

GILFORD BUDGET COMMITTEE MINUTES
November 14, 2006
6:30 p.m.
Gilford High School
Lecture Rooms A & B

Members Present: Doug Lambert, John O'Brien, Bob Brent, Dick Hickok, Bill Phillips, Paul Blandford, Sean Murphy, Connie Grant, Sue Greene, Skip Murphy and Phyllis Corrigan.

Also in attendance were Town Administrator Evans Juris, Assistant Town Administrator Debra Shackett and Administrative Secretary Sandra Bailey.

The Budget Committee recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Hickok began the meeting by stating that recommendations would be made for the Parks and Recreation, Department of Planning and Land Use and Town Clerk/Tax Collector budgets, followed by a presentation of the working group review on Technology and Administration. Mr. Hickok also indicated that he would give members of the public an opportunity for input at the end of the meeting.

Phyllis Corrigan moved to recommend \$223,151.50 for the Parks and Recreation Budget. Bob Brent seconded. Mrs. Corrigan then proceeded to provide a brief explanation of why the amount is different from the Board of Selectmen's recommended amount. She pointed out that the total budget amount is higher, due to recommending that one full-time position be changed to two (2) part-time positions, eliminating any benefits, which are in the Personnel Administration budget.

Doug Lambert moved to reduce the Parks and Recreation Budget by \$20,410 as follows:

Cross Country Ski Program	\$1,200
Downhill Ski Program	\$4,500
Red Sox Trip	\$3,360
Professional Training Conferences	\$2,850
Tennis & Basketball Court Resurfacing	\$8,500

Bob Brent seconded. Mr. Lambert then elaborated on the proposed reductions, stating that they will not make a large impact on the Parks and Recreation programs, but will save money for taxpayers. He cited the tennis and basketball courts as examples of projects that could be postponed. Bill Phillips also suggested some further reductions under Professional Development.

John O'Brien pointed out that the three programs suggested to be cut by Mr. Lambert do generate revenue. Doug Lambert replied that he understands this but would still like to make some bottom line cuts. More discussion ensued on training and liability issues with the tennis and basketball courts. Phyllis Corrigan also pointed out that the Sub-committee did not have any issues with the items Mr. Lambert suggested eliminating. Bob Brent also stated that upkeep is important in protecting the Town's investment, such as with the tennis and basketball courts.

Skip Murphy spoke against using Town funds for a skiing program. Recreation Director Herb Greene did provide some additional information on the ski program enrollment. Doug Lambert complimented Director Greene for his excellent presentation last week, but he feels that he must work for taxpayer relief. A brief question and answer period followed on various recreation programs.

A vote on Mr. Lambert's amendment failed on a voice vote. Phyllis Corrigan stated that her original figure needs to have \$250 deducted from it to reflect cutting one of the garden carts. After further discussion, Assistant Town Administrator Shackett stated that the current figure to be voted on is \$222,745. Phyllis Corrigan moved to recommend \$222,345 for the Parks and Recreation budget, which includes a further reduction under Membership (\$400). Bob Brent seconded. Motion carried by voice vote. Three were opposed.

Bob Brent then moved to recommend \$215,713 for the Department of Planning and Land Use Budget. Phyllis Corrigan seconded. Bob Brent did provide a brief explanation of the budget and feels that it is very straight forward. Doug Lambert indicated that he will vote in favor of this budget, which has a 3.88% increase. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Sean Murphy moved to recommend \$209,115 for the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's Budget. Bob Brent seconded. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

The next item to be discussed was the proposed vault shelving in the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's office, under Capital Outlay. Doug Lambert expressed concern with the cost of the shelving, as well as the need for it. John O'Brien asked Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector Jenn Mooney if there was any word on the grant that was applied for. She stated that the results would not be known until January. Skip Murphy suggested changing to an electronic version of Town records to be stored at another location, which prompted further discussion. Bill Phillips expressed concern that the Town Clerk/Tax Collector would lose control of Town records if they are stored at another site. Jenn Mooney briefly elaborated on safety concerns and preservation of records.

Sean Murphy moved to recommend \$23,475 for vault shelving in the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's office. Bill Phillips seconded. Motion carried by voice vote. A show of hands indicated two (2) opposed.

Under Capital Outlay, Bob Brent moved to recommend \$20,000 under GIS. Doug Lambert seconded. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

DPLU Director John Ayer reminded the Committee that they must also vote on the Conservation Commission Budget. He also pointed out that members of the Conservation Commission were in the audience to make explanations or answer questions. Since the Selectmen's 2007 Conservation Commission Budget is \$1,300, discussion ensued on the matter of reinstating \$2,500 for the water sampling kit. Both John Goodhue and Lee Duncan, Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of the Conservation Commission, spoke to the issue of water quality. They also advised the Committee that Pat Tarpey of the North Country Resource Conservation and Development Area Council was in attendance to provide more information on the water sampling kit. Several questions were asked and answered by Ms. Tarpey for the Budget Committee. Discussion revolved around the economic importance of Lake Winnepesaukee to the region.

Bob Brent moved to recommend \$3,800 for Conservation Commission, reinstating the \$2,500 for the water sampling kit. Doug Lambert seconded. Motion carried by voice vote. Connie Grant voted no.

Skip Murphy provided his recommendations for the Technology Budget. He pointed out that the 2007 budget is down 22% from 2006. He advocated adequate training in this department and shared some other concerns, including the workload and resumption of the Problem Tracking System. Doug Lambert indicated that he had confidence with Skip Murphy's assessment.

Chairman Hickok stated that the review of the Administrative Budget would be next. Before beginning the review, he recognized Town Administrator Juris, who read from a prepared statement that he also passed out to Budget Committee members. In his statement, Mr. Juris advised the Budget Committee that the Board of Selectmen has voted to discontinue their current COLA policy, but they stand by the employee benefit package and existing wage scale.

John O'Brien was spokesperson for the Administrative Sub-committee. He provided Committee members with a three-page handout of notes and recommendations and proceeded to review them. Under Capital Outlay, Doug Lambert asked for an explanation of Compensated Absences. Assistant Town Administrator Shackett provided this explanation, including the liability factor of carrying so much unused sick and vacation time. Dick Hickok brought up the issue of the low employee contribution for health insurance.

Bob Brent stated that he asked for a dollar change in the budget and the Board of Selectmen has responded with a policy change resulting in a \$55,000 reduction. He thanked the Board of Selectmen for their effort. Assistant Town Administrator Shackett also pointed out that a savings of \$65,000 would be applied under Health Insurance, since the guaranteed rate came in much lower than originally expected. Doug Lambert stated that he feels that the Board's discontinuance of the COLA policy brings them very close to the proposal made by Bob Brent. More discussion ensued on the matter of dealing with salaries long-term. Skip Murphy feels that wages are still too high.

Extensive discussion ensued on health insurance. Doug Lambert suggested a larger employee contribution. John O'Brien suggested a larger co-payment, which would be a less drastic step. Bob Brent reiterated his position that he is satisfied with the Board's new policy and Chairman Hickok agreed.

Chairman Hickok then opened the meeting for public input. Ronnie Bean asked for clarification of the performance based increase. Mr. Bean thinks that the employee should contribute more towards health insurance. Terry Stewart also explained his personal situation where his pay has been reduced due to health insurance. Jim Cookman does not feel that taxpayers should have to pay for their own health insurance, as well as that of Town employees.

More discussion ensued on the matter of Skip Murphy's salary comparison data and his wage deceleration plan. Chairman Hickok suggested that, if the Budget Committee were to agree with the deceleration plan, a letter be written to the Board of Selectmen making the recommendation.

Phyllis Corrigan feels that more needs to be done. Bob Brent stated that the Board of Selectmen has taken a pro-active position and it is important for employees to have a "soft landing".

The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p. m. The next Budget Committee meeting will be Tuesday, November 21, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. at Gilford High School, Lecture Rooms A & B.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra J. Bailey
Administrative Secretary