

GILFORD BUDGET COMMITTEE MINUTES
September 10, 2009
6:30 p.m.
Town Of Gilford
(Gilford Elementary School Library)

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

Members Absent: Fred Butler

Also in attendance were Assistant Superintendent for Business Scott Isabelle and Executive Secretary Sandra Bailey. Candidates in attendance for the open Budget Committee position were Philip "Pat" LaBonte, Linda Kangur and Mark Corry.

The Budget Committee recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Hickok welcomed the Committee to this evening's meeting. He stated that the purpose of tonight's meeting is to choose a replacement for Bill Phillips and to hear a presentation from Scott Isabelle regarding the 2009 Unreserved Fund Balance. Chairman Hickok asked Pat LaBonte to begin the selection process by providing a brief presentation on why he would like to be chosen for the Budget Committee.

Mr. LaBonte stated that he is a lifetime resident of Gilford and has served on the Budget Committee, Board of Fire Engineers, Board of Selectmen and Zoning Board of Adjustment. He feels that there is a need to further scrutinize the budget because of overspending within the Town. Government is getting "too big" in Gilford.

Linda Kangur provided an overview of her diverse experience in both the public and private sectors. Although she has lived in Gilford for three years, she has been directly responsible for the management of budgets in most of her jobs, primarily in New Jersey. As a taxpayer and resident of Gilford, she would like to serve the community.

Mark Corry stated that he placed fourth out of seven candidates who were on the 2009 ballot for open Budget Committee slots. Because he has been personally affected by the downturn in the economy, he now works from his home and is able to devote the time needed to serve on the Budget Committee. He is fiscally conservative and is planning to retire soon, which will mean living on a fixed income. He also has extensive IT experience in the accounting and financial industry.

Chairman Hickok then opened up the meeting for questions from the Committee members to the candidates. Kevin Roy asked Pat LaBonte how he plans to further scrutinize the budget. Mr. LaBonte stated that the Town has too many employees and feels that it is not necessary for Departments Managers to have "assistants".

Terry Stewart asked each candidate for their general impression of spending within the Town government. Mark Corry stated that being fiscally conservative necessitates finding areas for cuts. The budget needs to be reviewed line by line with explanations for each line. Keeping the budget at the same level or less is best.

Linda Kangur stated that with her background in education, her key interest would be in the review of the School District's budget. She also feels that the budget needs to be scrutinized and she could bring a new perspective to the Committee. She is unemployed and has the time needed to devote to the Committee. She also feels that the times are changing.

Pat LaBonte stated that he was in favor of the Police Station renovation and expansion but did not vote for it because of the state of the economy. He thinks that if the project is proposed again it will fail again. He feels that the economy will be in this state for years and the Town needs to downsize.

Skip Murphy asked each candidate their opinion of the proper role of government as it pertains to outside agencies and to prioritize the Departments that they feel have the greatest value. Pat LaBonte supports outside agencies because some of the people of Gilford need help and the Town should take care of them. He feels that the Fire Department, Public Works Department and Police Department need to be kept the same size as they are now.

Linda Kangur stated that with her background in human services, she is aware that some people are in need, but would still be interested in watching these areas. She thinks that the Police and Fire Departments are priorities and reiterated her interest in looking more closely at the School District's budget.

Mark Corry would like to see more warrant articles so that the taxpayers can decide on specific items. He supports public safety but feels that they must prove their needs. He also supports the need for providing a good education to the children of Gilford.

Terry Stewart asked the three candidates for their general opinion regarding whether the Town needs to add more services or if they need to cut back on spending. Mark Corry stated that there should be no additional burden placed on taxpayers. Pat LaBonte and Linda Kangur agreed with Mr. Corry.

Chairman Hickok stated that it was now time for the Committee to choose their new member and it could be done by a show of hands or by way of a motion.

Doug Lambert moved to nominate Pat LaBonte as the new Budget Committee member. Sue Greene seconded. Selectman O'Brien thanked all three candidates for their interest in the position and for attending tonight's meeting. Margo Weeks pointed out that Mark Corry has attended several Budget Committee meetings, as well as School Board and Board of Selectmen meetings. She feels that a show of hands would be a better way to vote.

Doug Lambert stated that Pat LaBonte represents long-time residents and feels he is similar to Bill Phillips, who is the member being replaced. He supports diversity on the Budget Committee. Kevin Roy stated that he also supports Mark Corry.

A show of hands for Pat LaBonte indicated 4-Yes and 5-No. Motion failed. Chairman Hickok did not vote.

Dale Dormody moved to appoint Mark Corry as the new Budget Committee member. Margo Weeks seconded. A preliminary show of hands for Mark Corry indicated 5-Yes and 4-No. Chairman Hickok cast his vote in favor of Mark Corry, making the final tally 6-yes and 4-no. Motion carried. Brief discussion ensued regarding the matter of the Chairman voting to break ties.

Chairman Hickok congratulated Mark Corry and welcomed him to the Budget Committee.

At this time, Selectman O'Brien exited the meeting.

The next matter before the Budget Committee was a presentation by Assistant Superintendent Scott Isabelle regarding the 2009 Undesignated Fund Balance. Mr. Isabelle stated that he has prepared a Summary of Revenue and Expense accounts for 2009 and can provide an overview of the report or explain the key areas. Chairman Hickok suggested that he explain the key areas.

Mr. Isabelle ran through the Revenue accounts. He provided the Committee members with an explanation of the various items that fall under Local Other Income, including additional unanticipated tuition for Gilmanton students. He also pointed out how District Bookkeeper Deb Wheeler took the initiative to learn how secure \$59K in Medicaid Part-D revenue. Other areas highlighted included reimbursement for flood damage at Gilford Middle School and a reduction in the number of students enrolled in the Driver's Education program.

Moving onto the Expense accounts, the first area to be discussed was Health Insurance. Scott Isabelle explained how the guaranteed maximum rate that is used for budget preparation is received much earlier than the actual rate that would be charged. As a result, if the actual rate is significantly less than the guaranteed maximum rate, a large savings is realized. The District also had employees leave who subscribed to family plans and their replacements opted for single plans or the \$2,000 buyout, again resulting in a large savings.

Two of the Principal line items were overspent due to retirements that included incentives. C/S Repairs and Maintenance was primarily overspent due to flood damage at the Middle School, even though it was reimbursed by insurance. Tuition Handicapped Non Public was not spent because the student did not attend Gilford schools. Psychological Testing and Services were overspent due to the counseling services due to the unexpected death of a parent.

Discussion then focused on Fuel Oil. Scott Isabelle provided an explanation of how the vendor supplying fuel oil provided a price reduction from the bid price to the rack price, plus \$.50.

Doug Lambert explained how the taxes for his business were significantly increased this year. Because of the surplus within the School District's budget, he feels the need for the Budget Committee to tighten their belts and look at the budget more closely.

Scott Isabelle pointed out that the District does not look to spend all of their money by the end of a fiscal year and has never made it their practice to do so. He is passionate about the School District's budget and wants the Budget Committee to know that they are really trying. School Board representative Margo Weeks further stated that both Mr. Isabelle and Dr. Deminico are very conscious of their responsibility to the taxpayers of Gilford.

Discussion ensued regarding the obligation of the District to fund retirements.

Terry Stewart pointed out that the Police Expansion survey results show a general consensus of the need to reduce overall spending. He also requested additional detail on the School District Supply account, which Scott Isabelle stated he would provide.

Doug Lambert has concerns with the DPW budget. He has learned that the Town plows the

church parking lot and a Memorandum of Understanding is being reviewed by Town Counsel regarding the Town plowing their lot for the use of the Community Center. He also stated that he does not want to vote in the church – he would like to continue voting in the School. In addition, DPW employees are being paid overtime to plow the church parking lot. He is concerned that this matter has never been discussed in DPW Sub-committee deliberations.

Dale Dormody stated that he is involved with the Community Church and is not aware of this pending arrangement. Doug Lambert replied that he received this information from a member of the Board of Selectmen today.

Doug Lambert also has concerns with the Senior Call-In program sponsored by the Police Department. He does not agree with dispatching officers to homes to check on senior citizens.

Skip Murphy raised a concern with the proposed Fire Training Facility. He does not want to see another “free” building that the Town is forced to maintain.

Dale Dormody suggested that these types of concerns be funneled through the Town Administrator, whose responsibility it is to respond to these types of concerns. Lengthy discussion ensued.

Margo Weeks moved to adjourn at 8:50 p.m. Terry Stewart seconded. Motion carried with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra Bailey
Executive Secretary