

**TOWN OF CANAAN  
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING  
September 18, 2008  
Approved Copy  
Canaan Fire Station**

Members present: David McAlister - Chair, Denis Salvail, Dave Barney, Nathan Deleault, Eleanor Davis, Russell Lester, Shirley Packard, Craig Lawler, and Selectman Scott Borthwick. Also present were Town Administrator Michael Capone, Selectmen Robert Reagan and Tim Lewis, Chief Bill Bellion, Chief Sam Frank, Bob Scott, Larry Brabant, and the minute taker; Christi Berube.

David McAlister called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. and took attendance.

**Continuation of the Budget Review**

Committee members reviewed the proposed 2009 budget, as presented on the budget worksheet dated September 9, 2008.

**Government Buildings Budget**

Michael Capone summarized and explained the proposal for a government buildings budget as follows: the salary listed is for Tom Guillette's position; allocation of funds for electricity, heating oil and gas, and water and sewer have been distributed among the various departments for next year; and these estimated costs for electricity, heating oil and gas, and water and sewer are subject to change as the proposed budget is fine-tuned.

Michael Capone explained that the appropriate allocation for the repairs and maintenance line item has not been determined yet. Michael Capone summarized that he has asked Tom Guillette for a list of outstanding repair and maintenance items on the projects list, which Tom estimates to be approximately \$14,000.

Nathan Deleault asked whether the custodial supplies are centrally stored. Michael Capone responded that some items are, such as copier paper, since bulk purchasing provides a cost savings. Eleanor Davis commented that she has found and identified excessive allocation in past years from line items such as this one.

**General Government Budget**

Michael Capone summarized and explained the proposal for a general government budget as follows: funds were not allocated for the training and education line item since adequate funds are already allocated in the executive budget; the printing and publishing line item was reduced since an expensive maintenance contract on a copier was cancelled; some supplies purchased from the office supplies line item are shared between the various departments; allocation of funds for gasoline and diesel have been distributed among the various departments for next year; the books and periodicals line item has been reduced since many items are now available electronically; the mileage reimbursement was recently increased to \$0.55; the recording fees line item was reduced

to reflect the actual usage since revenue offsets are provided; and the advertising and notices line item has been reduced to reflect actual use.

Michael Capone summarized that the recording fees line item refers to the county records. Nathan Deleault noted that the county fees have increased. Michael Capone offered to find out more about the fees and the revenues generated in order to verify that enough is allocated for this line item.

David McAlister commented that the historian has a wealth of information to share and that the Town Clerk often refers residents to the town historian when the town office is contacted with questions.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Committee members reviewed draft copies of the September 11, 2008, minutes.

**MOTION** by Russell Lester and seconded by Dave Barney to accept the minutes dated September 11, 2008, as corrected.

Dave Barney suggested that the following sentence be reworded as follows: “Scott Borthwick noted that the Goose Pond Lake Association chose to redirect their allotted funds to the Senior Center” to “Scott Borthwick noted that the Goose Pond Lake Association declined funding and requested that these funds be provided to the Grafton County Senior Citizens Council for support of the Mascoma Area Senior Center.”

Michael Capone corrected the misspelling of “Avitar”, “cyclical”, and “Plodzic” on page 4. Michael Capone also suggested that the following sentence be reworded as follows: “Scott Borthwick informed committee members that a pipe at the Transfer Station is spilling effluent and needs to be encased in concrete according to the Department of Environmental Services” to “Scott Borthwick informed committee members that the force main, a pipe that carries effluent back to the wastewater treatment plant, has become exposed in Orange Brook and needs to be encased in concrete to avoid getting damaged.”

**VOTE: Unanimous in the affirmative**

### **Fire Department Budget**

Bill Bellion summarized and explained the proposal for a fire department budget as follows: the part time salaries line item has been increased to reflect the likely increase in services next year; the third quarter payroll is approximately \$5,000 this year and has not been included in the 2008 expenses yet; the equipment maintenance line item should read as the “equipment maintenance and communications” line item; the equipment maintenance and communications line item includes funds for truck testing, radios, and pagers; the vehicle maintenance and repairs line item has been increased since the 20 year-old fire truck has recently failed the pumping capacity test; the dues and subscriptions line item includes funds for mutual aid and HazMat services, as well as, dues to the NH Fire Chief Association; the equipment line item includes funds for turn-

out gear and equipment for the trucks; the fire chief salary was increased to account for the number of meetings and inspections that he attends; the fire chief salary was proposed to the taxpayers in a warrant article last year; the deputy fire chief line item has increased to reflect a second deputy fire chief position; and the training line item was voluntarily decreased last year due to the default budget; a \$2000 allocation for the training line item has been the requested and approved allocation in past years.

Bill Bellion noted that the fire house building is used by many different groups although the building expenses are now included in the fire department budget.

There was general discussion that the 20 year-old fire truck has recently failed the pumping capacity test and that a quote of \$70 per hour was offered to diagnose the problem. Bill Bellion explained that he first needs clarification whether certification standards have changed or about to change regarding older trucks before any work is completed. Bill Bellion advised that the Town of Canaan should not operate an uncertified fire truck for liability reasons although there is no law that specifies that fire trucks are required to be certified. Bill Bellion added that the decision was made last year to expend \$6,500 for repairs on this fire truck and that he was hoping for a longer extended life span with this truck. Bill Bellion clarified that the other two fire trucks were manufactured in 1998 and 2000.

Denis Salvail commented that the certification should not be solely based on the age of a fire truck since some towns could have fire trucks that are rarely used and are in practically new condition despite their age.

There was general note that a capital reserve fund with \$220,000 exists but that voter approval is needed in order to expend the funds for a new fire truck. Bill Bellion clarified that the cost for a new, equipped, standard fire truck would be approximately \$250,000.

Denis Salvail asked whether any consideration has been given to billing residents for services. Bill Bellion responded no. Bill Bellion added that no other town is billing for services and that the Town of Canaan should not be the first to start billing. Bill Bellion explained that the only billable instance at this time is a brush fire when it becomes uncontrolled and fire department services are required. There was general discussion whether repeat offenders of chimney fires or damages caused by drunk drivers, for example, should be billable instances.

Dave Barney asked what the outcome has been regarding private roads and Class VI roads. Bill Bellion responded that he has been inspecting and advising in various situations, collecting waivers, and submitting the appropriate paperwork.

### **Emergency Management Budget**

Bill Bellion summarized and explained his proposal for the emergency management budget as follows: the salaries for the director and assistant director positions are \$2,200 and \$1,100 respectively; Sam Frank is the Assistant Director of Emergency Management; the emergency management line item is funds for supplies such as cots, blankets, and

food; approximately \$800 will be used from this emergency management line item this year in order to satisfy a federal mandate regarding use of reflective vests; and the dispatch service line item includes funds needed to reconfigure the portable radios.

Bill Bellion summarized that consideration was given to installing a separate antenna on the fire house for dispatch services but that the initial \$4,000 cost and the approximate \$600 monthly cost made the idea cost prohibitive at this time.

Bill Bellion noted that a small trailer with emergency supplies is already loaded and stored in the fire house when the need arises. Bill Bellion also noted that grant funds were awarded and will be used to purchase of bay station radios.

### **Police Department Budget**

Sam Frank summarized and explained his proposal for the police department budget as follows: negotiation of a three year contract with the full time police officers has not been started yet; the negotiated contract is presented to the voters in a warrant article; the full time on-call salary line item was estimated at \$2.75 per hour for 4 hours per night for 365 days, however, this line item is part of the negotiated contract; the part time salaries line item was increased in order to consider increases; the police chief salary line item was increased 11.69 percent; the overtime line item is calculated by the average full time hourly rate multiplied by 1.5 and based on 400 hours for the year; the overtime line item also includes twelve holidays multiplied by 1.5; the software support line item is funds for computer support; the departmental supplies line item includes funds for fingerprinting supplies, forms, film, and tape, for example; the equipment line item includes funds for radios, flares, and \$2,400 for three ballistic vests replacements, for example; and the training line item includes \$2,500 for the SWAT team membership and funds for range supplies, academy and instructor fees, and mandatory training, for example.

Sam Frank explained that he is the second or third least paid employee in the police department after all the overtime pay is considered yet he has additional responsibilities as chief. Sam Frank added that his chief position is the least paid chief position in the area.

Sam Frank clarified that the police department has six cell phones; one in each cruiser and one for the chief position.

Shirley Packard asked how many tazers are currently owned by the police department. Sam Frank responded eight and explained that he is hoping to add three more next year to have a total of eleven.

Craig Lawler asked what purchases are being considered for the rest of this year's budget. Sam Frank responded that replacement radio batteries, replacement flashlights, a video recorder, and a digital camera are examples of needed items.

David McAlister asked whether the radio frequency for the police department is a secured frequency. Sam Frank responded no and explained that the cost for a secured frequency is cost prohibitive. Sam Frank added that an option exists to switch to digital radios but that any user of the current radio frequency is suppose to have a license for the channel.

Sam Frank clarified that the police department currently has five full time police officers and five part time police officers although six full time and seven part time positions exist.

Shirley Packard asked whether the town's police department equipment is being used by the SWAT team members. Sam Frank responded yes. Sam Frank explained that his position on the SWAT team is a Control Chief of the Special Operation Unit.

Nathan Deleault asked how much time is devoted to the SWAT team incidents. Sam Frank responded that SWAT team participation is approximately eight to ten times per year at three or four hours each and that the participating police officers are paid overtime pay from the town's budget. ( about \$1000.00)

Bill Bellion noted that the SWAT team often participates in search and rescue incidences.

Sam Frank explained that the benefit of having police officers participate on the SWAT team is the mutual aid that is available when a major incident occurs in the Town of Canaan. Sam Frank noted that there have been two major incidents in Canaan during the past few years where mutual aid was needed. Sam Frank explained that the State Police only has twenty-five police officers and they are not always readily available when called for assistance. Sam Frank provided a brief explanation of the governing board that sets the rules and regulations of the regional SWAT teams and of the monthly training schedule, which requires a minimum of one eight hour training day for each participating member of the SWAT team.

Eleanor Davis asked whether the administrative assistant position has been filled by the former employee. Sam Frank responded yes.

Sam Frank summarized that the balance remaining in the uniforms line item will be used to purchase clothing for the new police officer starting in November and for replacement items, such as winter shirts and ties that the current police officers may need.

Denis Salvail asked why the \$2,500 membership fee for the SWAT team is not accounted for in the dues and subscriptions line item. Sam Frank responded that he inherited the accounting from the past police chief and that he does not really have a preference where the membership fee is accounted for in the budget.

Sam Frank noted that the cost of ammunition has tripled for next year.

### **Mechanic Budget**

Larry Brabant summarized that he tried to submit a level funded budget but that the costs for parts, supplies, and petroleum products have significantly increased. Larry Brabant summarized and explained his proposal for the mechanic budget as follows: the salary line item includes a three percent increase; the repairs line item includes funds for inspections and contracted services; the tools line item was voluntarily decreased last year due to the default budget; and a \$5000 allocation for the tools line item has been the requested and approved allocation in past years.

Larry Brabant estimated that he oversees the repair and maintenance of approximately thirty-six pieces of town owned vehicles and equipment.

Shirley Packard asked whether any consideration has been given to completing inspections in-house. Larry Brabant responded that he recommends that an outside party complete the inspections as an additional check on safety since repairs and maintenance already keeps him busy full time. Larry Brabant added that the equipment that he would need to complete inspections would be costly.

### **Highway Budget**

Bob Scott summarized and explained his proposal for the highway budget as follows: the road agent salary line item was increased 4.9 percent; the contracted services line item includes funds for equipment rental; the full time salaries line item includes an increase of three percent; the overtime expenditure for 2008 was for plowing needs last January through March plus time spent during the past major rainstorm; funds for the uniforms line item has not been determined yet since the current contract with Crown will expire next May and a clothing allowance for the highway and transfer station employees and mechanic is being considered; the supplies line item has increased since supply costs continue to increase for signs and posts, for example; the paving line item is a new line item for next year; there was general explanation that the block grant road reconstruction are state funds provided from gas taxes and that these funds are used before the funds allocated in the road reconstruction line item are used; the allocation for road salt was determined by a state bid; and the culvert line item was increased due to the increased cost for culverts.

Craig Lawler asked why the snow plowing is not a contracted service. Michael Capone responded that he spent some time researching this issue since Tom Hudgens had presented this idea in his proposal to the town last April. Michael Capone summarized that this idea does not seem to be a likely option since he could only find one contractor who offers this service in the State of NH. Russell Lester added that he would rather support a budget that provides incomes for the local residents. Also mentioned was the hassle that a contractor could cause in regards to road management.

There was general discussion that there are currently 6.5 highway employees at this time.

Michael Capone noted that approximately \$92,000 has been spent for highway fuel so far for 2008.

Bob Scott explained that the road reconstruction line item is funds that are used for stonework when the road ditches are washed out, for example. Bob Scott expressed that he is surprised to see \$175,000 allocated in the road reconstruction line item but that the highway department could definitely use the extra funds to improve the roads. David McAlister suggested that perhaps that line item could be level-funded for next year if a dire need does not exist.

There was general discussion that the town purchased 8,600 yards of gravel with last year's budget funds from a Clark Hill property but that the town is responsible for loading and trucking the material. Bob Scott summarized that the material is currently being stored at the crushing site and that the highway crew is loading and trucking the material to road projects as needed.

Dave Barney asked whether the current road repairs coincide with the road plans that have been drafted in the recent past. Michael Capone responded yes and no and explained that the town is fortunate to have an experienced and knowledgeable road agent who can easily identify the priorities and does not need to be necessarily directed by a plan.

Russell Lester asked whether Michael Capone is aware of any government laws that prevent town budgets from displaying the benefit costs of individual employees. Russell Lester suggested that a law called 100A has been referenced to him in the past. There was general discussion that the benefit costs of employees have been routinely lumped as one sum in the budget in order to ensure employee privacy. Michael Capone offered to research the matter.

### **Planning Board Budget**

Michael Capone noted that the legal fees, postage, and advertising line items have revenue offsets.

Michael Capone also noted that the funds allocated in the books and publications line item are for the updated handbooks that the board members receive annually regarding RSAs. Michael Capone explained that the handbooks are purchased in bulk, are distributed in October or November, and that the town receives a substantial discount through the bulk purchasing opportunity.

### **Selectmen's Report**

There was no report provided at this time.

### **Chairman's Report**

There was no report provided at this time.

### **Public Comment**

Dave Barney suggested that the letters to the area regional agreements need to be mailed.

There was general review of the upcoming agendas.

David McAlister summarized that notices regarding the vacated Budget Committee position were posted at five town locations and that no one has contacted him or Russell Lester regarding the position.

Michael Capone clarified that the departments have received keys to activate the gas and diesel pumps at the State Highway Department shed on Route 118. Michael Capone explained that the town is billed from the Concord offices from log sheets that are manually filled out by the drivers. Michael Capone summarized that the cost savings has been seen as high as \$0.30 per gallon and that departments now have a choice to go to whichever fill-up site that offers the lowest per gallon price.

The next meeting is scheduled on October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**MOTION** by Russell Lester and seconded by Denis Salvail to adjourn the meeting at 10:04 P.M.

**VOTE: Unanimous in the affirmative**