

**Ashland Budget Committee
Draft Minutes
December 5, 2013**

Budget Committee Members – Present [8 voting]

<i>Mark Scarano</i>	<i>David Ruell</i>	<i>Fran Newton</i>
<i>Christine Cilley</i>	<i>David Toth</i>	<i>Sandra Coleman</i>
<i>Mardean Badger</i>		<i>Jeanette Stewart</i>
<i>Renee Liebert, Alternate (non-voting)</i>		<i>Normand DeWolfe, Alternate (non-voting)</i>

Budget Committee Members – Absent

Ingrid Heidenreich, excused

Town Employees -- Present

Paul Branscombe, Town Administrator
Brenda Paquette, Finance Officer

Members of the Public -- Present

Eli Badger, Alan Cilley, Steve Felton

The Budget Committee meeting was called to order by Mark Scarano, Chair, at 6:06 pm.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved (David Ruell) and seconded (Christine Cilley) to approve the minutes of November 26, 2013. The minutes were approved as presented 8-0. The minutes will be forwarded to the Town Office for filing.

The minutes for November 13 are completed and will be sent out by Sandra Coleman.

Revenues

This year the Budget Committee will be looking at revenues earlier in the process of completing the budget, unlike previous years when revenues were not considered until after determining the BC's version of the budget.

Mark Scarano distributed 2 graphs prepared by Steve Felton (CIP) – (1) bar graph showing past performance and future trends of county, state education, net local education, capital improvements and town operating expenses and (2) line graph showing past performance and future trends of the difference between property taxes and revenues other than property taxes. Also distributed was a sheet showing property taxes and non-property tax revenues for Ashland Elementary School (2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14).

Ashland's new Finance Officer, Brenda Paquette, was introduced. She has been reviewing all past figures prior to updating figures for the Budget Committee.

After approval by the BOS at their next work session, the estimate for Supervisors of the Checklist election budget line will be increased by \$1145, due to the upcoming primary and election for Executive Counselor position.

The BC has received a revenue worksheet which shows revenues for 2010-2013, but does not yet include projections for 2014. The committee reviewed the sheets with Brenda Paquette.

- Correction – the column labeled “Budget 2010” should be labeled “Budget 2011”.
- The column headed “this year as of unaudited” reflects revenues received through approximately 11/20 or 11/25 most of November; there are still about 4-5 weeks of revenues to come in.
- Four years of revenue (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013) and 3 years of budget to compare. The Revised MS4 2013 is the budget for 2013, and is what was used to figure the tax rate.
- Property taxes – will they go up as a percentage overall revenue from the town? Not by much.
- Budgetary use of fund balance – used this year? yes
- Yield tax – those who cut more than 10,000 board feet (other than obstruction) of lumber on their property need file an ‘intent to cut’ and are taxed on what they sell.
- Payment in lieu of taxes – includes street lighting (internal accounting function). Is hydroelectric included? Are there other things included on that line?

- Informational purposes at bottom of page 1. For example, HEAL – is there a corresponding expense line? Grant monies are separate lines/categories outside the town budget and are tracked.
- Mark suggested it would be helpful to have a list showing our performance on applying for and receiving grants. Police and fire grants are plentiful and are typically matching grants. USDA Rural is working with the town on eligibility for grant for town hall renovations (may require bringing upstairs offices downstairs to comply with ADA requirements.)
- Approved Hazard Mitigation plan (FEMA approval next) will allow us to get money re: weather-related issues in the future
- Ventilation System Grant – bond payment going to about 2023? Brenda is still researching all the details of that.
- Highway Block Grant – Regarding highway block grant (offset) & amount in budget for roads (\$50,000) & capital reserve = how much have we actually spent this year? Leavitt & Hicks Hill about \$50,000 from Tim's budget was offset by highway block grant.
- Transfer from trust accounts – typically come from warrant articles; in this location similar to the MS4 format. This item is different from the performance grants.
- Fees have been relatively consistent.
 - New car purchase has slowed.
 - \$5 motor vehicle fee could result in about \$10,000-12,000 might be realized. Plymouth passed this last year.
- Charges for Services
 - 2010 sale of tax deeded property caused significant increase in 2010
 - Town deeded property – property owner bought back property which had been tax deeded.
 - Miscellaneous revenue – Revised MS4 shows \$26,767, but only collected \$2,977 on that line so far. DRA reviews the whole page, and changed the total without breaking it out, so the difference was put in this line.
 - Recycling receipts – why the drop? Recycling itself is up, but market prices vary widely and timing of receipts may vary.

Sandra raised questions regarding past warrant articles and concern for future warrant articles.

- “How do we track how money raised through a warrant article is spent?” -- Create separate budget line.
- “What happens if money raised through warrant article is never spent?” -- Depends on legal wording of warrant article.
- Warrant articles in question – these items will need further research.
 - Sidewalk on West Street – where does the money go?
 - Ambulance billing for transport – Where does the money go? Some transports have been done; has any money come in?

Balances of capital reserve funds created through warrant articles are kept by the Treasurer and the Trustees of the Trust Funds. The information is in the annual town report.

For information being presented at the Financial Forum, are revenues other than taxes going to be about the same? Brenda said she would expect so.

Brenda will work on revenue projections for the Board of Selectmen and the Budget Committee (both meeting on Wednesday next week).

The BOS will again be putting forward and better explaining the warrant article to allow the BOS to increase fees (RSA 41:9), as many of the small fees we charge have not changed, are not in line with other towns, and need to be re-evaluated.

Jeanette Stewart reported that the Fire Department warrant article was approved and recommended by the BOS 3-0.

Scheduling meetings

December 9, Financial Forum – Budget Committee will meet afterwards for a short time depending on length of Financial Forum, to possibly discuss goals.

December 11 – 6:00 pm, School Library [Renee cannot make this meeting]

December 17 (Tuesday) -- 6pm, School Library

December 19 cancelled – conflict with PB/ZBA joint hearing on Soldier On.

December 12 – SAU budget hearing, followed by Ashland School Board to vote on budget; 6:30 pm, SAU Office in Meredith. Will see if Ashland School Budget will be ready in paper form for December 17 meeting?

David Ruell asked if we had officially set and voted on dates for budget hearings and deliberative sessions. After much discussion, tentative dates seem to be:

January 15 – Town Budget Hearing

January 16 – School Budget Hearing

January 17 – “Snow” date for both town and school

February 1 – Town Deliberative Session

February 6 – School Deliberative Session

We need to discuss our goals before we start talking about revenues. Do we want to keep property tax the same? Do we want to adjust expenses based on revenues? Do we want to adjust expenses by a percentage?

Financial Forum Discussion

Flyers are available to post around town. There was an article in December 5 edition of *The Record Enterprise* and in the Ashland column. There will be an ad in *The Laconia Daily Sun* and it is on Channel 3. Other suggestions included the school marquee sign or on sandwich board by Booster Club.

What are we as a Budget Committee presenting? Need input and consensus from the whole group for what we will be presenting.

- Main topic -- looking back and looking at trends forward – big picture, developing strategy going forward
- Budget Committee has to look at options
- balancing expenses, revenues and property taxes
- increasing grants
- supporting CIP recommendations
- input from town members

Miscellaneous Items

Jeanette Stewart will do minutes for the December 9 Financial Forum.

The next regular meeting is December 11, 6:00 pm, at the Elementary School Library.

A motion was made (Christine Cilley) and seconded (Fran Newton) to adjourn the Budget Committee meeting at 8:21 pm.

Minutes taken by Mardean Badger