

GILFORD BUDGET COMMITTEE MINUTES
TOWN PUBLIC HEARING
January 15, 2008
6:30 p.m.
Gilford High School Auditorium

Members Present: John O'Brien, Bob Brent, Sue Greene, Dick Hickok, Margo Weeks, Gus Benavides, Dale Dormody, Terry Stewart, Phyllis Corrigan, Skip Murphy and Doug Lambert

Members Absent: Bill Phillips

Also in attendance were Town Administrator Evans Juris, Assistant Town Administrator Debra Shackett and Recording Secretary Melinda Ferreira. The audience consisted of about two dozen taxpayers and Town Hall staff.

Dick Hickok called the meeting to order at 6:30pm, led the Pledge of Allegiance, welcomed attendees and had the Budget Committee introduce themselves. He outlined the purpose of the meeting which was to invite the public's input on the proposed budget for the Town and stated that everyone should have picked up a proposed budget & summary handout as they entered the auditorium. He then stated while everyone was permitted to speak, the intent was to listen to the public and take that into consideration for the upcoming Budget Committee meeting on Thursday and Deliberative Session on February 4th. The rules of conduct were reviewed, noting a five minute time limit with follow-up comments only after everyone else had an opportunity to speak. Civility and politeness was advised. Audience members addressing the Committee were asked to identify themselves, but in instances where such identification was absent or unintelligible, that individual is referred to below as 'the audience'.

Chairman Hickok then began a review of the public hearing handout, noting the Budget Analysis which showed a 3% increase over last year, Summary of Selectmen and Budget Committee changes, Revenue Report, Warrant Articles, Default Budget, and Water District Budget as well as the Budget itself. He then opened the floor to questions from the audience.

One member of the audience asked if the ambulance in Warrant Article #29 was recommended by the Committee to which Chairman Hickok replied it was.

Joe Hoffman then spoke of his thoughts on the 'Legal Expenses' line items, stating his belief that the Town should not have the same Town Counsel since 1972 and that his opinion was that using Mitchell & Bates Law Firm required a Town vote. He voiced his issue with Walter Mitchell being a member of the Winnepesaukee Yacht Club and proceeded to talk of 'permitted uses' on the said Club's Varney Point lot that looked like a 'junkyard'. He added that the law firm and certain Town staff should all be removed. Mr. Hoffman also stated his notion that the Library warrant article was defective. Lastly, he inquired as to why there was no list of outside vendors used by the Town. Assistant Town Administrator Shackett replied they were listed on the Town website. Chairman Hickok informed Mr. Hoffman his time limit was up, and while he was welcome to have his view, and may have a valid issue with the Board of Selectmen's office, the Budget Committee did not have any authority over many of his issues.

Robert Kammeraad, Library Trustee, inquired as to why the Budget Committee was not in favor of the Library warrant article. Chairman Hickok informed the audience that the

recommendation failed 7 to 4 due to the general feeling that the future proceeds from the sale of the unused land should go back to the Town general fund.

Pat Labonte opposed the article and noted he thought the money from the sale should also go back to the voters in the general fund, stating it was in a RSA and that taxpayers would have to vote on it.

Bill Seed, Library Trustee and Chair of the Library Building Committee asked the Budget Committee to change its' position on the article; stating he was trying to give the Town a library with the lowest maintenance costs so as to save the taxpayers money in the long run. He affirmed that the geo thermal heating/cooling system was being funded with private donated funds, adding that the cost to heat/cool an average home ran \$1.21sqft versus .49csqft with geo thermal. He also explained that a new piece of land was used for the Library because the prior piece contained wetlands and required much more site work, versus the piece now being used which had better sandy soils and site costs were much lower for a better piece of property closer to the Village area. Bill Seed went on to pronounce that he thought the funds should go back to the Library for funding the move, equipment and so on and was troubled that the Budget Committee did not recommend the article.

Richard Campbell inquired as to whether the Library article was premature and didn't quite understand the geo thermal system.

Katherine Dormody, Library Director, explained the Library Capital Reserve Fund was started in 1999 for the sole purpose of building a new Library.

Robert Kammeraad described the geo thermal advantages to the Budget Committee and audience present; while another member of the audience stated the present Library site was not available at the time the first lot was acquired.

Bill Seed warned that not supporting the warrant article would set a dangerous precedent, noting townspeople would be less likely to give in the future.

Betty, an employee at the Library, alleged in the early 1990's, the Board or Selectmen had recognized a need for a new Library and had wanted to push up the building date back then. She invited the Committee to the Library to see what's going on.

Ron Dudley spoke to commend the Board of Selectmen and the Budget Committee for putting items in as warrant articles so that voters could decide upon them. He wondered if more warrant articles could be done in the future. Chairman Hickok replies 'yes', which is why the outside agencies had a warrant article this year.

Louis Bastille identified herself and introduced Ryan B. of the Lakes Region Community Child & Family Services to inform those present of what they did for the community. He confirmed they serviced 72 Gilford residents this past year and provided adolescent substance abuse treatment services at costs of about \$30,000, with the Town contributing \$3,000 last year. Chairman Hickok explained that it was not the programs that the Committee was against, it was just the fundamental concept of using taxpayers' funds to contribute what the Committee believed should be private donations.

Richard Campbell commented that the Capital Reserve Funds do have a place to smooth out the spikes in the taxes, but that they put a burden on people who are in Town now and may not

benefit from the funds in a few years.

John Goodhue agreed with Ron Dudley, adding that the dock repairs in Article 15 should've already been completed. He declared it was the only public dock in Town and is a safety hazard. Moreover, if anyone got hurt and sued the Town, it would only increase the legal fees.

Ron Dudley commented that he did not want Gilford to end up like Laconia whereas the Town would get behind in maintenance and then there would not be enough funds to make necessary capital project repairs throughout Town. He stated the Town could afford to be proactive and put money into Capital Reserve Projects. Chairman Hickok affirmed he saw both sides of the issue and voters rights were discussed.

Pat Labonte acknowledged that when he was on the Board of Selectmen years ago, they set money aside each year for the Fire Station, which is what a Town wants to do to avoid budget spikes. He added that all the outside agencies were a beneficial thing for the Town, and that purpose of the Capital Reserve Funds was advantageous to the Town as well.

Absent further discussion on any issues, Chairman Hickok thanked everyone for their input and stated the Committee would meet on Thursday to vote their recommendation on matters.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Melinda N. Ferreira
Recording Secretary