



Budget Committee Meeting  
Town of Gorham  
Gorham Town Hall  
Public Meeting Room

Minutes of January 17, 2017

Members Present: Michael Waddell, Chairman; Diane Bouthot, Vice Chairman; Reuben Rajala, Secretary; Robert Demers; Lee Carroll; Doug Gralenski (6:02pm); Dan McCrum; Pat Lefebvre, Selectmen's Rep; Todd Lamarque, excused

Town Staff Present: Robin Frost, Town Manager; Denise Vallee, Director of Finance & Administration; Chief Jay Watkins Fire/EMS; Shawn Costine, Gorham EMS; Grace LaPierre, Chairman of Board of Selectman; Arthur Perry, Gorham Fire

Others present: Judy LeBlanc

Minutes Taker: Shelli Fortin

1. Call to order: 6:00 PM
2. Approve Minutes 1/12/2017: **Motion to approve from Diane Bouthot with a second from Lee Carroll. Voted in the affirmative, with an abstention from Pat Lefebvre.**
3. Update on Prior Requests:
  - a. Mike Waddell reported that the attachments were received from Chief Cyr with the information requested by the committee. Diane Bouthot said that she would like more information on why the police department's fuel request for 2017 is so much higher than last year, with an extra 738.5 gallons in the budget for 2017. Waddell will ask the Chief for this information. Waddell advised that he met with Chief Cyr on Friday morning and looked at several of his time cards and confirmed that he has a solid paper trail of working 40 or more hours per week.
  - b. Diane Bouthot advised that she received the updated job descriptions from Chief Watkins today. TM Frost advised that she will send an electronic copy of her contract to the committee members.
  - c. Mike Waddell asked about the breakdown of the administrative legal costs. TM Frost advised that she still needs to go through the bills to do this, but will get it to the committee when it is done.
  - d. Mike Waddell advised that the spreadsheet of expenses for the Recreation Department has been received.
  - e. Waddell again asked for a copy of the Emergency Management Plan, and TM Frost advised that she will send it.
  - f. Waddell also asked if the PDF file for the road study had been received. TM Frost advised that she has requested it, but has not received it. Frost again advised the committee that the files were available in the town office. A question was asked about the cost of getting the study in PDF format, and if there was a cost involved it would be charged to the Budget Committee expenses.

- g. Mike Waddell advised the committee that they may need to meet on January 26. Denise Vallee stated that there was also a Planning Board meeting scheduled at 7pm on the same night. One of the groups will need to use another room.
- h. Mike Waddell asked for a show of hands in favor of the Recreation Department purchasing a truck with a plow, and no hands were raised. Reuben Rajala suggested that if a truck was needed, a hand-me-down from the public works department should do, as that is how it was done in the past. Robert Demers suggested that since Fred Corrigan is a half-time employee of both the Recreation and Public Works departments, that he use the same truck from Public Works for both departments. Waddell asked for a show of hands for members who were in favor of continuing the Recreation Revolving Fund as it is, and again no hands were raised. Doug Gralenski suggested that the revolving fund only be used as a fallback, and any expenses in excess of the budget would be absorbed by it. Waddell stated that there are parts of the fund that are worthwhile, such as having the Medallion Opera House included, and the ability to accept donations. Waddell also cited some concerns, such as just two selectman having the authority to authorize purchases such as the truck. Reuben Rajala asked if the original reason for setting up the fund was for the Moose Tours, and TM Frost advised that although that is included, it was not the only intention. Demers shared that he felt the Recreation and Parks budget is confusing, with a budget for Parks, a budget for Recreation, and the Revolving Fund. Waddell advised the Selectman that were present that the committee has no interest in the plow truck being purchased or in the revolving fund as it currently exists.

#### 4. Review of Budget Request from Fire/EMS:

Chief Watkins advised the committee that since he had only been on the job for 2 weeks before his budget was due, that he made no changes from last year except an increase in the telephone/internet and service supplies lines. He advised that a new Internet program is being considered that will allow dispatch to text information about a call in addition to toning, as some of the pagers do not work when the employees are out of range. The service supplies line includes the new Emergency Reporting Software for reports. Watkins also advised that the insurance costs were added to the department's budget.

Watkins was asked how many full-time fire personnel were at the department and he advised that his was the only full-time position. He stated that he is working on duties for the fire officers, as there are not a lot of duties assigned. Watkins advised that he has restructured the responsibilities of the three full-time EMS employees. Watkins was asked if the full-time EMS employees were cross-trained, and he advised that they were, however their primary role is EMS. Watkins advised that although all three are trained for both Fire and EMS, one cannot work on the fire department due to the residency requirement, as he does not live in the town of Gorham. Mike Waddell asked if this was something that may be overcome and Watkins advised he is trying to loosen the residency requirement. Watkins stated that he understands the concerns on both sides. He stated that allowing non-residents to join may take members from Shelburne or Randolph, which is why some do not want to drop the requirement. However, in 3-5 years the numbers of those available to respond during the day will drop, and having members from other towns to help fill the roster is a reason for dropping the requirement. Watkins advised that there are residents of Berlin who would like to be involved, but do not meet the stricter requirements for the Berlin Fire Department, but who would pass the requirements for Gorham. Reuben Rajala said it would make sense to have people from Randolph and Shelburne involved. Watkins advised that they are currently, since the towns do have mutual aid agreements.

Mike Waddell asked how the transition has been to Chief Watkins being in charge of both departments and Watkins advised that they have not lost any members due to the change. Watkins advised that there are still two employees that he has yet to meet, who have not

attended any meetings or training since he started. Watkins advised it is his goal to evaluate the rosters for both Fire and EMS. Watkins stated that he would also like to implement an interview process and committee, which the department currently does not have.

Dan McCrum asked about the line items for physicals and training, which were both underspent, and asked if they could be reduced. Watkins advised that only two firefighters went through Level 1 training in 2016, and some training was missed during the transition. Watkins requested to keep it in the budget this year and re-evaluate it next year. Doug Gralenski asked if Watkins could give them an idea of what training the department was looking to do this year. Watkins advised that the classes were posted on a monthly basis at the fire academy, so it would not be possible to say what might be coming up. TM Frost advised that the budget for training has been an average of just under \$12,000 for the last six years. Selectman Lefebvre advised that the training also includes the department's monthly meetings. In discussing the cost of physicals, Chief Watkins advised that he is looking into ways to save money on the current cost. Watkins advised that the academy only requires a signed waiver from a doctor, so if the department could have employees get signed waivers at their annual physicals, this may reduce what the department spends. TM Frost advised that the academy is only looking to protect themselves, and the department is looking to protect the employees. The current physical includes an EKG and a pulmonary function test, and costs \$524 per employee, which may be overkill for what is needed. Watkins advised 50% of the employees require the physical each year, so that every employee has it every two years.

Doug Gralenski asked about the cost of electricity for the building and how Watkins plans to keep it at \$3500, when it has been over \$4000 for the last two years. Watkins advised that he is currently trying to figure out why it is so high. Pat Lefebvre said that every truck needs to be plugged in. Shawn Costine advised that he has been replacing fluorescent lights with LED. Lee Carroll stated that if just the bulbs were being replaced, there were better ways to do it to save even more money.

Reuben Rajala asked about the alarm system that had been approved in the budget a few years ago, and if it had been installed. Chief Watkins advised it had not been. TM Frost advised that the money was in the Building Maintenance and Repair capital reserve fund and had been used toward the new Public Works office building. Watkins advised that the original quote was for \$11,000, and the three that he recently got were all around \$7,500. Mike Waddell asked if there were any other capital reserve items requested. Watkins advised that he is requesting \$5000 in the fire department equipment capital reserve fund. This money will be used to replace SCBA bottles in the coming years. Watkins advised that he needed to replace 21 bottles this year that were out of date and he was able to do it by purchasing used bottles with money left in the 2016 budget. Doug Gralenski asked how many bottles were currently in the inventory and Watkins advised they have 47. Watkins advised the bottles are good for 15 years and Bob Demers asked why they are only good for that long. Watkins advised that it is due to the material used in the bottles. Watkins advised the other item in the capital reserve requests is to replace Engine 2. Watkins advised that Engine 2 has failed the pump test for the last three years. Watkins said there has been talk about not replacing the engine and it is on his list of things to be evaluated in the department, which also includes the Cascade Fire Station. Watkins advised that he should have an idea about the need to replace the truck or keep the station open by July 1 of this year. Watkins said the budget request is for \$39,000 to be put into the fund toward the purchase of the truck, which would cost about \$300,000. Diane Bouthot asked about the grant that Rick Eichler had applied for and did not get for the truck. Watkins advised that the federal government is not going to approve a grant for a truck that is only used 8 times a year. Watkins stated that his new response plan for calls is for a member to stop at the Cascade station to get Engine 2 when responding, and standby at the Fire Station to cover town while central responds to the call. This will get the call numbers up so that they may be able to apply for a grant at a later date. Bouthot gave Watkins a list of grants available to the department.

Chief Watkins advised that the EMS budget was prepared by Marlys Litchfield, who is currently out on medical leave. Mike Waddell asked if she would be back as EMS Director and Watkins advised that she would not be the director, as he has taken over that role, but she would be covering some shifts and doing some quality assessment work. Diane Bouthot asked if the departments had merged and Watkins advised they are still two separate departments under one leader. The departments will re-evaluate the idea of merging on September 1 of this year. Watkins advised that the revenues from transfers is down as they have not received as many requests as they did in 2014 and 2015. He advised that many of those transfers were for UCVH and Memorial Hospital, who have since remedied the staffing issues they had. Watkins advised that transfers from AVH are given to Gorham EMS if the patient is a Gorham resident. Watkins advised that many of the staff are not interested in taking transfers. Bob Demers asked why the third ambulance was purchased if it was not needed, and Watkins advised that decision was made before his arrival. Watkins advised that it is his goal to increase the interest in transfers, and to rotate the use of all three ambulances. Watkins advised that he will have a better understanding of the department's needs in the next 6-7 months. Dan McCrum pointed out the drop in revenues in the two line items from last year, which is about a 33% decrease. Watkins advised that he was aware that if that does not increase, the permanent EMS positions and third ambulance would not be needed. Watkins advised that during the day, if a transfer request is made, the medic has been going with another member, while he covers town. Watkins advised that some questions to look at in the coming months are whether or not the department keeps full-time positions to cover 911 calls or whether they go back to an on-call department. Watkins stated that even the number of 911 calls is down from previous years. TM Frost advised that the transfer requests have been down since last February, so it appears to be a long term trend.

Reuben Rajala asked about the Emergency Management Coordinator position and where that was covered in the budget. TM Frost advised that it has a separate budget, which includes the salary for Chief Watkins, as well as training and benefits. Diane Bouthot asked what training is required for the position, and Watkins advised that none is required. Watkins advised that online training is available through Homeland Security. Rajala advised that he just received a partial report concerning Hurricane Sandy from Chad Miller. Rajala stated that even though the capital reserve request was increased from \$5000 to \$25,000 this year for emergencies such as this, it still may not be adequate. Mike Waddell advised that in cases like that, it is usually a 25/75 split with FEMA.

Chief Watkins advised that both the ambulance and ambulance equipment capital reserve funds were down this year. TM Frost advised that she chose to drop these, as one of the ambulances is brand new, and since the call volume is down, there is no need this year to add to the capital reserve. TM Frost advised that as far as the equipment, the money was slated for a power cot, which came out of the operating budget for 2016. There is enough currently in the equipment fund to purchase another. Watkins advised that the \$500 that was requested in this fund was appropriate, and that just one pager costs about that amount, if it needed to be replaced. Doug Gralenski asked if the new texting/internet program would make the pagers obsolete, and Watkins advised it would not. The new system would just be a backup for when the pagers are out of range. Watkins advised that new radios would be needed soon, as the old ones will be obsolete.

Mike Waddell requested that Chief Watkins look over the budget thoroughly before the public meeting, as the committee understands he has not had much time to prepare it, and would understand if any adjustments needed to be made.

## 5. New Requests for Information

## 6. Old Business

## 7. New Business

Mike Waddell asked about the Spring Road project and who was managing that. TM Frost advised that she was. Frost advised that Josh McAllister from HEB will be at the Selectman's meeting on Monday night. Waddell asked if FEMA was involved in that project and Frost advised they were, and possibly DOT as well.

Denise Vallee shared the new printout of the expenditures budget summary. Doug Gralenski asked what becomes of the remaining balance and Vallee advised it would become part of the unrestricted fund balance. TM Frost advised that when the audit is complete at the end of February, we would have a better idea of what is in the fund balance. TM Frost advised that the money usually sits until tax rate time, when it can be used to reduce the tax rate. Mike Waddell asked how much was used this year to reduce the rate, and TM Frost advised it was \$300,000. Dan McCrum asked what the current fund balance is and was advised it is \$387,000.

Mike Waddell asked the committee about the Thursday meeting and if one of the departments should be moved to another date. It was decided that the Town Clerk/Tax Collector budget would be moved to January 24.

**8.** The next Budget Committee meeting will be on 1/19/2017 for review of the SAU20 and Public Works budgets. It will be at 6:00 pm in the Town Hall Public Meeting Room.

**9. Lee Carroll made a motion to adjourn at 7:55 PM seconded by Diane Bouthot. Voted in the affirmative.**

Respectfully Submitted  
Shelli Fortin

Approved Janic