

WISCASSET BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
AND BUDGET COMMITTEE  
MINUTES, APRIL 14, 2009

Present: Selectmen Bill Curtis, Bob Fairfield, Chairman David Nichols and Nicole Viele; Budget Committee Members Judy Colby, Sheri Dunbar, Pam Dunning, Judy Flanagan, George Greene, Dick Hanson, Chairman Steve Mehrl and Greg Shea; and Town Manager Arthur Faucher

David Nichols called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Question 4: Steve Mehrl asked whether the selectmen would consider reducing the salary for the Code Enforcement Officer by \$11,188 to \$31,000 and contract out the position. The current salary is based on 20 hours per week for nine months of the year and five hours per week for the three winter months. Jim George said the position is part of the collective bargaining agreement and could not be contracted out. The item was tabled until it could be determined whether it could be contracted out.

Question 5: Steve Mehrl asked whether the engineering/consultants budget could be reduced. Nicole Viele said that Sue Varney had estimated that \$16,000 was needed for this line item and this should not be reduced.

Question 6: Steve Mehrl asked that the wording be changed to include \$5,000 for the 250th anniversary.

David Nichols said questions on the Highway, Transfer Station and Community Center would not be voted on until five selectmen were available (DiVece was absent).

Question 11: Pam Dunning said that a full-time employee needed to be added to the Highway Department. The department is shorthanded, and morale is low. Judy Colby added that an employee was taken from the Highway Department and he should be replaced. Steve Mehrl asked that the budget be increased from \$163,000 to \$190,000.

Question 16: Steve Mehrl asked that this item be revisited, as \$150,000 limits maintenance of town infrastructure. He said he would show where cuts could be made to increase this item. Judy Flanagan expressed concern and asked if the town could afford not to do maintenance. She said the maintenance and capital improvement budgets had decreased year after year and it would cost more in the long run if maintenance was not done every year. David Nichols said the state would be redoing Birch Point Road this year and there was nothing that couldn't wait a year.

Question 18: The Budget Committee was concerned with the cost of the generator and asked whether a 40kw generator was overkill. Roland Abbott explained the generator would supply power for the entire building, Police, Fire, Ambulance departments as well as the town offices in an emergency during a power failure. In a three-year period, the peak usage of the electricity was 37.5 kw/hours on a single day. Discussion included the possibility of purchasing a portable generator that could be used at the community center as well, the fact that the town communications center was backup for the county communications center, the usage of the building as a warming center, whether the office could do without power in an emergency and whether it was necessary to buy a

40kw generator when the peak usage was 37.5 kw on only one day during a three year period.

Steve Mehrl said that some of the details on the revenue sheet for enterprise accounts were misleading and gave as an example the waterfront and harbor budget where the difference between the revenues and the budget was what was needed from the surplus or fund balance. He said some of these accounts were unsustainable and the budget detail skewed the numbers. Nicole Viele asked why gross budgeting wasn't used instead of enterprise accounts. She said that if revenues were not sufficient, departments must cut costs.

Question 20: The airport budget was discussed and Erv Deck, Airport Manager, said that anticipated revenue for 2009-2010 was \$55,000; the warrant appropriates \$58,833. He said the difference of \$3,833 had in the past been funded by the fund balance or surplus. This amount would have to be raised and appropriated. The pros and cons of gross budgeting were discussed. David Nichols said that using gross budgeting would be giving the departments a blank check and they would have no incentive to raise revenues on their own. Judy Colby said that the departments should have to manage within their budgets, so that surplus wouldn't have to be used to make up any shortfall. Becky Applin said that the auditors had advised having no enterprise accounts and that gross budgeting was easier to understand.

Steve Mehrl asked that there be a statement on the warrant giving the amount the airport anticipates raising. He also asked that Question 20 be rewritten to indicate that raising and appropriating \$22,000 is property tax to the Town as opposed to the excise tax, which goes to the airport.

Becky Applin asked that she and Jim George have an opportunity to look at the drafts and to have them reviewed by the auditors and David Nichols agreed to the request.

Question 22: Todd Souza corrected the numbers in this question so that it should read, "Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate an amount of \$274,390 for the Parks & Recreation Department budget; and appropriate the sum of \$470,000, which the department will earn from recreation programs, fundraising and sport services?"

Question 24: Steve Mehrl said the Budget Committee recommended no funds be raised and appropriated for Waterfront and Harbors. He said the department expenses were approximately \$40,000 per year; but 150 to 200% of expenses had been raised for many years and the department currently has \$110,683. The annual report shows this money has been carried over in previous years and has not been put back into the general fund. Treasurer Jim George said that as this was set up as an Enterprise Account, the money would stay with that account. David Nichols said the amount in the budget, \$58,767, should be only appropriated, not raised and appropriated. Steve Mehrl said the Budget Committee recommended appropriating only.

Question 21: In response to Steve Mehrl's question, Buck Rines said that as of February 27, 2009, receipts at the Wastewater Treatment Plant were \$228,862, and he expected more funds would be coming in. In response to Steve Mehrl's question regarding impact fees, Becky Applin said that by statute impact fees must be segregated and used for only certain purposes. Buck Rines said he indicates to the office which bills should be paid from impact fees. He added that he did not use impact fees for the pump

station replacement because it would have left the account with no funds for emergencies.

Steve Mehrl asked where the impact fees from Maine Yankee go. He said Maine Yankee had paid \$139,499 this year. Jim George explained this was the difference between what the town would have collected based on the assessed value of the property and what the town actually received. Steve Mehrl asked for clarification on what this money represents and whether it goes into the general fund.

Greg Shea recommended that the wording for the enterprise account articles be consistent and show the amount is being raised, the amount be appropriated and the total amount.

Judy Flanagan said that because of increased costs, the grant the Fire Department received did not cover the cost of the equipment planned in the current year's budget process. Arthur Faucher said that the matching funds for the grant would come out of the current budget and there will be a reduction in the equipment purchase so no funds will be needed in the 2009-2010 budget. Steve Mehrl asked that the town manager verify this with the fire chief.

Becky Applin asked again that the selectmen have the auditors look at the warrant, particularly the waterfront question, as the only amount in their budget in reference to the grant should be the matching funds.

In response to Dick Hanson's question, David Nichols said the board could not estimate the mill rate at this time. Hanson recommended having Town Meeting after the books are totaled and tax rate set, so that people would be more comfortable with what they were voting on.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.