

TOWN OF WISCASSET  
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
February 21, 2008

The meeting was called to order by Chair Steve Mehrl at 6:30 PM at the Wiscasset Community Center.

Budget committee Members in attendance: Chairman Steve Mehrl, Judith Colby, Sherri Dunbar, Pamela Dunning, and Robert Fairfield Sr. Members absent were George Greene, Richard Hanson, Karl Tarbox and Tony True.

Chair Steve Mehrl went over the key points on the agenda. Acceptance of the agenda for the meeting was moved by Pamela Dunning, seconded by Judith Colby. Motion passed 5-0.

Chair Steve Mehrl introduced Office of Planning and Codes head, Jeffrey Hinderliter. Jeffrey passed out copies of the budgets and revenues for the office of Planning and Development and the office of and Code Enforcement.

Jeffrey decided to talk first about the budget for Planning and Development and his responsibilities connected to that position. Some of Jeffries duties include working on, Planning Board, Shellfish Conservation, Comprehensive Planning, Ordinance Review Committee, ad hoc committee on Historic Preservation, Waterfront Committee, as well as other duties. Jeffrey said that he may some day outgrow this position or he may remain but that the position should continue to exist. An employee needs to be in place to maintain, oversee, and implement the plans that are developed in these areas.

Jeffrey explained that although he received a raise this year, he has managed to practically flat fund his budget this year. He did this by not taking mileage or town retirement and by cutting telephone, printing, books & publications, postage, gen. supplies, office supplies, training , meetings, and food item lines.

During discussion about these line items, Jeffrey explained the line item 30-08 Contracted personnel. This line item would in part fund mapping the town of Wiscasset.

Jeffrey stated that he since he has been since was hired and he consolidated the positions of Planning and Development and Code Enforcement, the town has saved about \$100,000 a year by combining these positions.

Jeffrey explained the revenues involved with this position. He stated that although the budget projects a \$7,500 revenue from the planning board line, he did not anticipate the actual revenue as being near that amount. The amount from 2007 budget year was \$829,46, which is a more realistic amount. He further went on to explain that there are many things in the works that may impact this line item. Commercial development at the industrial park, storage buildings, an anticipated building project at the corner of Rt 1 and Old Bath Road, and projects at the Mason Station could all bring in additional revenue. There are also many approved residential sub-divisions that could generate a revenue in the near future.

Jeffrey talked about the high rate for building permits compared to the services provided. Wiscasset's fee for building permits are much higher than other towns of comparable size. This high cost may directly impact the number of people and businesses who decide to build here. The way to change the rate of fees charged is by rewriting the town ordinance that governs this and letting the public vote on the ordinance change.

At this point, Jeffrey began to talk about the budget for the office of Code Enforcement. This budget covers the expenses for a code enforcement office and plumbing inspector. Jeffrey explained that the personnel part of the salary is already at 78% spent with only 59% of the year past. He will keep this budget balanced by taking on some more of this work himself and using the part-time personnel less. Jeffrey explained that he has talked with the Town of Woolwich about the possibility of sharing a code enforcement officer in order to cut expenses.

Jeffrey talked about the line item 30-05 Recording fees may not be needed on the budget. This is the state percentage of fees (about 25% of collected plumbing fees.)

Jeffrey invited members of the budget committee to come to his office alone or collectively for any questions they would like to ask.

Chair Steve Mehrl thanked Jeffrey for coming in and educating members of the budget committee and helping us gain understanding about his cost centers.

Wiscasset Community Center (WCC) director, Todd Sousa joined the budget committee members to discuss the plans for the WCC.

Todd began by talking about the extra work that the WCC has undertaken for the Town of Wiscasset. WCC assists with the upkeep of the lawns and grounds at all fields, parks, municipal building, art gallery, and waterfront as well as its own property. This added work and its expense needs to be kept in mind when examining the WCC budget.

Todd spoke about the importance of keeping staff and avoiding the hassles and expense of staff turn-over and training new staff.

Todd has several plans for capital improvements. They are described briefly as follows:

- New easily maintained website that will keep members alerted to programs, schedules, and events.
- Solar Heating project that would save the WCC approximately 30% of their water heating costs (around \$27,000.) Todd explained that there may be state and federal grant money available. The total project would cost \$296,000, with 199,850 raised locally. This could be paid in full from the town's reserve account, a loan with payments made with money from the reserve account, or a loan paid by money raised for the WCC budget each year that is offset by the amount saved from reduced oil costs.
- Resident membership plan that would give a free membership to all Wiscasset residents. WCC raises approximately \$100,000 from resident membership fees. This revenue could be raised through taxation instead. Free membership would increase

- local access to the WCC. New members may buy more programs thus increasing revenues.
- Friends of WCC group could be formed with active members. Members would be asked to use their areas of expertise and their knowledge and talents to assist the WCC in raising funds, running programs, and generally being useful wherever the need arises.
  - New lockers for the changing rooms are needed. The old lockers are made of a particle board. Many are broken and are falling into disrepair. The new lockers are made of plastic panels that are easy to repair and clean and would come with a 15 year warranty. There would be 54 – 70 lockers in each of the two changing rooms. The cost would be \$39,000.
  - Endowment fund could be built to help fund the WCC. An endowment fund would give the public a place to donate that would ensure them that the money given stays within the WCC. There is \$1,400,000 in the Wiscasset reserve account that was labeled as Community Center Building Fund. Todd would like to see the people of Wiscasset vote to give this money to the WCC as the basis of the endowment fund. Policy would have to be written on handling the fund so only a percentage of the interest may be used with the rest staying in the fund to continually benefit the WCC.

There was a discussion about the importance of the WCC to send articles to the local press that would educate the public to the work they do for the town, the programs offered at the WCC and the plans for capital improvements. Todd agreed that a series of brief articles would probably be useful.

Todd spoke about the need to replace the pool filters. Chair Steve Mehrl pointed out that replacing existing equipment needed to be under maintenance and not added to capital improvements. The expense of the replacement would be \$1,800.

Todd talked about some of the energy efficiency measures the WCC has already put in place. WCC has updated the lights, heating system controls, and lowered the pool temperature in order to cut expenses.

Chair Steve Mehrl thanked Todd for helping the budget committee understand the workings of the WCC cost center.

Having no further business, Pamela Dunning made the motion to close the meeting. Motion was seconded by Sherri Dunbar. Motion passed 5-0. Meeting closed at 9:02 PM.

The next meetings of the Budget Committee is set for Wednesday, February 27 and Thursday, February 28 at 6:30 pm at the Municipal Building.

Respectfully submitted by Pamela Dunning.