

MINUTES

BOARD OF SELECTMEN/BUDGET MEETING
Town Hall

November 23, 2020
5:15 PM

Board of Selectmen Members Present: Leo Enos, Leon Rideout, Shane Beattie

Budget Committee Members Present: Jon Gainer, Keith Kopp, Herb Richardson, Tricia Frenette, John Eddy, Rick Bernier, Leo Rideout, Jr., Dana Southworth

Others in attendance: Finance Director Michael Nadeau, Benjamin Gaetjens-Oleson, Charity Baker, Rob Christie

Board of Selectmen Chairman opened the meeting at 5:15 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Leo stated, the meeting was to find out what the budget committee would like to see for the Fire/EMS bottom-line budget. The board and the committee have been given several projected scenarios to address the staffing concerns.

Leo Rideout, Jr said if they are not going to buy an ambulance and we decided to move forward with the 6 new full-time employees plan, how much will there be to pull from another source. It was explained, the projected deficit with the 6 new employees would be around \$350,000. He also expressed that he is not happy about Lancaster subsidizing the surrounding towns. He knows it is being resolved but it has been going on too long.

Keith mentioned that Ed has stated in past years that things will be fine as they are until it started to cost the taxpayer instead of making revenue. He feels it is the time that they need to make a decision what direction they need to go. He is really concerned that it won't sustain.

Herb stated he would like to hold off for a year and continue as they have been to see how the year goes, before they present increasing staff to the public. Leo Jr doesn't think it should wait a year, it should be monitored quarterly, at least. He feels there has been management problems. People should not have been allowed to go over their required amount of time. Leo Jr feels that if it is going to be presented as a business then we should hire someone to manage it as a business.

It was mentioned to Herb that we cannot move forward as we have been doing because we are not in compliance with our current staffing practices.

Dana said he agrees with Keith. He questions whether the Town should be in position of running an ambulance business instead of a service.

Jon mentioned it has been talked about several times. He reminded everyone that Ed has said for years that when it isn't working then we need to downsize. He feels that it is time to take a step back. There are variables that are assumptions so it is hard to know what is accurate.

Keith's thought is to add one full-time employee to take off the stress of the current full-timers and see if they can make that run. His suggestion is taking the 2020 budgeted amount with the additional line items that were added to budget for 2021 (health, property/liability, workers' comp, medicare, etc.) and add an additional \$100,000 for one full-time employee and see if they are able to run with that.

It was suggested separating out the fire and ambulance budgets to accurately see the expenses for each. Herb mentioned years ago they used to be separate and suggested they make sure that separating the budget will not mess up any group II retirement benefits.

Rick doesn't see a 6-person plan passing by the committee. He doesn't think any that have been presented is anything that should be brought to the public.

After much discussion, the committee agreed to have Charity work up what the 2020 budget would have been if the additional lines were included and get that information to the fire department so they can figure up what their projection would be adding \$100,000 to cover one new full-time employee and what they feel the projected revenue will be. Ben advised the committee that the department is already going to expend more than what was budgeted for 2020 so the additional \$100,000 may already be met. The committee requested to see the increase on the budgeted amount not on the actuals for 2020.

Keith feels the fire department may let them know that they will not be able to make the revenue as in the past with only the 1 new employee and if that is the case then they may need to pull back to only 911 coverage.

Keith and Dana stated, the budget committee's job is to approve the bottom lines not to manage how each of the lines are expended/managed.

Rick wants to express his feeling that there should not be any new equipment being purchased where there is a deficit.

Leo Jr asked if there is someone monitoring monthly or quarterly that hours are being adhered to. It was mentioned it is the responsibility of the Fire Chief.

The committee would like to meet Monday, November 30th at 5:15 p.m. to discuss the added expenses to the 2020 budget and what it would be to add 100,000 to that budget.

The Budget Committee discussion ended.

The Board of Selectmen had a couple items that needed to be discussed. The board talked about the discussion at the Conservation Committee meeting regarding the timber cut of the town forest. Leon stated the board needs to vote on cutting the town forest.

Motion made by Leo and seconded by Shane to approve the cut of the Town Forest. All in favor. Motion carried.

Motion made by Shane and seconded by Leon to adjourn. All in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Charity M. Baker

Board of Selectmen

Date: _____

Leo Enos

Leon Rideout

Shane Beattie

Budget Committee Chair

Date: _____

Jon Gainer