

ASHLAND BUDGET COMMITTEE

June 27, 2013

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: C. Cilley, S. Coleman, I. Heidenreich, F. Newton, D. Ruell, M. Scarano, J. Stewart, D. Toth

Members Absent: M. Badger and R. Liebert (with notice)

Alternates Present: N. DeWolfe

Others Present: T. Paquette, A. Cilley, R. Boyle, J. Hughes, L. Pack, J. Gleich,

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 P.M. in the Ashland Elementary School Cafeteria.

Public Works Department Mid-Year Budget Review

T. Paquette said that spending is generally on track. The Street Improvements line will be spent down next month when the Highland Street sidewalks are done. The discrepancy on the HWY Heat line between June and July financial reports was the result of miscoding and has been corrected.

T. Paquette said that his concerns include the Equipment Maintenance line, which has 15% remaining as a result of maintenance for the grader, sidewalk plow, and the old loader as well as the purchase of tire chains. He also said that the Vehicle Expense line would go over as a result of the need to purchase new tires for trucks.

S. Coleman commented that the Budget Committee will have to look closely at the Public Works Department budget next year because of overages in maintenance and vehicle expenses for the past two years.

S. Coleman and I. Heidenreich mentioned the possibility of establishing a capital account for the revenues from the transfer station, which can be spent on equipment for the transfer station rather than be put in the General Fund.

M. Scarano asked how the Highway Block Grant money is spent and how we estimate the revenue for purposes of the budget.

T. Paquette said that the town will be spending approximately \$100,000 from the capital reserve account for roads to repair West Street.

T. Paquette said that he and P. Branscombe are discussing the possibility of a bond for the rebuilding of Smith Hill Road and Thompson Street.

Parks and Recreation Department Mid-Year Budget Review

J. Gleich said that overages include advertising for the summer program and the after school program, chemical toilets, fuels (oil and propane) for the Booster Club, building expenses, camp ground improvement, summer training, summer equipment. He is also planning on hiring a new program assistant for the after school program to replace the individual who has resigned.

J. Gleich said that enrollment the summer program is down five students from last year. He did not think the summer camp would break even this year but that the program would be more cost effective than last year because the staff was decreased.

He said that despite overages on individual lines, he does not expect to exceed his overall budget.

Water and Sewer Department Mid-Year Budget Review

R. Boyle said that he has no concerns. Expenditures are where they were last year. However, the rainy weather has reduced water revenues. Water revenues have decreased from last year, which A. Cilley said is part of a three-year trend. Sewer is still not breaking even and is subsidized by septic receiving, but revenues for sewer are increasing. Work is proceeding on the design for the new treatment plant.

M. Scarano questioned the negative number in the Now account (checking account). L. Pack explained that checks are written before the treasurer moves money into the checking account.

M. Scarano also asked whether the commissioners felt that Water and Sewer is in a good cash position, especially given the fact that cash balances are significantly less than last year. A. Cilley said that the differences between the 2012 and 2013 cash amounts has to do with the amount of money that has been placed in capital reserve.

J. Stewart asked whether money for the new truck came from the budget or from capital reserve. J. Hughes said that the money came from capital reserve.

J. Stewart also asked whether rates would go up. R. Boyle said that he preferred not to raise rates at this time. However, A. Cilley said that rates will have to be raised in the future to cover the cost of needed improvements to infrastructure.

D. Ruell asked about the \$11,000 expenditure for Pump Station Equipment. A. Cilley said that the money was for the unexpected purchase of a new pump.

Other Business

M. Scarano checked into the question concerning Library paying bills from its own checkbook. He said that libraries are given the right by statute to expend funds on their own.

S. Coleman asked about a discrepancy on the Police Training line between the sheet provided by T. Randall at the last Budget Committee meeting and the expenditure reports provided to the committee by the town. N. DeWolfe said that T. Randall had mentioned that there was an error in the report he handed out.

S. Coleman said that the union contract she received from the town does not contain the salary schedule for the Police Department. J. Stewart said that she would provide copies of the contract that contains the police salary schedule.

I. Heidenreich asked about the spending freeze, given the fact that some department heads have said there was none. J. Stewart said that a spending freeze has been in effect since January. She explained that the spending freeze involves an extra layer of oversight for non-essential expenditures provided by the town administrator.

A. Cilley expressed concern over the accuracy of Water and Sewer financial reports. He asked that the Budget Committee carefully scrutinize these reports and said that he would be willing to address any questions and concerns.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 31, 2013 at the Ashland Elementary School Library.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 P.M.

Respectfully submitted

David J. Toth