

**TOWN OF DIXFIELD
BUDGET MEETING 2016-2017 MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2016
LUDDEN MEMORIAL LIBRARY**

Attendance

Selectmen: Dana Whittemore, Malcolm Gill, Norman Mitchell, Eugene Skibitsky, Town Mgr. Carlo Puiia. Hart Daley came in to meeting at 6:30.
Finance Committee: Scott Dennett (Chair), Eric Theriault, Cathy Dorion, Anthony Bucci, Sharon Gilsleider.
Chief Jeff Howe, Dan McKay, Mr and Mrs. Varnum , Norine Clarke, WVACTv, Matt Daigle.

1. Vice Chairman Dana Whittemore called the meeting to order at 5:35pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Agenda adjustments: None
1. Dept #2 Police: TM Puiia noted that the Cops Grant program will be completed on July 12, 2016 which is two weeks into the new budget. He has budgeted for a fifth officer through the summer to cover officers vacations. Chief Howe noted that if the town returns to a four man department his intent is to fill the rotation but will not be as in full as with five. There will be more of a workload on the officers and the level of service will “be disrupted”. Mr. Skibitsky asked if the re application of the “cops grant” was discussed and the chief answered no, but he would like to explore the availability. Mr Skibitsky then asked if the 4-man rotation will give 24 hour service as the citizens have often asked for. The Chief answered yes but will not be as fast. Mr. Whittemore asked to re-visit the pay for reserve officers. Chief explained that there are two levels of reserves, green pins and blue pins. Green pins are qualified to cover all calls except death scenes or fatal crashes. Blue pins can do all calls and are often full time officers in other towns. He would like to have the blue pins receive the salary of a new officer. Mr Whittemore asked about using reserves for filling schedules. Responses were from Chief Howe and TM Puiia. There are no benefits paid for reservists. If there is scheduled overtime, the union officers get first refusal of those shifts at overtime pay. (union contract). In 2015 there was the changeover of chiefs. Chief Pickett did not require a full-time insurance package. That will require that an additional \$10,000 be added to this year's budget. Also in 2015, there was a union agreement made in June and some of that has added to a rise in the budget. Last year’s budget was \$355,000 and this year, \$378,000 which includes the cost of a fifth man for 8 weeks. Historically, officers

take their vacations in the summer when their children are out of school which is also a busy time period for the dept. There is no vacation policy in place but he usually gets a two week notice and an extra officer at that time would be a great help. Mr. Gill asked about the Dare program which is listed in the budget for \$2000. There is currently no program in any Dixfield school. Sheriff Holland was going to pursue it at the Peru school but it has now been lapsed for about 6-7 years. The Chief would like to see it implemented in the Middle School. Officer Bernier is a certified officer but would have to update that certification. Mr. Gill noted a concern for the current Heroin crisis and felt that an additional \$1000 would be required to cover the training. TM Puiia said he was not in favor because of the fewer officers. Office Bernier would be required to be at the school about 6 hours a day for 12 weeks. Chief Howe said that there are new drugs and new approaches to the teaching because of the advances in the knowledge of how kids learn. The payroll costs are in the Payroll section of the Budget and may be adjusted due to contract overtime vs. reservists. There are only two union officers, the Lieutenant and Chief are Non-union. The Chief can offer his vacation time to a reservist. Other factors in the payroll item are increases in Workman's Comp and Unemployment. Mr. Gill asked when the union contract will be finished and was told June 30th, 2017. Mr. Whittemore asked for a clarification on the service contract. It is a stable price and is not changed from last year for cleaning services. Mr. Therriault asked about the drop in maintenance costs for the cruisers. Chief explained that the two newest cruisers are under warranty and the 2011 cruiser is used as his vehicle now and does not have as much upkeep and needed repairs. Mrs. Gilsleider asked about the high cost for legal services and was told it was in anticipation of the contract renewal. Mr. Whittemore said it was not so much about the budget itself, but how it will be implemented.

There was a discussion on whether the two groups would vote tonight, at a later time, together or singly. The Finance Committee chose to wait and the Selectmen decided to vote now. Mr. Mitchell said he would like to cut the request to the 2014 amount. When asked where to make the cuts, he said it would be up to the Chief. Mr. Whittemore noted that the expectation was that any unspent money would be turned back to help cut taxes. Mr. Mitchell said that the tax bills are outrageous and spending must be controlled. Mr. Gill said any large cuts should be justified. Mr. Skibitsky made a motion to use the budget figure \$378,516 for the Police dept. and Mr. Gill seconded. The vote was 3 in favor, Mr. Mitchell opposed and Mr. Daley abstained. The Budget committee will vote later. Mr. Bucci asked for an explanation of the high legal fees.

1. Dept. #4 Fire: Chief Dennett presented the budget for the Fire Co. He reported there should be money left over in both of the fuel accounts, heat and vehicle. It can be rolled over or turned back. Mr. Gill asked how many were on the force now and the chief replied 17 or 18. Mr. Gill also asked

how the heating system was working with propane instead of oil. Chief said that the first year was horrible but insulation has helped some. Propane does not heat up as fast as oil did so they have to plan ahead to have the meeting room warmed up. Mrs. Gilsleider asked about the telephone costs dropping and was told it was the change in cell phone costs. Mr. Mitchell asked for an explanation of the unit not being a town department but a fire company when it was all owned by the town. Chief Dennett said that the Fire Company is the manpower (the corporation), and that is the way it was formed historically. Mr. Mitchell made a motion to accept the budget amount \$89,643. and Mr. Skibitsky seconded the motion. The vote was 5-0.

2. Dept. #6 Boards and Committees: TM Puiia explained that there was some money in this budget for professional development. The Planning Board will be taking some workshops and the members get a \$10 stipend per meeting. The Chairman gets \$20. The Economic Development request did not change. The Finance Committee request went from \$50 to \$100 to cover cost of binders and nameplates. Mr. Daley made a motion to accept the total of \$3258 and Mr. Mitchell seconded. Vote was 5-0.
3. Dept. #7 Public Safety: This portion of the budget covers hydrants, street lights, traffic lights and ambulance (Med-Care) assessments. Med Care currently is \$24 per capita but they are on a calendar year so TM Puiia added a 5% increase for the second half of the year. Mr. Skibitsky moved the amount of \$198,027 and Mr. Gill seconded The vote was 4-0-1 abstention (Mr. Daley)
4. Dept. #8 Health, Animal and Code Enforcement: TM Puiia introduced the new Code Enforcement Officer Michael Moore who lives on the Common Road. Mr. Gill asked if the Town would help Mr. Moore get his training and TM Puiia said it should be free from the state but the town would pay mileage and meals. Mr. Skibitsky recommended the proposed amount of \$14,439 and Mr. Daley seconded the motion. The vote was 5-0.
5. Dept. #9 Recreation: By phone call to Mr. Whittemore, Aaron Perrault had recommended that the requested amount be changed from \$12,500 to \$15,000 to cover increased offerings. Mr. Varnum said that four of the Rec. Board's members have agreed \$12,500 is enough and that they should get money from the towns that send youngsters because they have no program of their own. The Board has improved some of its policies. Mr. Daley wanted to clarify that the Board could have fundraisers and take donations for the revenue fund. There is a new field but it is at the school. They are hoping for volunteers to keep the fields in shape. Mr. Daley made a motion to go with the budget figure of \$12,500 and Mr. Whittemore seconded. The vote was 5-0.
6. The next meeting will be Monday, March 7, 2016 at 5:30 at the Ludden Library meeting room. At 7:10, Mr. Gill made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Daley seconded. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Norine Clarke