

**ASHLAND BUDGET COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes for December 4, 2014**  
**Ashland Elementary School Library**

**Present Members [9 voting]**

Norm DeWolfe	David Ruell	David Toth
Mark Scarano	Mardean Badger	Harold Lamos
Christine Cilley	Jamie Lyford	Sandra Coleman

**Absent Members**

Renee Liebert, with notice	Fran Newton, with notice
----------------------------	--------------------------

The Budget Committee meeting was called to order by David Ruell, Chair, at 5:35.

The group reviewed requested changes to non-union salaries and discussed with Mr. DeWolfe, Selectboard representative, the process of identifying the increases. Mr. DeWolfe indicated that the Selectboard had reviewed similar salaries in other areas as well as personal performance in making their decisions. Ms. Coleman opposed the raises but suggested that we peg salary increases to perhaps other standards such as the federal government's Social Security COLA. The group discussed the increase in pay at 3% compared to the fact that for the past four years, these employees have not seen any increase. Mr. Toth referenced that inflation averages 3% per year and that there could be a loss of salary over the years when no increase is provided.

**Mr. Toth moved, Ms. Badger seconded, to support the Selectboard's recommendation to increase salaries by 3% for all the non-union, non-elected employees.** This includes the Administrative Assistant and the Department of Public Works Director.

*The vote was seven in favor, two opposed.*

**Mr. DeWolfe moved, Ms. Badger seconded, to accept the Selectboard's recommendations for FICA, Medicare, and Retirement within the Executive Account.**

*The vote was seven in favor, one opposed, and one abstaining.*

*(Ms. Cilley exited the meeting at 6:10pm; 8 voting members remained)*

**Ms. Badger moved, Mr. Toth seconded, to increase the Executive Account's health insurance line from \$23,284 to \$23,750.**

*The vote was seven in favor and one opposed.*

Mr. DeWolfe reviewed the reasoning behind the "ER Clerk Longevity Stipend" line that recognizes individual tenure and experiences while ensuring that the "ER Clerk Salary" line would be consistent with a lower experienced and tenured clerk assuming office in the future.

**Mr. Lamos moved, Mr. DeWolfe seconded, to approve the Selectboard's recommendations for ER Salary Clerk, ER Clerk Longevity Stipend, ER Office FICA, Medicare, and Retirement.**

*Six in favor, one opposed, one abstained.*

**Ms. Badger moved, Mr. Toth seconded, to approve the Selectboard's recommendations of Tax Collector Salary, Tax Collector Longevity Stipend, Financial FICA, Medicare, and Retirement.**

*Six in favor, one opposed, one abstained.*

**Ms. Badger moved, Mr. DeWolfe seconded, to approve the Selectboard's recommendations of Finance Health Insurance from \$15,523 to \$15,833.**

*The vote was unanimous; eight voted in favor.*

Mr. Lyford raised a concern about the salary amount for the new Land Use Part Time Assistant; the computation of the salary was clarified. Ms. Badger mentioned that the level of work would probably reflect the amount of time needed by the Assistant to do the job right and avoid unnecessary legal fees.

**Mr. Ruell, Ms. Badger seconded, to adjust the General Government Repair/Replace/Upgrade account from \$16,650 to \$17,997 in order to accommodate new weatherproofing needs in the Town Office.**

In subsequent discussion, Mr. DeWolfe reflected that the Selectboard and Staff are researching grants to help cover this expenses.

*The vote was unanimous; eight voted in favor.*

Mr. Lyford asked that the Committee reconsider the Part Time Officers Wages being \$45,000 rather than the Selectboard's recommendation of \$40,000. Questions were raised as to why this account was overspent during 2014 while being much lower in 2013. Some mentioned that the Police Chief referred to the situation in his address to the Committee months previous but no one could confirm the reason with any confidence. Mr. Lyford requested that the Police Chief make another appearance before the Committee to explain the reason.

**Mr. Toth moved, Ms. Coleman seconded, to reduce the EP Equipment Purchase amount from \$23,300 to \$1 in consideration that the outfitting of a police cruiser should be in a Warrant Article as it is a capital expense;** it is recommended to the Selectboard that the amount be included in the Police Cruiser Warrant Article as earlier proposed.

Mr. DeWolfe recalled that the Chief expressed concern that voters may not approve a \$40,000 plus Warrant Article rather than a smaller article that would exclude the fitting of the cruiser. Mr. Toth stated that this was an effort to be transparent to the public as to the exact cost of the cruiser. Ms. Coleman concurred.

*Six voted in favor, two abstained.*

The group agreed to leave Police Salaries, FICA, Medicare open pending updated information from the Police Chief.

**Ms. Badger moved, Mr. Toth seconded, to increase the Police Health Insurance account to \$68,440.**

*The vote was unanimous; eight voted in favor.*

*[at 7:25, Mr. Scarano, who had been taking minutes, left the meeting and Ms. Badger took over those responsibilities. 7 voting members remained.]*

**Mr. Ruell moved, Mr. DeWolfe seconded, to approve the Selectboard's recommendation of \$154,985 for Public Works salaries.**

*Six voted in favor, 1 abstained.*

**Mr. DeWolfe moved, Mr. Toth seconded, to approve the revised amount \$40,297 for Public Works Health Insurance.**

*Seven voted in favor.*

**Mr. DeWolfe moved, Ms. Badger seconded, to accept the Selectboard's recommendations for Public Works FICA, Medicare and Retirement.**

*Six voted in favor, 1 abstained.*

**Mr. Toth moved, Mr. DeWolfe seconded, to accept the Selectboard's recommendations for Town Mechanic salary, FICA, Medicare and retirement.**

*Six voted in favor, 1 abstained.*

**Mr. Toth moved, Ms. Badger seconded, to approve the Town Mechanic health insurance \$17,476.**  
*Seven voted in favor.*

**Ms. Badger moved, Mr. Toth seconded, to approve the Selectboard's recommendations for Transfer/Recycling salaries, FICA and Medicare.**  
*Six voted in favor, 1 abstained.*

**Mr. DeWolfe moved, Mr. Toth seconded, to approve the revised amount \$1,767 for Solid Waste District Dues.**  
*Seven voted in favor.*

**Mr. Toth moved, Ms. Badger seconded, to approve the revised amount \$1,500 for Park & Recreation Building Expense.**  
*Six voted in favor, 1 abstained.*

**Mr. Toth moved, Mr. Ruell seconded, to approve the revised amount \$14, 350 for Patriotic Purposes AARA 4<sup>th</sup> of July Expense.** Note that this will be offset by revenues.  
*Seven voted in favor.*

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Lyford reported that the grant for radios for the Highway Department was not approved. However, the Police Department was awarded a \$3800 grant for a camera.

Mr. Toth reviewed the proposed outline of the topics to be discussed at the **Financial Forum – January 8, 7:00 pm, Elementary School Cafeteria**. The focus of the forum will be to explain the operating budget, capital budget and taxes; to show how these pieces work together; to explain therefore why we need economic development and grants; and to show how land use planning is related to economic growth. The presentation will be about 45 minutes to an hour long, followed by a panel discussion of key questions and an opportunity for the audience to ask questions.

The tentative schedule of upcoming meetings was established:

- December 11** – utilities; revenues; additional information from the Fire Chief and Police Chief
- December 16** – presentation of the school budget
- December 18** – finalization of the school budget; warrant articles
- December 22** – to be determined

The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 pm.

*Minutes submitted by Mark Scarano and Mardean Badger*