

Town of Gilford
Budget Committee's Public Hearing
1/18/2005 7:00pm

Members Present: Richard Hickok, Chairman, Sue Greene, Phyllis Corrigan, Bill Phillips, Diana Goodhue, Sean Murphy, Connie Grant, Bob Brent, Dennis Doten, Derek Tomlinson, John O'Brien.

Members absent: Don Sibson

The meeting began at 7:00 and after the pledge of allegiance the Chairman reviewed the handouts and summary sheets. He was asked to review the process and the make up of the Budget Committee. A request was made for a summary sheet showing any one-time expenses for 2005. A question was asked to determine if outside agencies had an opportunity to present to the BC. Dick Hickok answered that the BC thoroughly reviews the requests because the membership is generally opposed to supporting these organizations through property taxes. It was noted that the Thompson Ames Historical request is being recommended by the BC for one additional year. Doug Lambert specifically informed the BC that he is opposed to funding the Historical Society. There was a discussion regarding the preparation of the default budget and the philosophy behind it.

Dick Campbell explained his thoughts on the airport authority contribution and questioned what it was to be used for. Russ Dumais provided historical information about the airport, and clarified that the \$10000 will be used for specific capital improvements. Several pilots spoke in favor of the funding and several taxpayers voiced their opposition.

The Chairman then reviewed the budget handout, reading the Budget Committee's recommendations and asking if there were any questions on each.

The Appraisal budget prompted a significant discussion of assessed values, the tax rate setting process, and the level of spending by the Town government. Taxpayers were advised to call the Appraisal Office if they have specific questions about their assessments. When asked if this budget allowed enough money to correct the assessed values, Selectman O'Rourke answered that the Board would be monitoring the situation more closely this year. Interim Administrator, Evans Juris, informed the audience that a series of press releases are scheduled to be printed and explained the state certification process that has been going on. He also explained the Selectmen's intention of holding a couple of meetings with the Assessor for the taxpayers to ask questions.

There was some discussion of the Rowe House, and why the need for a new boiler, and who's responsibility it is.

Dick Hickok pointed out an error in the handouts, the BC did not reduce the amount requested for Cemeteries.

There were questions about the reclassification of DPW wages and Sheldon Morgan, DPW Director, explained the increase in part time wages.

The Lakes Business Park was discussed. There were questions about the occupancy status and if any revenues have been generated to date.

Doug Lambert asked if the dog for the K-9 program would ruin a police cruiser. Chief Juris briefly explained the program and the benefits of having a dog available. An old cruiser would be used for the K-9 and would not be able to be used by any other department after that. Bill Akerley spoke in support of the program.

The default budget was reviewed. Dick Campbell noted how close the default budget is to the BC's recommendation. He suggested that it should be much lower. Several other comments were made on the default budget:

- § It ought to be a hardship
- § A lot of time has been spent to develop the default budgets
- § It may be close because the 2005 requests are lean
- § A message needs to be sent

A taxpayer specifically objected to dental insurance as an employee benefit. An observation was made that the Town shouldn't have to borrow money. The capital cost assessment will be billed during the coming year.

The warrant articles were reviewed. The sewer fund and the Gunstock Acres Village Water District budgets were reviewed.

Kinney O'Rourke answered questions about the Town wage policies.

At 9:20 the School district handouts were reviewed. The school employee's benefits were explained by Scott Isabelle, Asst Superintendent for Business. The following issues and comments were discussed:

- § 10% budget increase is too high
- § unhappy with test scores
- § transportation costs are too high
- § justification of the School Board Costs
- § Meadows property
- § Compare school's summer programs to parks & recreation programs

The Chairman read through the BC recommendations for the school district budget and asked if there were any questions. He explained the recommendation to reduce the Tech Ed budget by \$20000. Doug Lambert questioned why students need to be called away from academic instruction to learn to make tile. The question was answered by an explanation that the field trip was funded by the PTA.

The cost per student in Gilford was determined to be \$10600 as compared to the average, statewide cost of \$7800.

The audience was informed that the full cost of the new lawn mower would be donated to the school district.

The district's warrant articles and default budget were reviewed and the "one time expenditures" were noted by Scott Isabelle.

The budget hearing was adjourned at 10:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra A Shackett, Finance Director