

MEETING

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MARCH 25, 2006

**Approved May 22, 2006**

Attending: Doug Boyd, Michael Crowley, Carol Fitzgerald, Timm Marini, Kathy Pessolano

Also in Attendance: John D Flynn, Jim Smith Duane Mosier, and several residents.

The advisory board reviewed the draft recommendations line by line. Kathy said that what this budget tried to do was to restore as much as we could, the departments and the clerical salaries. The clerical salaries should at least have a cost of living increase and in some instances step raises. The board is of the philosophy that we would not increase any of the elected officials line items until we see exactly what we have, if anything, available.

Assessors line item 4.8 Field Review was changed from \$0.00 to \$2,000. The original \$14,000 included the \$12,000 for the cyclical inspections and \$2,000 for the building permits inspections. The cyclical figure was removed and will be put on a warrant for town meeting.

Insurance 7.0. Kathy said she had a conversation with John D Flynn who said there might be some money available and asked him to expand on that for those present. John said he felt it that line item 7.2 Employee benefit was a soft number. The number in 06 was higher than it should have been because of a miscalculation; it's hard to believe that we should carry that miscalculation forward into the FY07 budget. Kathy said we will have to look into it more; it's possible that we may be able to free up \$15,000 to \$20,000 in that line item. John said that health insurance estimate is an increase of 4% so that would run about another \$5000 a year. Timm felt that was low, he is seeing a 9 to 12 % increase on average. John said even if it goes up 10% it still wouldn't be anywhere near \$30,000. The board agreed to wait until we have more information. John asked Kathy what she wanted to do about longevity. She said that she personally does not want to include it in the budget. She feels that if we have some people who have been grandfathered in that need it, that it should come out of employee benefits. She had been told by a few people that the purpose of the longevity account was because there was no labor step increases or cost of living increase. If we are going to get back on track with step and cost of living increases then she doesn't see the purpose of having a longevity account. Once we get an accurate figure for employee benefits then we can possibly put that \$5,000 in there to take care of any employees who would still be affected by it. Timm asked if we could transfer that without a town vote. Kathy said that what we would do is not fund that line item and then based on what we hear from John, we could

build it into the employee benefit line. Jim Smith said that if advisory wanted to remove line item 7.4 longevity and put those funds into 7.2 employee benefits that would be fine.

Registrars line 11.1 salaries were increased by \$19 to make it \$780.

Cemetery Commission – In their perpetual account they have about \$12,000. Hank Dunwoody was one of our meetings and he told us that up on Prospect Hill the roads need to be repaired. Kathy felt that they could take the \$2000 that they are asking for in maintenance and fund the repair of the roads and still have \$10,000 left. Doug said that the cemetery is being expanded and that they were going to use the \$12,000 to fund that expansion. Right now advisory is recommending funding the maintenance line item at \$500.

Transfer station – Kathy asked John if there is anything going on with the possibility of privatizing that. John said that Duane is working with a committee on that to investigate other options. Kathy said that that means there is probably no chance of that number going down. John didn't think that he would be finished in time for the budget. Jim Smith said that it would be a wash anyhow because if we privatize it than we will not be receiving any revenue from it.

School building repairs – Kathy said that she is aware that TWB is in need of an ADA compliant bathroom. She would like to hold that off and put it on as a warrant article this year or at Fall town meeting.

Library – Full restoration would be \$119,221, our recommended figure, just for working purposes is \$85,000. The minimum that they need is \$69,000+. We wanted to give them a little more than that to give them a little leeway. The board decided to lower the recommended figure to \$75,000 at this time.

Park & Rec – The board decided to lower line 30.2 operating expenses, from \$10,000 to \$4,000. Kathy said that she felt they could use some of their fee money to fund the salaries to supplement what the budget doesn't give them. Doug said he still doesn't understand how anyone was paid from park & rec this year. Kathy said it was from the fees in the revolving fund, that a part time salary can be funded through the revolving fund. John said that the clerk was paid out of baseball revolving when she worked on baseball, out of the soccer revolving when she worked on soccer, ect. Doug said he is not comfortable with the numbers because he hasn't been shown any support for any of these figures. John said the operating expense figure of \$4,000 is pretty firm, that's what they spent two years ago and that was for lights, phone, and dumpsters. The capital expenses are for the roof and the fence. The only figure we don't really know about is the salary. Kathy said that the fees for park & rec are hefty enough without having to put more on to pay their clerical so she would like to put something in their clerical line item. Doug said he has no problem providing a supplement to the salary once he knows what the supplement is. John said that Deb, the park & rec clerk, is doing what Jay and Sue used to do for \$40,000, for just her salary. Kathy asked if the board felt comfortable putting

\$5,000 in the salary line as a working number. The board agreed. The board also agreed to cut line item 30.0 capital improvements from \$5,000 to \$2,500.

Street Lighting – Full restoration \$17,126, if we wait until Sept 1, 2006 we will not be charged the \$3,000 turn on fee. Doug said his concern is that if we can't fully restore all the services then we shouldn't be turning all the lights back on 100%. He feels we should go to the fire and police departments and ask them which lights they feel are important safety issues. Doug said he feels it's not right to turn them all back and give the towns people the feeling that everything is normal, when it's not. John said that Duane has been looking into buying it out and owning the hardware ourselves. John looked into having the turn on fee waived but it cannot be waived, it's part of a tariff law. Carol said she agreed with Doug. She said the street lights are really the last thing on her list. Kathy said her concern is the major roads in the town; East Longmeadow Rd, Allen St. Wilbraham Rd, Main St, and Somers Rd. She said she would be okay with just having those streets lighted. John said to keep in mind that a lot of the lights that are on on Main ST. are not paid for by the town right now, they are being paid for by businesses and residents and there is no guarantee that these people are going to continue to pay for them. The board agreed to change the line item to \$12,100.

Council on Aging – The bare bones budget had the directors salary at \$23,516 and the clerks at \$11,000. Kathy said what these figures allow for is 20 hours of operation a week, open 10am to 2pm, meal site reestablished, morning and afternoon programs. Salaries allow for 25hr a week director, 15hr a week clerical staff and 15hr custodian. Doug felt custodial hours were too high for the amount of hours that the center would be open. Board agreed to fund custodial at 10 hours a week for \$6,550 and to fund clerical for 10 hours a week at \$7,722.

Highway Department – Kathy said on the draft budget she fully restored the highway budget to the 05 figures, but to keep in mind that there is going to be a debt exclusion override at the annual town meeting for \$4,000,000 to rebuild the highways. Kathy said we should be able to fund tree warden at a lower amount of \$5,000. Doug asked on the maintenance line item, how does that dovetail with the proposed debt exclusion. Kathy said that Dana had said if he doesn't have the materials to do the jobs then there is no point in rehiring people. His suggestion was to hire one person back and then have some leeway to subcontract for some of the jobs that he will need done that he doesn't have the equipment for, such as a backhoe. Kathy feels that this is a good idea because he will have a pool of funds to draw from and there may even be money left over at the end of the year. So Doug surmised that if the debt exclusion passes it would overlap with some of the jobs to be done. The board agreed to leave the budget as is. Timm said that if there is any impact to our property values, this is the biggest area that will impact them.

Emergency Management – Selectmen feel that we really need to start funding this better, so that people can be trained in how to respond to a disaster. Doug was wondering if there are any grants available to help fund this. John said Duane has been working on that. Timm said it cost money to write the grant, you have to get someone to write the

grant. Jim Smith said that Board of Health received some grants for emergency responses to emergency health issues. Board agreed to fund the line item for \$1,000.

Fire department – line 53.3 operation – increased to \$25,154.

Board of Health – Kathy asked if the clerks salary could be supplemented with the fees from the revolving account. Duane said that part time help can be paid out of revolving but not the full time clerical employee. The position is for 24hours a week. The board agreed to fund that line item at \$17,760.

Water district – Doug asked if that figure is a contract figure. Duane said yes but he has to check with the water district to make sure that that is still firm.

Police budget – Kathy is aware that the Selectmen and the patrolmens' union have reached a tentative agreement for a contract. She was told that for budgeting purposes that we should calculate a 4% increase over the \$672,000. Also at the special town meeting we are going to have to try to appropriate the \$3,000 or \$4,000 that it is going to cost to fund the increase from March 17, 2006 to June 30, 2006. So line 57.2 will now be \$698,880 and line 57.8 Quinn bill will now be \$63,468. Kathy said we need to discuss the new cruiser. We have \$45,000 tentatively in the draft budget for the new cruiser. We are going to try and buy one with a warrant article. Kathy said her suggestion is, as much as she would hate to do this, would be to keep \$15,000 in there and try to lease one for 2 years or we zero it out and buy one this year and if we have more money at fall town meeting we can buy a second one then, because they need 2 cruisers. Michael wanted to know why we wouldn't fund a line item that would provide for leasing a new vehicle every year as opposed to buying them because it sounds like the cost of maintenance would equal the lease payments. Kathy said that when Jeff and Scott came to a meeting, they said it would cost \$15,000 per year per cruiser; they could essentially lease 2 for the price of one for two years, bumper to bumper warranty and then have the option of buying them for \$1 at the end of the lease period. The leasing option is something we have never done before, so Kathy said she was thinking if we buy one outright on a warrant article and then maybe lease one for \$15,000 this year, knowing that next year we will have to put \$15,000 in the cruiser item to take care of that payment, we would be saving ourselves \$30,000 this year and we are accomplishing the purchase of the second cruiser. That is going to have to be the selectmens call. Doug said it makes sense financially but his concern is that we are characterizing cruisers as an operational need, when it is a critical need, along the same lines that snow & ice seems to fall under. We are incurring these costs which we absolutely have to have and we are deferring to a certain extent the payment of these mandatory items. Kathy said we could fund it for \$30,000 and fund two leased cruisers. Timm said we should leave it at \$45,000 and have them try buying and leasing and see how the lease works out. Michael thinks that this would be a good year to put in a leasing arrangement. Michael said that we need to start looking at this as an operating expense. Jim Smith feels that someone is going to be making money on it. We have to find out about the rules and regulations such as excess mileage and wear and tear. When you lease you are paying interest, when you buy it outright you are not. He is concerned about these issues. Kathy said we have to do one

or the other; either take \$15,000 out and leave \$30,000 to purchase one or take \$30,000 out and leave \$15,000 in to lease one. The board agreed to change line item 57.5 to \$31,000 to purchase one vehicle.

Regarding the schools budget, the only unknown right now is the school ban. We are using the \$295,000 figure but Kathy said she feels that number will probably go up. It's outside 21/2 but Cliff said that the higher that number goes up, our projected revenues will follow.

Next meeting scheduled for Monday March 27, 2006 at 6:00pm.

Timm motioned to end meeting. Michael seconded. All agreed.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Murphy

APPROVED