until the Committee's joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen.

The Committee took action on the following Budgets:

- Financial Administration – tabled in the event the audit process is put out to bid.
- Judicial & Legal – tabled until the year-end when a clearer projection can be made.
- Personnel Administration – tabled until 2008 wages have been established by the Selectmen.

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Property/Liability/Bond Insurance – accepted the \$19,500 Budget.
Contingency Fund – tabled until the year-end when a clearer projection can be made.
Ambulance – approved an \$8,000 Budget as recommended by the Town of Antrim.
Red Cross donation request – moved from Emergency Management to a warrant article.
Capital Reserve Funding – accepted the CRF Committee’s Budget of \$142,500.

The Budget Committee reviewed the following Selectmen’s decision regarding establishment of 2008 wages:

Bennington’s base salary increase, otherwise known as COLA, would be set at 1.5%.

Merit would be based upon 0.5% increase per Merit Level, and added to the base salary increase. Level 0 being the lowest and Level 3 being the highest.

0 = 0.0%
1 = 0.5%
2 = 1.0%
3 = 1.5%

The Committee expressed appreciation for the concept developed and unanimously voted to accept the wage formula.

Minutes of the November 6, 2007 Budget Committee meeting were reviewed and approved subject to one amendment. Page 1, add *TABLED* after Judicial & Legal Expense.

The meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Denise French
Town Administrator