

*Town of Atkinson
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
November 13, 2012*

Members Present:

Bill Smith Vice Chairman
John Feuer
Craig Schuster
Wendy Barker

Others Present:

Bill Innes, Town Administrator
Fred Childs, Board of Selectmen
Mike Murphy, Fire Department
Noriko Yoshida Travers, Community Center
Susan Ober, Recreation
B. Scott – Memorial Day
Debra L. DeSimone, Tax Collector
Josh Dougdale, Animal Control
Kathleen Friel – Cemetery Trustees
Paul Wainwright, Conservation Committee

Vice Chairman Bill Smith called the November 13, 2012 meeting of the Atkinson Budget Committee to order at 7:00 PM. Chairman Harold Morse and Member Sue Carroll were not present, Fred Childs, Board of Selectmen made the quorum.

Mr. Smith requested that Mike Murphy, Chief, Fire Department come forward. Chief Murphy went through the Fire Department Budget line by line.

Ambulance contract - \$1.00, the same.

Fire Administration

Fire Department offices and personnel - \$116,294, the increase in member ship averages about \$14,000 -\$15,000 per person, the maximum allowed is 45 members, the department has 38, probably 24 active.

Clerk -the change is the 1.5% COLA. FICA is \$8,853 and Medicare is adjusted.

Telephone is reduced to \$5,250, the contract is ending. The share of cleaning with the other departments in town proposed is \$3,500. There is a \$2,000 increase for electricity. The hydrants and water contract is \$14,000, there are 64 hydrants in town. Dues and subscriptions are \$1,000. Hazmat is \$1, not rejoining. Office supplies are \$3,000 and are level funded. Postage is \$500, level funded. Education and conferences is level funded at \$10,000. Truck maintenance is level funded at \$500. Water line protection for the Hampstead area water company is level funded at \$1,500 and covers the maintenance fee for the sprinkler and water. Craig Schuster asked about water lines and Chief Murphy explained that there are two water lines, one is strictly hydrants and the other is for the sprinkler and drinking water.

Hydrant maintenance is level funded. Atkinson is a member of the water district and there are several abandoned hydrants on the west side of town. Chief has been pulling up the abandoned hydrants.

Fire Fighting - Minor equipment is budgeted at \$2,500, a \$1,000 increase, it was cut a couple of years ago. Gas and oil is \$5,000, a \$1000 increase. Truck maintenance is level at \$20,000 and covers maintenance for 9 vehicles. Chemicals/hazmat is level at \$500. New Equipment is level at \$12,500. Chief gave the committee a handout explaining some of the items on the list. Food is reduced to \$1,000 from \$1200.

Chief Murphy is requesting \$30,000 for uniforms. The gear is not compliant with NFPA standards; anything 10 years old has to be discarded. Some people were sent home from fire fighting academy because of old gear. Chief did a study of who needs structural gear, for example, EMS do not need it, The department needs 21 sets at a cost of \$1,700 to \$2,000 per set, even the helmets are not NFPA compliant. He has authorized purchase of 4

sets this year, using money from the truck maintenance line and is trying to find more money to reduce the \$30,000 requested for next year.

The Committee discussed how to dispose of the old gear. Chief Murphy explained that it can be used for any non structural training. Chief Murphy explained that there is no value because no one in the US can use it and that the gear is in good condition, but is not authorized. Bill Innes said that the town might be able to donate it, but can't sell it. Chief Murphy informed the committee that in the past Atkinson sent the old gear to departments up north that did not have much gear. He did not know about the 10 year rule and now has guidelines of how to dispose of it. The guidelines are explained in the hand out given to the committee. Chief Murphy intends to look at 1 year expenditure and then get on a replacement schedule and wants to buy more with remaining revenue if the selectmen allow him to.

Vice Chairman Smith asked for questions. There were none.

Fire Prevention and Inspections – The line for fire inspectors is level at \$5000, when residents apply for building permits and inspections the money comes back.

Training is level at \$750 for instructional material (firearms). Communications is level at \$6,500.

Medical Services – the line for physicals is increased \$500, from \$2,500 to \$3,000 for new personnel. Professional services are level at \$1,800. Ambulance is level; Trinity in Plaistow is taking most of the calls.

The committee discussed the difference in the total for 2012 which was \$ 273,000 and 2013 which was \$309,000 an increase of \$36,000. \$20,000 of the increase is uniforms and \$10,000 is payroll.

Building Inspections – level at \$54,662. Craig Schuster asked about revenues and Mr. Murphy informed the committee that revenues are nearly level at \$4,000, and that Sandra LaVallee tracks it.

Homeland Security – \$3,906, it used to be \$0. This year the Selectmen have looked at a reverse 911 system called Code Red and felt that the best place to put the cost was in Fire Department budget. Code Red is an independent company with over 3000 phone numbers of Atkinson residents that they can call.

The committee discussed Code Red. \$3,906 is the annual cost. An example is the most recent storm; residents can be called and warned. Chief Murphy pointed out that storms are getting worse and worse, and the reaction from utilities is not as fast as it could be, with problems lasting longer and longer, we can call residents and let them know if a storm is coming or when power will be restored. As it is the Fire Department gets 50-60 calls a day from people asking. There are opportunities for other activities, for example seniors or other people with risk factors can be identified and called 1-2 times a day and if they don't answer, they will call the Police Department. It is not mandatory.

Chief Murphy then requested to raise the new equipment line to \$2,500 for a 25 person shelter care kit, that can be used as a shelter, the kit holds cots, blankets pillows in one cart and can be rolled into facility, for example, the library or the Community Center. The department only has 6 cots right now, and with the kit the department will not have to scramble to find cots, blankets and pillows.

Vice Chairman Bill Smith asked for more questions. There were none.

Recreation, Community Center, Patriotic Purposes – Susan Ober, Recreation Chairperson, Brandon Scott, Memorial Day, Noriko Yoshida Travers, Atkinson Community Center presented their budget to the Committee.

Memorial Day - decreasing from \$1500 to \$1300 and from \$400 to \$300 on minor equipment which includes flags and medals. Food is up from \$125 to \$130 to feed the band. The committee discussed flags. Selectman Childs informed the committee that the line for flags was \$1,200 and they are asking for \$1300 because they have an extra flag at Collins Park. It is to replace flags if they get tattered or worn, also for small flags for graves.

Recreation – Mr. Innes requested that the recreation department present lines that are increasing or decreasing.

Sun and Fun – Staff is down from \$32,000 to \$31,000 which has to do with how counselors are graded, they can come in at various levels, some were slightly increased, there were lot of rain dates, they made some adjustments for actual, everything was level funded except electricity, the line says Pope but it should be Woodlock. It was increased by \$450 to cover the cost of irrigation, then everything else is level, the overall budget is up \$90.

The Committee discussed the Sun and Fun Budget. Member Craig Schuster asked about buses. Susan Ober replied that the amount is low because one field trip was canceled, fees are also included. Parents pay for the field trips so the department actually breaks even on field trips. Ms. Yoshida Travers informed the committee that the amount should be for buses, field trips and mileage. Ms. Ober informed the committee that the food line is for the year end picnic at \$999 but is on the wrong line it is in the programs and seniors line, it belonged in the food. The other wrong line item was supplies which is \$713 over, the recreation department expended \$1,428, but \$713 of that belongs on equipment and maintenance. Mr. Innes asked if the department is adjusting. Noriko Yoshida Travers responded that they requested but it is up to the auditor.

Mr. Feuer asked about enrollment. Noriko Yoshida Travers informed him that enrollment was 218 this year for Sun & Fun and attendance was between 150-130, with 80-90 kids for field trips, they tried to get a conservative amount, they were anticipating 40 campers and got 70-80 kids, they try to get them to pre register but they always wait to the last minute. Sue Ober informed the committee that income from Sun and Fun is about \$25,000. Mr. Schuster informed the audience that income through October 31st is \$47,000, including the Community Center and Sun and Fun.

Community Center – Noriko Yoshida Travers explained that the hours for the Senior Recreation Coordinator were cut from 40 hours per week to 35 hours per week, a 5 hour per week difference for a total of \$26,000. Mr. Childs asked her about extra hours. Ms. Yoshida Travers explained that she can work up to 35 hours and does not get paid for hours over that. The Committee discussed getting paid for the extra hours and Mr. Childs recommended that the line be increased to \$28,000 because Ms. Yoshida Travers does not get paid for all the hours she works. If you look at how the Selectmen voted previously, if she works all those hours, she can put in for it. Mr. Innes explained that according to labor laws, part-time employees can only work 35 hours /week, and if a part-time employee is working more than 35 hours per week, the Town has to either offset with wages or compensation time.

Cleaning Service – an increase because the Community Center is cleaned once a week. People who rent it are supposed to clean it, but they don't so it is being cleaned twice a week, also because of elections. Mr. Childs recommended that cleaning be added to the fee and if they clean up can be refunded. Ms. Yoshida Travers explained that she can't because sometimes 3-4 parties a day use the facility and she cannot say who did not clean, they are thinking of raising rental fees to offset cleaning. The community center is also being used more and getting dirtier and not just for rentals. Mr. Innes asked that the recreation department make a recommendation to the Board.

Water –increased and includes the sprinkler system and drinking water.

Gas – for the hot water heater, they installed a timer and keep it low, there are 2 tanks, one is for the backup generator to cover a couple weeks in case they have to use the Center for a warm up shelter. Craig Schuster asked if use as a warm up shelter is paid by FEMA. Ms. Yoshida Travers explained that the generator was paid for by FEMA. Mr. Innes explained that it generates only enough power for half the building and suggested that the town get a grant replace it with a new generator and sell the old generator or put it at the town garage.

Supplies - \$200 more for new copier machine cartridge, it costs \$199.

Minor equipment - down to \$500 – finished installing window air conditioners and \$500 is for emergencies.

Total – down 2.64% reduced \$1,284

Tax Collections – Debra DeSimone, Tax Collector, went through the budget for tax collections and handed out copies to the Budget Committee.

Deputy Tax Collector – Ms. DeSimone is requesting to increase her wages to \$12.00 per hour. The Deputy Tax Collector has been with the Town for 5 years with no raise. The committee discussed raises for Town employees. Mr. Innes is creating a matrix to compare pay and benefits for Atkinson Town employees compared to employees with the same jobs at other New Hampshire Towns of similar size. He gave the matrix and recommendations to the Selectmen but no decision has been reached. Mr. Childs informed her that the Budget Committee cannot approve the raise, it is up to the Selectmen and he does not know if they can or will approve it. Ms. DeSimone asked about the 1.5% cola. Mr. Innes explained that he was not sure if it is COLA but they are calling it 1.5% increase, but are not sure how they are going to manage it. Ms. DeSimone requested a small increase of 1.5% in her salary, as well. Mr. DeSimone also calculated FICA and Medicare. Bill Innes stated it would be adjusted because it starts in April.

Ms. DeSimone went through the rest of the lines in the budget. The telephone line has a \$60 increase due to foreclosures; she has had to make many telephone calls to Massachusetts lawyers. Data processing is \$200. Microfilming is \$100 the same. Both are for records retention. Other professional services, she spent \$1,760 getting bills out on time, and is requesting to bring the line to \$1800. Equipment repairs is \$1. Dues and memberships is increased \$70, her Justice of the Peace and Notary have to be renewed this year. It is \$75 each, the following year it will go right back. Office supplies is \$1500, she still has to order her bills. Postage went up to \$3,600.

New equipment – she spent nothing but needs a printer, and is requesting to leave at \$200. Mr. Innes informed her that she should go through technology committee. She also used it for a calculator.

Mileage - no slips were submitted to keep costs down, but the deputy tax collector may have to go to conferences.

Education and Conferences - requests to leave at \$1000, they only spent \$100 for renewals and neither she nor Sue went to the conference this year but will need to in 2013.

Mr. Smith asked for other questions. There were none.

Animal Control - Josh Dougdale went through the animal control budget line by line.

The Animal Control Officer is the same. Assistant Animal Control Officers is requesting to go back up to \$3,000. Fines is the same, the department gets reimbursed. FICA, Medicare, telephone, radio maintenance and kennels are all the same as 2012.

Mr. Dougdale explained that the other professional services line is up because he got an animal control car last year and spent a lot of repairs so he is requesting \$4500. He has been paying car repairs out of that line. Craig Schuster requested that he add an equipment line. Mr. Innes suggested the mileage and vehicle line, Mr. Childs recommended that money for vehicle repairs could be put in the other/new line.

Operating supplies, office supplies and postage are the same. Minor equipment is up, it includes ammunition to requalify, and he also wants to get scanners for people with chips in pets, right now they have to go to Plaistow, Brushwood doesn't have one either. Mr. Dougdale informed the committee that a good scanner costs around \$600. Instructional materials, firearms, are the same.

Mileage is the same, he is talking to Sandra about a fuel line, all fuel is coming out of minor equipment. The Committee discussed removing the mileage line and the fuel line. Mr. Dougdale stated that he would like to leave \$100 in mileage and \$500 in fuel because he has to use another vehicle once in awhile. Mr. Dougdale informed

him that he has to use another vehicle aside from the animal control vehicle, for example transporting dead animals. The committee agreed.

Mr. Dougdale is requesting \$600 for uniforms, animal control officers have t shirts, that's all, the department had to buy badges and other ID for this year.

Bill Innes asked for questions. Mr. Schuster asked about the assistant. Mr. Dougdale explained that it was \$3,000 and got cut to \$1100, the line is for when I'm not around, and when the assistant animal control officers have to requalify the money comes out of the assistant animal control line, everyone has to requalify every year.

Mr. Childs asked about shots and Mr. Innes informed the committee that he can give 3 people shots this year.

Cemeteries – Kathleen Friel, Cemetery Trustee

Wages are \$10,113, last year they were \$12,240 and only \$3,078 was spent because they didn't hire anyone right away. Bo doing was doing most of the work without getting paid, FICA is down to \$629, Medicare is down to \$147, the deeds line is the same at \$300, other professional services was \$10,000, last year, this year they are requesting \$15000, it looks over expended but the line is to pay people who dig graves, the town gets the money back, it goes into the general fund. Minor equipment is the same at \$2,000. Care of grounds is the same at \$20,000. Mileage is left at \$100, but it is not used. Mr. Schuster asked to clarify the income line.

Mr. Innes asked for questions. There were no questions.

Conservation - Paul Wainwright - Mr. Wainwright gave everyone a copy of his budget request with notes at the bottom and requested to go over lines that are changed. He is also reviewing Notes a, b, c and d.

Mr. Wainwright requested the recording clerk line be kept at \$500 in case Pete is out. Other professional services, note a, is increasing from \$2,000 to \$3,000 to survey or acquire conservation land. He is anticipating acquiring conservation land in 2013. Mr. Wainwright explained note b; no increase is shown because the Road Agent helps them, for example, pulling the town dock out, the expense needs to be in the conservation budget or road agent budget. Mr. Childs asked if Mr. Stewart does it as part of the Road Agent Budget and how he pays for it. The committee agreed to review those expenses.

Mr. Wainwright explained that note c; the line for equipment and maintenance is increased to \$1000 because major trail work needs to be done in Sawyer. It is overgrown with invasives, mostly bittersweet.

Mr. Wainwright explained note d. Special programs is up because he is proposing for Atkinson to sponsor a kid for conservation camp, the cost is \$475. Kingston sponsors a kid to conservation camp. Mr. Schuster asked how he would pick someone and Mr. Wainwright explained that he does not have a plan as yet.

Vice Chairman Smith asked for questions. There were no questions. Vice Chairman Smith asked if there were other business. There was no other business.

Vice Chairman Smith asked for a motion to adjourn. Member John Feuer made a motion to adjourn. Member Craig Schuster seconded the motion and all members present voted to adjourn the November 13, 2012 meeting of the budget committee at 8:15 pm. Vote: 4/0 with Mr. Childs abstaining.

Mr. Smith informed the audience that the Town Administrator and the Technical Committee are presenting at the November 20, 2012 meeting.