

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
NORTHFIELD TOWN HALL
21 SUMMER STREET
NORTHFIELD, NH**

MINUTES

DATE: February 8, 2007

PRESENT:	George Corliss, Jr.	Yes
	Leif Martinson	Yes
	Steve Randall	Yes
	Linda Pardy	Yes
	Patricia Sawicki	Yes
	Lisa Swancott	Yes
	Sel. Stephen Bluhm	Yes

Also present were Sel. Glen Brown, Acting Chief Steve Adams, Highway Superintendent Michael Summersett and Town Administrator Joyce Fulweiler.

Chairman Corliss opened the public hearing on the Budget Committee's recommended budget at 7:30 p.m. Members of the public present were the reporter from the Winnisquam Echo, Greg Hill, Gretch Wilder, William Wilder, Kevin Waldron, Dennis Allen, Valerie Allen, Scott Hilliard, Sally Robert, and John Raffaely.

The Chairman proceeded to go through each page of the budget worksheet. The Committee answered questions of the public. The Budget Committee's recommended budget is a 23% decrease over the 2006 budget.

General Government:

The Selectmen asked the Budget Committee to reinstate the \$3,200 for professional recruitment services for a Chief of Police. Following considerable discussion and input from the public, the Budget Committee suggested that since the Selectmen already signed the contract, they either bring the issue up at Town Meeting use an appropriation from another line item.

The Selectmen have proposed keeping the combined position of Town Clerk/Tax Collector and making the Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector position full time (35 hours per week) with benefits because of the increased workload. Office hours will be able to be extended in response to the demand. Even though it will cost approximately \$15,000 more for wages and fringe benefits the first year to make

the position full-time, it will be less expensive in the long run instead of separating the two positions at a higher labor grade. The costs for the Town Clerk/Tax Collector office are reflected 50% in the Clerk's Budget and 50% in the Finance/Administration Budget.

The 2006 actual expenditures for the Health Insurance, Office Supplies and Postage line items still need to be adjusted for year-end.

The Selectmen have proposed a 2.5% pool for each department to allocate merit raises the 14th pay week. Medical insurance has increased 13% overall, the employees are responsible for 10.5% co-payment. Mandatory employer retirement contributions will increase July 1st. Hopefully the legislature will amend the law so that employees will be required to pay more into the plan so that the employer is not absorbing the entire increase.

The Treasurer's salary request for a salary increase was reduced on the basis that the position was elected for three years at the rate of \$2,750.

The Town is in the third year of a four-year assessing contract to verify the data on the property record assessment cards. Twenty five percent of the properties are being measured and listed by the assessor each year. In 2008, the assessor will conduct a sales analysis and update all of the values to bring the Town's assessments as close to 100% of market value as possible. There will be a much larger appropriation next year for that phase of the update.

Planning/Zoning wages are for a part time land use technician who works for the Planning Board, Zoning Board and Conservation Commission. The position is currently budgeted at \$16.22 per hour with an increase to \$16.63 based upon an estimated number of hours worked during the year. The individual only bills for the hours actually worked.

Cemetery Grounds keeping expense line item increase is to reflect actual cemetery maintenance hours worked in this budget instead of the highway department budget.

Public Safety:

It is less expensive to use part time officers for shift coverage and pay overtime (mostly due to increased court time) than hiring another full time officer with benefits.

Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid Association (dispatching services for Fire Departments) is comprised of member Towns. Tilton's assessment is paid by Belknap County. The annual assessment is based on a fixed factor, equalized valuation and population.

Highway & Sanitation:

Due to the uncertainty of the weather, the Budget Committee will review the overtime line item as Town Meeting date approaches.

Sanitation wages are now reflected in the Highway Department full time wages line item.

Contracted services/equipment is for street sweeping, catch basin cleaning, pavement/crosswalk line painting, rental of excavator, etc.

The Budget Committee's recommendation for the landfill and transportation line items reflects the corrected actual year to date expenditures.

The incineration contract actual expenditures line item needs an adjusting entry to correctly show 12 payments instead of 13.

There is a warrant article to reappoint a recycling committee to look at alternative ways to reduce disposal costs. One of the options they will be researching is pay per bag.

Health & Welfare:

Animal Control is now a contracted service.

The Budget Committee is recommending the full amount of the Youth Assistance Program's request. YAP must request this amount in order for Merrimack County Court Diversion Program to offset the expenses. Chief Hilliard confirmed that the funds are still available.

Culture & Recreation:

The Budget Committee's recommended amount is still less than the original request of \$118,875. Primary increase is for increasing staff hours and the associated payroll line and fringe benefit line items. The library currently has only one full time position with benefits.

Tilton Northfield Recreation Council request was reduced to \$51,000, which will encourage them to seek outside funding sources for programming, and building needs.

Project T-N-S had sufficient monies remaining in 2006 that they did not need to request an appropriation in 2007, however, the Budget Committee entered \$1 to keep the line item open.

Conservation Commission:

The Conservation Commission and Knowles Pond Conservation Area budget requests were revised in accordance with the Commission's re-evaluation of projects and projected expenses in 2007.

Debt Service & Capital Outlay:

The Town has budgeted for the second year of a two-year lease/purchase agreement for two cruisers purchased last year, which is shown under debt Service. The Town has a warrant article (with a non appropriation clause) to purchase a replacement cruiser in 2007. The first year's payment is shown under capital outlay.

The backhoe and truck have two years of a three-year lease purchase agreement remaining. These payments are shown under debt service.

The skid steer appropriation is for the full amount of \$25,000 because of the gross appropriation rule. A 50% offset grant is anticipated and shown under estimated revenues of \$12,500.

The increase in tax anticipation interest expense is primarily due to the Fire Department's fire truck and delay in getting the tax rate set.

Proposed Warrant Articles.

The Town received a petition to adopt Senate Bill 2 (Official Ballot). Copies of a NH Department of Revenue Administration technical bulletin explaining Senate Bill 2 (Official Ballot) were made available.

The Budget Committee recommends the police cruiser lease/purchase \$15,000; \$25,000 for the skid steer (bobcat) purchase; \$100,000 for Phases II & IV of the Zion Hill/Hodgdon Road Drainage Project; \$20,000 for Twin Bridge Road Improvement Engineering; \$105,390 for Oak Hill Road improvements and \$50,000 payment to capital reserve funds for State Aid Reconstruction Projects. The proposed bottom line of the Budget Committee's recommended budget is \$3,705,631.

The Chairman closed the public hearing on the budget.

The Budget Committee made the following corrections to the worksheet. Recommend the \$20,000 for Twin Bridge Engineering, which had been inadvertently left out. The Selectmen corrected their recommendations for Landfill Costs and Transportation costs to match the Budget Committee's.

The Town Administrator presented revenue estimates, which are extremely conservative. Accounting adjusting entries need to be made prior to closing out the FY 2006 fiscal year which will update the actual expenditures and revenues columns. The Selectmen will review and revise the revenue estimates so that a more accurate projected property tax rate can be calculated.

The Budget Committee adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Joyce Fulweiler