

Final

6/4/11

**BUDGET SATURDAY  
JANUARY 8, 2011**

**Francis Faulkner Hearing Room, Room 204  
[8:00 AM]**

Selectmen Members Present: All. Ms. Rosenzweig Morton, Mr. Gowing, Ms. Friedrichs, Ms. Harding-Barrat, Ms. Adachi  
Finance Committee Members Present: All. Ms. Ashton, Mr. Mullin, Mr. Tindal, Ms. Clifford, Mr. Evans, Mr. Noone, Mr. Seward, Mr. Sharp, Mr. Brandon  
Town staff Present: Town Manager Steven Ledoux, Assistant Town Manager John Murray, Acting Town Accountant Lisa Krause, Finance Director Steven Barrett, Assistant Assessor Brian McMullen.

BOS Chairman Rosenzweig Morton convened the meeting.

Mr. Ledoux gave a general overview.

**Human Resources/Veteran Services**

Marianne Fleckner and Doré Hunter

Ms. Fleckner reviewed the Human Resources budget.

Ms. Friedrichs asked about new hires and backfill numbers. Ms. Rosenzweig Morton asked whether terminations were involuntary or resignations. Mr. Evans asked about health insurance costs. Mr. Mullin asked about benchmarking; Ms. Fleckner said she uses benchmarking in determining if we are in the right range for jobs.

Mr. Hunter reviewed the Veteran Services budget and the need for those services in the community. Mr. Gowing asked about the number of veterans, which two years ago numbered about 260.

**Highway/NESWC**

Russell Robinson

Mr. Robinson provided an overview of the Highway Department's function and services.

Mr. Noone asked about the salt shed. Ms. Friedrichs asked what percentage of the department's work is with other departments: 31%.

**Engineering**

Corey York

Mr. York, the new Town Engineer and DPW Director provided an overview of the Engineering Department. The budget is basically level funded. The work van is 15 years old, rusting and needs to be replaced.

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Ms. Clifford asked whether the van came with specialized equipment. Mr. Gowing asked how the department planned to use GIS: for Town mapping and analysis on different projects. Mr. Seward asked if the Town could charge builders for GIS services, perhaps via an enterprise fund. Mr. York said he would discuss the Information Technology Department. Ms. Friedrichs hoped at least the building fees could include GIS costs.

### **Council on Aging**

Sharon Mercurio

Ms. Mercurio outlined the services of the Council on Aging. She asked that the Minuteman Services be restored to full funding and noted that the COA van provides a lot of rides to senior citizens.

Ms. Harting-Barrat asked about future plans; Ms. Mercurio said staffing hours would need to increase and the COA is looking into providing other services.

### **Fire**

Chief Robert Craig

Chief Craig reviewed the Fire Department budget, which has not changed. The biggest expense item is protective clothing. The slight increase in the fire alarm budget is to purchase and install software for fire alarm receiving equipment. Information on capital is in the answers the Board has received.

Ms. Harting-Barrat asked about the level of the protective clothing required. Dr. Evans asked whether the second ambulance is paying for itself: it is. Mr. Gowing asked about ambulance response time: 3-4 minutes. Ms. Clifford asked about using the second ambulance for mutual aid. Mr. Mullin asked about the staffing increase for the primary ambulance service. Ms. Friedrichs asked about the number of visits to higher density housing complexes.

### **Police**

Chief Frank Widmayer

Chief Widmayer said that his budget is on track. In the next fiscal year, two issues will require attention, one being that the state has cut Quinn bill funding again.

Mr. Mullin asked about the trend of overtime in the Police and Fire Departments. Mr. Tindal asked about the impact of the recession on law enforcement in Acton. Chief Widmayer said depression, suicide risks, scams, fraud are among the issues the department is seeing. Ms. Friedrichs asked about compensation levels for the average officer; Chief Widmayer said that with overtime details, compensation could reach \$52,000/year. Mr. Gowing asked whether the Town was over-budgeting for the juvenile officer; Chief Widmayer said the budget is for after-hours overtime. He struggles with

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staffing, which is why his overtime is high. The recommended number of police officers for a town the size of Acton is 44; the current number of officers is 32.

### **Planning/Zoning Board of Appeals**

Roland Bartl

Mr. Bartl reviewed the Planning Department budget. He would like to subscribe to a service that would provide demographic information. The department's support to the Acton 2020 master planning effort includes printing and copying costs; these are one-time items due to Acton 2020 and will go away. He has asked for a new staff member and needs additional support in his department.

Ms. Clifford asked whether a town-wide mailing for Acton 2020 is a statutory requirement: no, Acton 2020 wants to keep the community involved. Mr. Seward asked whether the subscription would provide a picture of Acton in one database; Mr. Bartl explained that the Town would receive yearly updates on Acton with information from the 10-year census.

Ms. Friedrichs asked what proportion of time the department spends on preservation as opposed to new development; Mr. Bartl said the department should do more planning but lacks resources. Ms. Harting-Barrat said that when the Planning Board does not have hearings, it could use the time for planning, rather than canceling a meeting.

Ms. Adachi asked what the effect would be if commercial site plans shifted to Planning from the Selectmen, who currently handle them for political reasons; Mr. Bartl said it could increase efficiency and reduce the need for Town planners to work long hours.

### **West Acton Library**

Jennifer Friedman

Ms. Friedman said the budget has not changed.

Ms. Friedrichs asked about the hours that volunteers work; Ms. Friedman said 18 hours by adult volunteers at the desk and 5 hours by students doing backroom work.

Ms. Friedman said the library has other sources of support: the Auxiliary and Friends of the Library, free museum passes and funding for the plaque on the building.

Mr. Gowing asked how the library handles his donations of books; the library reviews the books and sells some in fundraising activities.

### **Town Manager/Emergency Management/Celebrations/Green Advisory Board**

Steven Ledoux, John Murray

Mr. Ledoux provided an overview of the budget. The Town Manager's Office supports the Board of Selectmen and manages training and conferences for Town staff. The

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budget includes Town Counsel and Labor Counsel services; he provided a breakdown of Town Counsel services, noting the legal work involving the purchase of the Caouette property.

Mr. Murray addressed Emergency Management and the need for new pumps and generators after a postponement of a number of years. Mr. Gowing asked how many people the Town could accommodate in the event of a disaster: the Town has room for 7,000 people, 300 personal grooming kits, 150 cots, but does not stock food.

Mr. Murray reported that the Green Advisory Board needs \$10,000 for an intern to assist with the 5-year plan to reduce energy use.

The Celebrations budget will cover the cost of a bus on the 19<sup>th</sup> and flags and flowers for the cemetery.

Mr. Evans asked about the possibility of having a consortium of towns hire in-house counsel. Mr. Ledoux said that would be difficult. Mr. Mullin asked what the legal budget would look like if the Town had in-house counsel. Mr. Ledoux said the issue of legal counsel was up to the Selectmen. Mr. Noone said the Town should aim to reduce the amount spent. Ms. Clifford asked about and noted the expense of staffing for an in-house attorney. Mr. Tindal said that with the current depression in real estate and legal services, there are extraordinary people looking for work. Ms. Harting-Barrat said that with all the areas of law, the Town would need more than a generalist. Ms. Rosenzweig Morton noted that contract negotiations and unresolved litigation accounted for some of the legal services costs of the past year, and asked whether the Town could reduce costs moving forward while continuing to use an outside firm. Ms. Adachi said that the Town would to review detailed billing information to see if there would be enough work for an in-house general attorney, but would not be able to avoid the need to hire outside attorneys for specialty work.

### **Informational Technology**

Mark Hald

Mr. Hald said the department needs another employee to help with, GIS, e-mailing notices, meeting recordings online and the microfiche project.

### **Municipal Properties**

Dean Charter

Mr. Charter reviewed budget highlights and noted that the cutback on utilities was due to some of the programs and fixed-price contracts for electricity and gas.

Ms. Clifford asked about the budget for contractual services. Mr. Charter explained that it was for a two-year contract for tree work. Mr. Noon asked about the Piper Lane/Piper Road house; Mr. Charter said it was listed and there have been showings. Mr. Noone also asked about the Town Commons development; Mr. Ledoux provided an update. Ms.

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Friedrichs asked how much time the department spent on NARA: none. Ms. Rosenzweig Morton asked about street light changes.

### **Natural Resources/Cemetery**

Tom Tidman

Mr. Tidman presented the Natural Resources budget. The department need a 16-hour clerical person to help him address Conservation Commission issues.

### **Recreation**

Cathy Fochtman

Mr. Mullin asked about the NARA picnic pavilion. Ms. Fochtman said the design is done but the project is on hold, pending enactment of the amendment of the Community Preservation Act.

### **Memorial Library**

Marcia Rich

Ms. Rich provided an overview of the library services and materials. The library would like to purchase more books and for the 4<sup>th</sup> year also is seeking funding for another library position that would make the library more effective and efficient.

### **Building**

Frank Ramsbottom

Mr. Ramsbottom presented his budget.

### **Health/Nursing**

Doug Halley, Heather Hurley

Ms. Hurley provided an update on the Nursing Service in comparison to services in the towns the Acton Leadership Group considers to be comparators.

Mr. Halley reported on Board of Health inspections, the collection of unused medication on Hazardous Waste Day and the Community Services Coordinator. 50% of the budget is driven by regulatory obligations of the Board of health.

State law requires the Sealer of Weights, and management of food safety and wastewater. Mr. Halley reviewed the Sewer Enterprise operation and noted that the department is requesting a new position under the new storm water bylaw. The position will be part-time and non-benefited. Mr. Gowing asked about Lyme disease. Ms. Friedrichs asked whether the department has reviewed water capacity limitations of build out; Mr. Halley said work was just getting started.

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**Finance (Accounting Town Clerk/Elections, Assessors, Collector and Finance Director)**

Steve Barrett, Lisa Krause, Brian McMullen

Mr. Barrett introduced what is his 11<sup>th</sup> budget presentation. Ms. Krause presented the 2012 comptrollers budget. They oversee payroll and budget. Salaries are 90% of the budget.

Mr. McMullen is responsible for maintaining the database on properties in Acton and administering excise bills, calculating annual levy growth and submit the tax recap to the state. The requested 40-hour-per-week employee will allow the department to continue providing the 2-hour morning coverage at the Assessor's counter.

There were several questions about health insurance savings and costs, and unfunded pension costs.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Christine Joyce, Recording Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting called by the Board of Selectmen, Chair Mike Gowing

**Agenda**

| Event  | Who   | Time     | Special Funds  | Manager's Recommended Capital Item   |
|--|---|----------|--|--|
| Convene Meeting  | Chairman Mike Gowing  | 8:10 AM  |  |  |
| General Overview   | Steve Ledoux  | 8:15 AM  |  |  |
| Human Resources/Veteran Services   | Marianne Fleckner/Jim MacRae                                  | 8:30 AM  |  |  |
| Highway/Transfer Station   | Russell Robinson/Corey York                                   | 9:00 AM  | Transfer Station Enterprise  | 1 ton Truck, Sander/Dump Truck, Utility Truck, Towable generator, Skid Steer Bobcat, |
| Engineering  | Corey York  | 9:15 AM  |  | Quarry Road drainage   |
| Council on Aging   | Sharon Mercurio   | 9:30 AM  | COA Van Enterprise   | Senior Center Design   |
| <b>Break 9:45</b>  |   |          |  |  |
| Fire   | Bob Craig   | 10:00 AM | Fire Alarm Revolving;<br>Ambulance Enterprise  |  |
| Police   | Frank Widmayer  | 10:15 AM |  |  |
| Planning/Zoning Board of Appeals   | Roland Bartl  | 10:30 AM |  |  |
| West Acton Library   | Jennifer Friedman   | 11:00 AM |  |  |
| Town Manager; Emergency Mgmt.;<br>Celebrations; Green Advisory                           | Steve Ledoux/John Murray                                      | 11:15 AM | Energy Enterprise  | Land Use renovations/Portable intersection traffic control system                    |
| Memorial Library   | Marcia Rich   | 11:30 AM |  |  |
| <b>Lunch Break</b>   |   |          |  |  |
| Municipal Properties   | Dean Charter  | 12:15 AM |  | Senior Center generator  |
| Natural Resources/Cemetery   | Tom Tidman  | 12:30 AM |  | Goward Playground, Ford F-350 replacement  |
| Recreation   | Cathy Fochtman  |          |  |  |
| Information Technology   | Mark Hald   | 1:00 PM  |  | Emergency Communication Equipment; Storage system replacement                        |
| Building   | Frank Ramsbottom  | 1:15 PM  | Building Inspector Revolving   |  |
| Health; Nursing  | Doug Halley, Heather Hurley                                   | 1:30 PM  | Nursing Enterprise,<br>Septage Enterprise, Sealer<br>of Weights Revolving, Food<br>Service Revolving,<br>Hazardous Materials<br>Revolving, Stormwater<br>Revolving |  |
| Transportation   | Steve Ledoux, Doug Halley, Steve<br>Barrett                   | 1:45 PM  |  |  |
| Finance (Accounting, Town<br>Clerk/Elections, Assessors, Collector,<br>Finance Director) | Steve Barrett, Brian McMullen, Joe<br>Tassone, Eva Szkarardek | 2:00 PM  | Sewer Enterprise   |  |
| OPEB   | FinCom  | 2:30 PM  |  |  |

Coffee and morning pastries will be available at 7:45 AM. As in the past lunch will be provided, we will take a brief break for you to fix a plate but we will work through lunch in an attempt to get folks home early. We will resume the meeting while eating.