

ASHLAND BUDGET COMMITTEE
Minutes for December 18, 2014
Ashland Elementary School Library

Present Members [8 voting]

Norm DeWolfe
Mark Scarano
Christine Cilley
David Ruell
David Toth
Mardean Badger
Harold Lamos
Sandra Coleman
Renee Liebert (alternate)
Fran Newton (alternate)

Absent Members

Jamie Lyford

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

Chair Ruell mentioned that the Committee missed voting for Article 2 of the Ashland School District Warrant at the Committee's December 16th meeting.

Mr. DeWolfe moved, Ms. Coleman to recommend the article for the school district officer salaries.

All present voted to recommend, 8-0

Chair Ruell referred the Committee to the recently submitted Town Warrant Articles and distributed copies.

The group discussed Article 2, a \$450,000 five year lease purchase agreement for the purpose of purchasing a Fire Engine and to fund that, in part, through the withdrawal of \$75,000 from the Capital Reserve Fund. The Article also seeks to raise and appropriate \$90,000 for the first year's lease payment. Mr. Toth discussed how the CIP Committee and the Fire Engine Committee reviewed the costs and came to recommend this article.

Since the Selectboard is still researching the language of the article, the Committee declined to vote on it.

The Committee shifted their attention to Article 3, the General Operating Budget for the Town, the Electric Department, as well as Water and Sewer budgets. The Committee decided to wait until the Selectboard reviewed the numbers.

Under Article 4, the Committee reviewed a Selectboard and CIP Committee recommendation for a four year lease purchase for a mini loader of \$51,750 with a first year's purchase cost of \$12,938.

Ms. Badger moved, Mr. Lamos seconded, to recommend Article 4 to the public.

All present voted to recommend, 8-0

Under Article 5, the Committee reviewed the history of Town votes for the Road Improvements Capital Reserve Fund for \$125,000.

Mr. Scarano moved, Mr. DeWolfe seconded, to recommend Article 5; \$125,000 to be raised for the Town's Road Improvements Capital Reserve Fund. Mr. Ruell conceded that this would be the fourth year of the Town raising these funds for that purpose.

All present voted to recommend, 8-0

The Committee then turned their attention to Article 6, a four year lease agreement for a total cost of \$29,478, for the purchasing of a police vehicle. While the Selectboard had already voted 5-0 to recommend the article, the Budget Committee elected to wait on their recommendation until the Selectboard added the costs associated with outfitting the vehicle. Mr. Toth reflected on the CIP Committee's discussions on the purchase and how the costs were projected. The Committee spent time reviewing past articles for the vehicles and how those funds were expended. Additional time was spent discussing the difference between leasing for the vehicles and approved capital reserves being used for the outfitting of the vehicles. Because the Selectboard is still researching the wording of this article to incorporate the outfitting costs, the Committee decided to vote on the article at another time.

Article 7, as presented, pertained to raising and appropriating \$15,000 for the Police Department Capital Reserve Fund. During the discussion, Committee members asked Mr. Toth about the CIP Committee's research.

ms. Badger moved, Ms. Cilley seconded, to recommend that \$15,000 should be raised or the Police Department Capital Reserve Fund.

All present voted, 7 to recommend the article and 1 to not recommend the article.

The Committee decided to not vote on the recommendation of Article 8 until the Selectboard had more time to review and adjust the language.

The Committee reviewed Article 9 to create a Department of Public Works Capital Reserve fund and to raise and appropriate \$40,000 toward the fund. The Selectboard voted 4-1 to recommend the article. These funds would be followed by four more years or similar articles in order to pay for larger equipment with cash rather than lease purchase agreements. Items cited by the CIP Committee for equipment needs include: a pick up truck, two dump trucks, a back hoe, a loader with a plow, and a baylor.

Mr. Toth moved, Ms. Badgers seconded, to recommend Article 9: \$40,000 for the Public Works Capital Reserve fund.

All present voted, 6 to recommend the article and 2 to not recommend the article.

The group considered Article 10; the raise and appropriate \$60,700 for the purchase and installation of new, custom fit windows for the Town Hall. Mr. Toth mentioned that the CIP Committee did not recommend this article but it did garner the support of the majority of the Selectboard. Mr. Ruell stated that voters may be receptive to a projected amount of energy savings that the new windows would incur. Mr. Ruell urged the Committee to seek Selectboard research on the energy savings. Mr. DeWolfe stated that he was the Selectboard member who voted against the article considering how much voters would be asked to appropriate and that the CIP Committee did not support the expenditure.

The Committee elected to wait until more information was forthcoming on energy efficiency and the savings that the windows would provide. It was decided to have Mr. Ruell seek this information in writing from the Selectboard and Town Administration.

Regarding Article 11, the establishment and appropriation of a \$25,000 capital reserve fund for the maintenance and repair of town buildings. Mr. Toth stated that the CIP Committee has sought information on future repairs of town buildings but no information was forthcoming. The Budget Committee asked Mr. Ruell to write to Mr. Branscombe seeking an explanation of how the amount was identified and what the funds would be used for.

Article 12 was a revenue article and not considered by the Committee.

Article 13 authorized the collection of an additional \$5 fee for vehicle registrations and that the resulting funds, estimated at up to \$12,000 per year, would be added into a capital reserve fund for municipal transportation improvements. Many on the Committee reflected about the lack of sidewalks in some areas and how renters would be paying for this rather than the funds coming from property taxpayers. Mr. Ruell stated his support saying that those that use the roads should pay for it.

Mr. DeWolfe moved, Ms. Cilley seconded, to authorize the collection of an additional \$5 fee for vehicle registrations and that the resulting funds will be added into a capital reserve fund for municipal transportation improvements.

All present voted, 7 to recommend the article and 1 to not recommend the article.

Although not a monetary article, the group reviewed Article 14, the establishment of an Ashland Heritage Commission.

Article 15 was introduced by Mr. Ruell who discussed the efforts by the Library Trustees to identify new locations for the town library. The article would create an Ashland Library Building Fund and funded for \$25,000. Funds could be used for the purchase of real estate, renovations, and furnishings or equipment.

Mr. Toth moved, Mr. DeWolfe seconded, to recommend the article for the stated amount: \$25,000.

All present voted to recommend, 8-0

The last article to be reviewed, Article 16, garnered discussions about the need and how the article was presented (by petition). Mr. DeWolfe indicated that Bridge House is housing an Ashland resident. The shelter is available to any resident of town and the nearest shelter is located in Manchester. The Town would be responsible for transporting people to Manchester or housing people directly in expensive hotels.

Mr. Scarano moved, Mr. Coleman seconded, a motion to recommend approval of \$3,000 to the Bridge House.

All present voted to recommend, 8-0

In review, the group identified future votes for draft articles 2, 6, 8, 10, and 11. The Committee decided to reconvene on December 29th, 5:30 at the Fire Department.

Mr. Lamos moved, Ms. Coleman seconded, to adjourn.

All present voted to recommend, 8-0

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Scarano