

*Town of Atkinson*  
*Budget Committee Meeting Minutes*  
*November 27, 2012*

Members Present:

Harold Morse, Chairman  
Bill Smith Vice Chairman  
John Feuer  
Sue Carroll  
Wendy Barker

Others Present:

Bill Innes, Town Administrator  
Fred Childs, Board of Selectmen  
Todd Barbera, Board of Selectmen  
Chief Consentino and SGT Caggiano, Police  
Department  
Ted Stewart, Highway Department

Chairman Harold Smith called the November 27, 2012 meeting of the Atkinson Budget Committee to order at 7:10 PM. Member Craig Schuster was absent.

Mr. Morse informed the Committee and the audience that the Highway Department, Police Department, Elderly Affairs and Executive Budget for the Selectmen were on the agenda.

First, the committee reviewed the minutes for the November 20, 2012. The 2nd paragraph last sentence as line items have dropped should say in other departments.

**Member John Feuer made a motion to accept the minutes of the November 20, 2012 meeting of the budget committee. Bill Smith seconded the motion and Sue Carroll abstained. Vote: 4yes, one abstention.**

**Police Department** –Chief Consentino and SGT Caggiano- Harold Morse asked about a vehicle for \$12,000. Chief explained that it was in process, the department is getting the vehicle from the DEA for free. The Feds redid the computer system, the initial seizure has been approved, it needs to be processed and the Town will have the 1st deposit. The vehicle is not a cruiser; it is a Honda Ridgeline, for the officer to travel back and forth to Bedford, instead of using his POV and paying him gas and mileage. Gas, mileage and other vehicle expenses will be paid for out of asset forfeiture money which is also available for police work. The town has to keep the vehicle for 3 years and then can dispose of it. The money from selling the vehicle would go back to the asset forfeiture fund. SGT Caggiano said that there are strict guidelines on how asset forfeiture funds are used. The money cannot be used for expenses that the Town has to pay, for example gas and mileage. Mr. Childs asked why the money does not come to the Town first and that asset forfeiture funds should be used to pay for the officer. Mr. Innes explained that the fund has not returned any money yet, but when it does it will cover the officer's salary and the cost of the vehicle. The committee had more questions for the police department regarding when funds would be available to the Town to pay for the officer's salary and how much money the Town would be receiving. It was the understanding of the committee that money received from asset forfeiture would cover the cost of the officer and equipment. Mr. Innes explained that the officer has participated in 5 cases with \$45,000 coming to the Town plus the vehicle for a total of \$57,000. SGT Caggiano explained some of the benefits of the asset forfeiture program to the Town.

Mr. Morse asked if there were specific questions about the police department and asked why the chief's salary increased by 41% and everyone else had an increase of 1.2%. Mr. Childs explained that he received a raise. Mr. Innes explained that all expenses for the 6th officer have moved from the police department budget to the warrant article. The cost for 2013 to keep the officer is roughly \$80,000, for salary uniforms and all other expenses and would be added to the police department budget. The reason for hiring the full time officer is to cut back on part time officers. He will be working double shifts so that the midnight officer will have someone to work with him. He will also cover shifts during the day. Member Sue Carroll asked if part time officer payroll should go down due to the 6th full time officer and that the contract requires that overtime be offered to the full time officers first. Chief explained that it went down to \$85,000. This year 1.5% has to be added in because of the union contract. The department also looked at ideal patrol coverage for the town. Now we have one cruiser for each shift. The

department goal is to have 2 cruisers on the evening shift and also one for the detective. The department has 2 cruisers during the day, one for the neighborhood patrol. The goal is 1,979 shifts that need to be staffed. 729 shifts staffed by the part time workforce. The total cost is roughly \$90,000 for part time officers. Chief Consentino remarked that people do not realize what the Town is dealing with, including sexual assault and one instance of bad checks by someone who was writing bad checks all the way to Tennessee, and the time all the pipes were stolen out of someone's house. The committee discussed why Atkinson police department news does not get in the news. Mr. Morse asked if the DEA agent is coming out of part-time money. SGT Caggiano said he represents 208 shifts or 32 hours per week. The Town pays his salary and once the money comes in, he will be the Town will be reimbursed from the forfeiture fund.

The Committee discussed the part time officer's line. Mr. Morse stated that the Selectmen's budget has the part time officer line at \$80,000. Chief Consentino asked about the cut. Mr. Childs explained that since they had more full time officers, they would not need as much. Chief Consentino stated that the DEA agent was \$26,000 and it doesn't cover the weekend shifts and the daytime patrols. Mr. Morse remarked that the part time line would be \$65,350 without the DEA agent. The committee discussed the DEA agent salary. Chief Consentino asked why Medicare was dropped. SGT Caggiano explained that it was the corrected version and that the Town pays 1.45% of police department salaries for Medicare.

Next, the committee discussed where the police department budget could be cut. Chief Consentino said he could take a \$2,000 cut on the telephone line and continued to go through the police department budget. Mr. Consentino stated that the cleaning services line could be dropped, but it would depend on whether they have a trustee. Mr. Consentino stated that the Juvenile Officer line was cut to \$1,500. Member Sue Carroll said that historically it could be cut to \$1,000. Chief Consentino stated that the department has a DARE officer who could go into the schools now, so the department has to budget more money. Chief Consentino suggested all payroll go into one line. Mr. Consentino asked about the cruiser lease agreement line which was put down to \$1.00 and asked if the cruiser lease would be presented as a warrant article rather than in the budget. Mr. Childs responded affirmatively. Next Mr. Consentino asked about the new equipment line which was dropped to \$3,500. Mr. Childs explained that the cut was based on past history. SGT Caggiano and Chief explained that the new cruisers would need new equipment. The department has one new cruiser. It was suggested that the new equipment be included in the warrant. SGT Caggiano expressed concern about the age of the cruisers the town presently has.

Member Sue Carroll reiterated the Town needs to keep expenses down for the sake of the taxpayers. SGT Caggiano explained that as the economy has gone down, crime has gone up. Mr. Barbera explained that retirement went up 22%, plus the 6th full time officer and this accounts for most of the increase.

Mr. Morse asked about the full time officers over time line which is up \$55,000 from last year. Chief explained that by the union contract all open shifts will be offered to full time officers first by seniority then to part time officers by seniority. For example, if someone calls in sick, that open shift has to be offered to a full time officer first. If it is scheduled time, then a part time officer can be put into the schedule. The committee continued to discuss the overtime line. SGT Caggiano and Chief Consentino explained that when officers work details, the money comes back to the department. An officer scheduled for a shift is not allowed to do a detail unless he can find someone to change shifts with. Next the committee discussed the over time line. SGT Caggiano said that the department was estimating 100 shifts and explained how the department estimated overtime shifts. Using an average rate for overtime of \$34.50 per hour, it comes to \$22,500. SGT Caggiano explained that overtime would be divided among the five full time officers who generally take extra shifts. The Committee also discussed the overtime line for the sergeant and asked whether it should be separate or included in the over time line for full time officers. SGT Caggiano explained that the department estimated that his share of department overtime was one fifth, divided among the five officers who work overtime. The sixth full time officer does not work overtime. Chairman Morse if there were more questions. There were none.

**Elderly Affairs** – Director Consentino's payroll is \$34,731. It is up because the department is over expended this year, the drivers are working about 67 hours a week. Postage is \$100, vehicle gas is \$6,000, vehicle maintenance is \$2,000, the total proposed by the Selectmen is \$45,488. Director Consentino proposed \$46,288 with a \$800 cut in postage. Mr. Morse asked about vehicle maintenance and Director Consentino explained that the money for

the vehicle comes out of the senior fund. Also, that the senior fund has spent over \$19,000 to assist elders in the Town, including the cost of maintenance of the vehicle; funds that the Town would have to pay. Chairman Morse asked if there were more questions. There were none.

Mr. Barbera requested to address the Board and stated that the selectmen also had some concerns about the increases in the budget and that the committee would have the final budget by next week. \$5 million increase valuation for new buildings which means \$94,000 additional revenue for property taxes. The new superintendent of schools has informed the selectmen that their operating budget will be flat. Mr. Barbera informed the committee that there is extra money not spent from unallocated fund balance, the Town spent some and kept some in reserve. The 2% increase coming from things like retirement and insurance which the Town has no control over. There were no more questions.

**Highway Department** – Ted Stewart, Road Agent, came before the Board. There are no conflicts with the Selectmen’s proposed budget. Member Sue Carroll asked about legal notices. Mr. Stewart explained that in years past the budget was over expended by that percent. Mr. Morse asked about the truck lease. Mr. Stewart reiterated that he would like to reconsider the decision to make the truck lease a warrant. The committee continued to debate the truck lease line. Mr. Innes asked to poll the committee. The committee agreed unanimously that the truck lease should be a warrant. Mr. Stewart said he would still prefer to have the truck lease on the budget. The committee continued to debate whether or not to put the truck lease on the ballot. Mr. Innes requested to move on. Mr. Stewart stated that the truck lease line was the only one he disagreed with. Mr. Innes asked if there were more questions.

Mr. Morse asked about the gravel line for summer. Mr. Innes informed the committee that the road agent had expended \$19,017 as of the end of October. Mr. Childs asked about contract labor at \$105,000. Mr. Stewart explained that he looked at the yearly average. He also stated that he is putting in a warrant article to add to the emergency fund for winter. \$15,000 would handle one extra storm, but he would like enough to handle a national disaster. Salem has \$60,000 for a winter disaster or a harsh winter, enough for a national disaster. Mr. Stewart is hoping for a \$30,000 cushion. Mr. Morse asked if there were more questions. There were none.

Mr. Morse asked if there were more questions and asked to move on to street lighting. There were no questions about street lighting.

**Recycling** – Mr. Stewart stated that he had the bid packages with him but is not prepared to discuss it. Mr. Innes stated that he has the figures. In the last 5 months, recycling has increased by 2%. This is primarily for the custodial services at Woodlock Park. It covers the cost of turning the compost, grinding material and taking it away. The department pays \$2,500 quarterly. Probar was doing it for the wood chips, but the market dropped. The Town put it out to bid and for \$10,000, the Town gets a lot of work. Mr. Smith asked if the Town got anything for paper. Mr. Stewart explained that the Town saves \$3.00 per ton to put it in the back of the truck. Mr. Innes stated that 17% of the Town trash goes to single stream recycling and the Town saves a lot of money. Mr. Morse asked about the other professional services line in the recycling line. Mr. Stewart said one thing is household hazardous waste day is the major part of the line and explained that the increase was due to the fact that Atkinson is hosting hazardous recycling waste day in 2013. He needs it to be increased by \$8,000 but it will be a wash, because Atkinson will be repaid by the other towns. Tonnage is quadrupled for host towns, costing \$5000 to \$6000 plus the amount needed to host. Mr. Innes explained that other professional services used to be used for waste management. Mr. Stewart explained that it was used for tipping fees and recycling bins. Next year the line should be significantly yes, except for the cost of hosting hazardous waste. The Town hosts hazardous waste approximately every 5 years. It will be a \$6,000 increase, bringing it to \$18,000. Next year that line will be brought back to about \$5,000 at most.

**Solid Waste** - Mr. Innes requested to discuss solid waste. The total cost is \$3.50 per ton. Next year the town will save about \$120,000 next year by moving to North Side, and this year we will save \$85,000 in waste management. The fees are fixed for three years.

**Grounds Maintenance** –Mr. Innes requested to discuss grounds maintenance. It is pretty flat. It was put out to bid and the mowing contract came in \$500 less but the contract for fertilization went up. Mr. Morse requested that Mr. Stewart give the figures to Mr. Innes. Mr. Stewart would like a \$500 cushion for items like grass seed. The expended line for 2012 has already been spent. Mr. Innes asked if all the bills had come in and Mr. Stewart informed the committee that there was one more mowing bill. Mr. Innes stated that the town needed to do an over expenditure of \$300.00 in one of the lines. Mr. Morse asked why the water use fire protection line was over expended. Mr. Stewart explained that it covered ancillary water. Mr. Innes said that the Committee needed to discuss Mr. Stewart's budget further and Mr. Morse invited the Road Agent back for the meeting of December 6, 2012. Mr. Morse asked for more questions. There were none.

Mr. Stewart requested to discuss warrant articles and said there should be a solid number before Christmas. Also, the 5 year plan was 2 years behind schedule because of budget cuts. Mr. Morse asked if Mr. Stewart was going to redo the plan. Mr. Stewart said things have shifted but no roads were slated to be done in 2012 and 2013 that were scheduled beforehand so that some roads have been shifted around. He hopes to get back on the yearly spending and adjust the plan accordingly. Mr. Innes said that a plan reduces overall costs, putting off maintenance increases future costs. Mr. Stewart reiterated the need for planned, routine maintenance. Mr. Morse suggested that if Mr. Stewart needed extra for road maintenance it should be put in a Warrant Article for a 5 year plan for road maintenance. Mr. Stewart stated that a citizen's petition was not the best solution. Mr. Innes agreed. Mr. Morse stated that Mr. Stewart was free to go.

**Executive Budget** – Mr. Bill Innes, Town Administrator

Mr. Morse asked about the increase in the stipend for the selectmen and Mr. Innes requested to poll the committee. Mr. Morse does not agree with the increase. Mr. Innes stated that there has not been an increase in their stipend for 10-12 years and asked to poll the committee. Member Sue Carroll agreed with Mr. Morse not to increase the stipend. Vice Chairman Smith abstained. Member John Feuer was in favor. Member Wendy Barker felt that they do not warrant a pay raise now that the new town administrator has been brought in. Mr. Morse asked if the committee would like to discuss anything else in the executive budget. There was no more discussion.

**Financial Administration** – Bill Innes, Town Administrator

The committee looked through the financial administration budget. Mr. Innes stated that the tax collector budget was not presented by him.

Mr. Morse asked if the committee would like to invite the technology committee back next week or accept his budget as proposed. Member Sue Carroll had some questions about the Crimestar program. Mr. Morse said he also had questions. The biggest question is what to put on the warrant and if it should be a 2 year or one year warrant. Mr. Innes stated he would invite Mr. Athanasiou back.

Mr. Barbera stated that the tax collector budget was adjusted because the telephone line was underfunded, but another line was also adjusted so the change was a wash.

The committee returned to the proposal for the Crimestar system and Member Sue Carroll said she had questions. Mr. Innes reviewed the program for her and explained that it allows them to check for warrants in the car, gives the town a sequel database and upgrades the computers, among other things; it is also a safety issue. If the upgrade is not done the Town will not be able to get certain grants. Their existing program is discontinued. Mr. Innes reiterated that the main question was whether to do it all in one year or spread the cost over 2 years. Mr. Innes asked if there were more questions. There were none.

John Feuer stated that the Library, the Fire Department and Town buildings would also be back for the December 4, 2012 meeting. Mr. Innes informed the committee that about \$75,000 has already been taken out of town buildings. Mr. Innes and Mr. Weymouth would be back to discuss the town buildings with the committee.

**Legal** – There were questions on line 41531.390. Mr. Innes proposed \$50,000 and the Selectmen proposed \$35,000. Chairman Morse requested that it be taken down to \$10,000. 2011 was \$90,000 and 2012 was \$9,400. Mr. Innes stated that there is at least one grievance for the police department. The arbitrator fee is \$1,500 plus other fees. There is also a cable contract for 2013 and historically legal fees for a cable contract are around \$20,000. Mr. Innes expects the cost for negotiating the cable contract to be around \$10,000, and including the grievances, at a minimum, legal costs would be \$13,000, with nothing extra. He felt the cable contract \$35,000 is a reasonable figure. The committee discussed the legal contract. Mr. Morse said \$10,000 would be a reasonable amount. Mr. Feuer and Member Wendy Barker felt \$25,000 would be reasonable. Vice Chairman Smith and Member Sue Carroll felt \$15,000 was reasonable.

**Vice Chairman Bill Smith made a motion to accept the Legal Budget at \$15,000. Member Sue Carroll seconded the motion. All present voted in favor. Vote: 5/0.**

Mr. Innes moved to the other insurance lines and explained that those expenses are pass through. Advertising Regional is for costs for Rockingham Regional Planning Commission; dues are \$.92 per capital and is \$6,269. It is for the cost is for a circuit rider. The circuit rider is working with the Planning Board to rewrite the Master Plan.

**Health Administration** – down 13%, the assistant health inspector is not taking a salary.

**Health Agencies** – up 1.6% and covers services such as family mediation, the Vic Geary Center and Rockingham Visiting Nurses. Mr. Morse asked about Casa and Mr. Innes stated that Casa goes on the warrant article and it is for abused children. Mr. Morse asked why the Red Cross line went down and Mr. Innes explained that the figure was what they requested. The Sad Café requested \$5,000 but the Selectmen felt that \$2,500 was a reasonable amount. Sue Carroll stated that the committee discussed eliminating or reducing contributions to the Sad Café. Rockingham Community Action does oil assistance and are budgeted for \$2,000. Mr. Morse asked about RSVP and Mr. Childs explained it is to help elderly people get jobs. Mr. Innes asked if there were more questions about health agencies. There were none.

**General Assistance** – the Town gets calls for fuel assistance and money for Christmas presents. The general assistance budget is flat year over year and the Town gets donations.

**Long Term Debt** - \$85,000 for the library.

**Long term interest** – down from \$64,388 to \$58,969 and should decrease year over year.

The committee ended the discussion on financial administration.

**Vice Chairman Bill Smith made a motion to adjourn. Member Sue Carroll seconded the motion. Vote 5/0 in favor with member Craig Schuster absent. Chairman Harold Morse adjourned the November 27, 2012 meeting of the budget committee at 9:55 pm.**