

**TOWN OF CHESTERFIELD
BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 8, 2008**

Present: Steve Laskowski, Bill Bucknell, John Koopman, Elaine Blake, Chesterfield Fire & Rescue Representative; Gary Winn, Chairman; Rick Carrier, Town Administrator; Dan Cotter, Selectmen's Representative; Dave Thomas, Spofford Fire Representative; John Zannotti, Judy Idelkope, School Board Representative; Elliot Rowsey, Warren Porter, and Amy LaFontaine, Secretary

Absent: Anita Barber and Fred Szmit

Guests: Deb Hogancamp and Leon Wyman, Chesterfield Fire & Rescue Commissioners

- 1). Bill moved to approve the December 18th minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by John K. and passed unanimously.
- 2). **Housekeeping** – Rick will let committee members know who are up for re-election this year.
- 3). **General Government Buildings update**- There is a \$2500 warrant article proposed to fund a study committee for the old TO building. Judy stated that at Town Meeting alternate uses for the building were not discussed. There was something dead in the attic. There are floorboards on the 2nd floor that you can see through to the Treasurer's desk. There is a possibility of mold in the basement. There is asbestos in the roof and window flashing. There will be a need to maintain the building until March of next year.
- 4). **Highway update** – Bart had added \$3,000 to building maintenance and subtracted \$1,000 from chloride and \$2,000 from culvert & block line. The increase in building maintenance is to paint the roof to seal in the foam insulation installed this year. It was understood that the foam insulation installed last year would be up to fire code. It was not.
- 5). **Chesterfield Fire & Rescue Precinct** – Deb Hogancamp presented the budget. The 2008 Budget for payroll has been reduced because a change was made last year to include training hours and radio check. Payroll was just over \$20,000 in 2007. A new heater was installed in the West Station. The Commissioners are still not sure how much gas will be needed to get through the winter. She has budgeted for same amount of usage as last year. The last payment on the bond will be 2009.

The Balance in the Building Maintenance NCRF is approximately \$4,036.84. The Commissioners are proposing to increase the contribution to \$20,000 for this year only. The Commissioners are proposing to increase the contribution to Heavy Equipment CRF by \$1500. A truck was damaged at the Wantastiquet Fire and was replaced by a 2nd hand truck out of Connecticut. Gary stated that the trucks were 20 years old when he

started on the department. Now for insurance purposes they are required to maintain 1 Class A piece of equipment.

A Warrant Article to repair the frost wall and cinder block foundation for \$21,825 is proposed. The West Station is used to house cover fire personnel. Wetlands approval is required to work on the brook. Steve stated that this may be a time to discuss how much longer the West Station can be maintained. The question was asked how the West Station is decided. The other proposed warrant article is for \$17,283 to install the overhead doors and move the internal wall. The wall installed by OEM needs to move over 2 ½ feet. Trucks need to be moved around in order to exit the building. The new doors allow exit from the other side of the building. The building was built to accommodate the 2nd set of overhead doors. The Chesterfield Fire & Rescue Precinct was the recipient of equipment from Brattleboro. They are not planning on purchasing any small equipment this year. Steve asked for a Heavy Equipment Fund Balances Report. Deb stated that they had been working on updating the Heavy Equipment Contributions but have not had a chance to update the report yet. Dave stated that it was difficult to forecast heavy equipment because trucks can last 20 to 25 years.

Rick stated that the oil expenditures were low this year because the Town switched oil carriers. The Fire Precinct had a large credit. He just reduced the bill because 1,000 gallons was prepaid. Deb stated that the Precinct would be pre-buying gas this year as well. Gary stated that the gas is a lower BTU per gallon fuel, but a more efficient furnace has been installed and the building has been insulated so the proposed budget is about as good an estimate as any. The miscellaneous revenue for \$2,502 is grant money from OEM for Minor repairs. The repairs have been paid for out of Small Equipment Repairs.

6). Spofford Fire & Rescue Precinct – The new building will be GeoThermal Heat which is a ground source heat pump that runs on electricity. The cost is a guess. Payroll hours were higher than expected. 2005 was 1,204 hours, 2006 1,265 hours and 2007 was 1,683 Due to increased # of hours. The officers are paid salary and remaining funds are divided up by the # of hours. By increasing hours there pay rate went way down. Last year payroll was approximately \$11.25, This year it was down to \$8.16. Dave has proposed to increase the payroll to average \$10 per hour. The # of calls has not increased, but more volunteers are responding and more mutual aid calls to Keene. The Commissioners are proposing a full audit this year. There was \$76,000 in interest on building account last year. \$50,000 was returned to the building fund and \$26,000 to reduce taxes. Small Equipment expenditures are on schedule this year. Warrant Articles are funding the Capital Reserve Accounts and the Small Equipment Purchases. The move to the new building will be done by volunteers. There is a study committee including; Neil Jenness, Bill Allen, John Schlichting and Scott Pierstoff. There is not a lot of interest in the building. There is limited septic and little land for parking.

7). Discussion – Steve asked about reducing the work load on department heads. He stated that it was unfair of the budget committee to task Leon with producing the paperwork to convince the Town to purchase a \$150,000 roll-off truck. He should be running the Transfer station and not worrying about administrative tasks. Steve also asked about the validity of having a department head for a 2 person department. The

Committee also discussed having a Police Chief that should have all his time free to manage officers and not spending time working on a budget. However, he should certainly be entitled have input to his budget.

Steve stated that he has been researching the actual expenditures instead of budget to budget from Fred's suggestion. The Highway garage turned back about \$50,000 last year. Police ran pretty close to budget. The School returns between \$115,000 and \$200,000 a year. There is more competition for dollars this year because of the Town Office Complex and Spofford Fire Department.

There are 4 major entities in Town: The School, The Town and The 2 Fire Precincts. The Library also has some separate statutes that need to be followed. Steve asked about shifting more responsibilities to Rick and Carol and if additional help is needed to use the part-time Secretary at the highway garage to fill in at the Town or as Deputy Town Clerk or Budget Committee Secretary. Gary stated that he was concerned about Highway Garage becoming maintenance workers for the Town. They get called to the Beach to pick up leaves. The Parks & Rec payroll line does not include leaf pick-up. Parks & Rec would consider it subcontracting.

Steve stated that he did not know what the Highway Secretary was doing for 4 hours per day. Mondays are spent compiling payroll and bills. Gary stated that he thought the Town had come a long way since the days of an elected Road Agent. A Public Works Superintendent was hired after that. Gary stated that even companies with budget departments still need department heads to have input into their budget.

If you reduce the budget by the amount of funds that has been returned to the Town you have only reduced this amount for 1 year. Warren stated that the budget can't be overspent, so we are better off allocating the money each year and having it returned to the Town annually. Bill asked about sub-contracting for snow removal.

Judy wanted to review compensation for all employees. She does not know if the employees are adequately compensated. As a user of Town Services the Police Department ranks high for her. Dan stated that employee compensation is reviewed with comparable towns. Judy stated that Keene and Brattleboro could hire our workers out of Town so she would consider them adequate comparables. Dan stated that a patrolman in Chesterfield is not the same job as a patrolman in Keene. Steve stated that the purpose of the Committee is to look at the salaries budgeted and determine if those monies have been spent as appropriated. This is about taking the money the Town has and using it better.

8). The meeting adjourned at 10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amy LaFontaine
Secretary