

GILFORD BUDGET COMMITTEE MINUTES
Town Budget Public Hearing
January 15, 2009
6:30 p.m.
Gilford High School

Members Present: Doug Lambert, Dick Hickok, Bill Phillips, J. Kevin Hayes, Sue Greene, Margo Weeks, Richard Young, Kevin Roy, Dale Dormody, Terry Stewart and John O'Brien

Members Absent: Skip Murphy

The Budget Committee recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Hickok began the meeting by welcoming members of the public and thanking them for attending tonight's public hearing. He asked each Budget Committee member to introduce themselves. Chairman Hickok further explained that the purpose of tonight's hearing is to receive public input on Town Budget items. He explained that tonight's handout on the Town Budget contains a two-page summary, seventeen pages of budget detail and four pages of Warrant Articles. Chairman Hickok briefly reminded participants to be polite and civil at all times. Members of the public will be limited to three (3) minutes the first time they speak.

Chairman Hickok proceeded to run through the 2009 Town Budget Hearing Summary. He pointed out that two petitioned warrant articles have been received since the last regular Budget Committee meeting on January 8, 2009. Chairman Hickok stated that the Budget Committee was pleased with the budget that was presented and then opened the public hearing for questions and comments.

Polly Sanfacon, Chairman of the Library Trustees, stated that the Board of Selectmen voted to return \$4,200 to the operating budget of the Library at their meeting last night, allowing the operating budget to be level funded from the 2008 budget. She feels that this is a reasonable request and would like the Budget Committee to also support the change. Board of Selectmen Chairman Connie Grant briefly explained that without salary items, the operating budget of the Library shows a \$4,200 decrease from the 2008 budget. As a result, the Board of Selectmen voted to restore the \$4,200 to the operating budget of the Library.

Sue Dalton outlined some of the advantages to having the library available to the public during this poor economy, including loaning of DVD's, having access to newspapers and computer access.

Barry Grevatt brought up the matter of the compensation for the Supervisors of the Checklist. He specifically questioned how a yearly stipend would be equitable for the Supervisors when the time required for them to perform their job differs from year to year. Chairman Hickok stated that the stipend for 2009 reflects the fact that two elections will be held. He further stated that the Budget Committee appreciates the work of the Supervisors, but felt this was another department growing too fast within Town government. He further stated that unfortunately, the Budget Committee will need to take this into account in the future if no one will do the job. Extensive discussion ensued.

Chairman of the Supervisors of the Checklist Connie Moses stated that the stipend being

proposed is not fair for the number of hours worked. She provided statistics of the hours worked by the Supervisors over the past few years. She also stated that the Board of Selectmen recognized that the request by the Supervisors was both thoughtful and reasonable. She feels that there may have been confusion with the Budget Committee as to what the Supervisors of the Checklist do and the importance of their work being thorough and accurate.

Merrill Fay expressed his concern with the state of the economy and that he feels the Town has too many unnecessary services. He cited instances with Gilford Fire Rescue. Jack Stephenson agreed with Merrill Fay, stating that many seniors are on fixed incomes and can't sell their homes, even if they wanted to. He urged the Budget Committee to do more.

Chairman Hickok responded to the concerns of Mr. Fay and Mr. Stephenson. He pointed out that the Budget Committee urged the Selectmen to discontinue the annual COLA and have all employees subject to Performance Based Evaluations only. He also stated that the School District has reduced positions, based on declining enrollment. The School Board, Board of Selectmen and Budget Committee have all done a good job with the review of the 2009 budget.

Jack Stephenson then pointed out the fact that the Police Department does need a new, reasonably price addition. He feels that the expansion plans show a grossly inadequate facility that is an insult to the Town of Gilford. He continued, stating that for a few thousand more dollars, it could be an efficient building.

The public hearing was closed at 7:13 p. m. At 7:15 p.m. the Budget Committee meeting convened. Chairman Hickok stated that the items the Budget Committee needs to consider are the \$4,200 for the Library, \$1,624 for the Supervisors of the Checklist and the two petitioned warrant articles that were received this week.

Richard Young moved to restore \$4,200 to the Library budget, for an amended total of \$302,516. Margo Weeks seconded. Mr. Young proceeded to make a statement in support of the library, reiterating its importance to the residents of Gilford during a poor economy. Library attendance has significantly increased, with more citizens utilizing computers, Internet, books and newspapers.

Doug Lambert is disappointed with the Board of Selectmen for restoring the \$4,200 for the Library. He further stated that if this amount is restored by the Budget Committee, he will actively campaign against it. Selectman Hayes explained the position of the Board of Selectmen and why they felt it was prudent to restore the \$4,200. Terry Stewart pointed out that the Library Trustees also hired a new person during the 2008 budget year. He commended Mr. Young's passion but is concerned with the operating budget of the Library taking on a life of its own. Dale Dormody pointed out that the additional position in 2008 was the result of increased circulation.

John O'Brien stated that he made the motion at the Budget Committee meeting that added back \$1,000 for books. He pointed out that he uses the new library and feels this is the case with many other residents since the opening of the new building. Chairman Hickok stated that the Library's 2009 budget has shown an overall increase of 4.9% from 2008. Doug Lambert pointed out that the Library has the largest percentage increase of any department from 2008 to 2009. Further discussion ensued.

A vote on the motion indicated a vote of 4-yes and 6-no. Motion failed.

Kevin Hayes moved to increase the Election and Registration (Supervisors of the Checklist) total by \$1,624, to \$15,803. Richard Young seconded. Selectman Hayes stated that the Selectmen grappled with this issue and felt this additional compensation was warranted. Doug Lambert is opposed to this increase, since the Supervisors are elected officials. He feels that the stipend is fair compensation. A vote on the motion indicated a vote of 3-yes and 7-no. Motion failed.

Warrant Article 28 for \$9,402.89 to Genesis Behavioral Health was the next item discussed. Doug Lambert moved to not recommend this warrant article. Terry Stewart seconded. Selectman Hayes stated that supporting Genesis is a good investment for the Town. Extensive discussion ensued on the philosophical difference between Committee members on using Town money to fund outside agencies. Many Committee members expressed an interest in seeing Belknap County assume responsibility for oversight of outside agency funding.

More discussion ensued on whether or not the recommendations of the Selectmen and Budget Committee influence the voters of Gilford. A vote on the motion indicated a vote of 6-yes and 5-no. Motion failed.

Dale Dormody moved to recommend Article 29 in the amount of \$2,000 for New Beginnings. Margo Weeks seconded. A vote on the motion indicated a vote of 5-yes and 6-no. Motion failed.

The Budget Committee approved the minutes of the January 13, 2008 School District Public Hearing.

Finance Director Ruggles provided Committee members with State budget forms for signature.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra J. Bailey
Administrative Secretary