

FINAL

BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING

February 27, 2008

7:00 P.M. – MUNICIPAL OFFICE BUILDING – HANOVER NH

The meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Brian Walsh. Present were: Brian Walsh, Chairman; Katherine Connolly, Vice Chairman; Peter Christie, Selectman; Bill Baschnagel, Selectman; Athos Rassias, Selectman; and Julia Griffin, Town Manager.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT.

There were no comments from the public.

2. 2nd BUDGET HEARING:

- Fire
- Ambulance
- Parks and Recreation

Chairman Walsh invited Ms. Griffin and Chief Bradley to address the Board. Captain Gilbert, Captain Hinsley and Captain Clark were also in attendance to speak to the Board.

Ms. Griffin noted that the Town is being weaned off the SAFER grant and the salaries budget item will be going up to reflect that.

Chief Bradley advised that this is the leanest budget that he has presented in many years.

Selectman Rassias asked for clarification on the SAFER Grant. Ms. Griffin noted that each year the federal funding for the 4 firefighter positions is reduced and the responsibility lies with the Town. Captain Hinsley noted that this grant covered a 5 year period with the amounts applied to salaries reduced each year.

Ms. Griffin noted that the Town was really fortunate to get the grant funding. Captain Hinsley reported that of the thousands of applicants, less than 1% actually receive funding.

Selectman Baschnagel asked about the reporting software and whether it will give them a better capability to pull numbers. Captain Gilbert stated that as more information is put into it, more information can be pulled out of it.

Selectman Christie asked about the new Fire District rates and why District 1 isn't going down when Districts 2 and 3 go up. Ms. McClain stated that the way the rates are structured and the transition time. The rate in District 1 doesn't increase at all and it really should decrease by a large amount but does not because of the reallocation. Selectman Christie clarified that the potential rate decrease is being offset by the increased costs in this budget.

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Selectman Baschnagel noted that they raised the rate for the call personnel and asked if the hourly call firefighter rate is on par with the full time rate. Chief Bradley advised that it is not quite on par.

Chairman Walsh asked about the part-time Fire Inspector and whether this is just for new construction. Chief Bradley advised that 95% of this amount is spent on plan review for fire alarms and sprinkler systems and then testing them which takes the bulk of his time. Ms. Griffin noted that part of the building permit revenue is being applied to the Fire Fund for this service. Chairman Walsh would like this put on the list for further review (the possibility of putting more money into the Fire Fund from building permit revenue).

Questions were raised about the decibel reader that was being requested for the Fire Department. Ms. Griffin noted that this was for testing fire alarms. Chairman Walsh would like to know if this is the same equipment that the Planning Office uses and how this equipment is different or exactly the same.

Selectman Rassias asked about the amount being transferred to reserve and what is driving these costs. Ms. Griffin reported that this is due to scheduled vehicle replacement and other equipment and in looking out to 2013, Engine 3 needs to be replaced so they opted to increase the reserve contribution for this upcoming expense.

Selectman Christie clarified with Betsy McClain that when the Town financed the ladder truck they handled part of this through a loan and the other part through reserve. Ms. McClain stated that there are still several years that need to be built up to fund the ladder truck.

Vice Chairman Connolly asked about the building equipment renovations line item for locker replacement? Chief Bradley advised that the lockers were original from 1973. Captain Gilbert advised that one set rusted and fell on a truck.

Ms. Griffin noted that there was a cost to repaint the old Etna Fire Station (across from the station) that was cut from the budget (in the amount around \$3,000). The building is really cold storage at this point and the Town needs to decide whether to put additional money into this building. Selectman Baschnagel is generally against getting rid of any Town properties. He would like to see about getting a community of volunteers to paint it. Captain Clark stated that this has come up in the past but there are safety issues with the back of the building. Selectman Baschnagel would like to see about getting the old 1931 engine restored.

Vice Chairman Connolly asked about hydrant revenue. Chief Bradley advised that this item is for revenue generated by private hydrants such as Dartmouth College, CRREL, etc.

Selectman Baschnagel asked about the false alarm charges. Captain Gilbert took last year's figures and applied the new rates that are now in effect. Ms. Griffin stated that it is unclear whether this is a sustainable amount.

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Chairman Walsh asked if the hydrant rentals line absorbed the Water Company increase. Ms. Griffin confirmed that it did. Chairman Walsh confirmed that there are no anticipated increases.

Selectman Baschnagel asked about the telephone charges. Ms. Griffin explained that the telephone charges at the fire station have nothing to do with the dispatching services so it is now a separate expense charged to the Fire Department. Ms. McClain noted that this is the actual fee and when fiber is up and running, the cost will go down.

Chairman Walsh asked if there were any trends with the Fire Department statistics that should be noted. Chief Bradley stated that the numbers were pretty much in line year to year.

Vice Chairman Connolly noted that there is a significant increase in ambulance calls versus fire calls. Captain Hinsley stated that the percentage of calls to the percentage of the population is not far off and there are a lot of calls at the College but more so for the assisted living facilities.

Selectman Baschnagel asked about surcharging some of the high use entities to reflect the capacity. Chief Bradley didn't feel that this could be done legally (penalizing a certain population). Selectman Baschnagel stated that it had to be tied to something real. Captain Hinsley stated that if they were looking at eventually funding another ambulance, they could possibly charge an impact fee legally but to treat people differently could be illegal.

Ms. Griffin stated in a previous conversation with Walter Mitchell about Hanover Terrace, it was determined that they could charge the ambulance fees but not another surcharge because they are a heavy user.

AMBULANCE

Vice Chairman Connolly asked when TB testing began. Captain Hinsley stated that this has been done by the Fire Department for quite some time.

Selectman Baschnagel asked about the overtime. Ms. Griffin stated that there are discussions as to what percentage of firefighters' salaries should be allocated to the Ambulance Fund and what percentage of overtime. They are also looking at what the Towns of Norwich and Lyme could sustain for charges.

Selectman Rassias asked about Comstar. Chief Bradley advised that they are well into the 90% range for collecting fees. Ms. Griffin noted that so far, there have been no complaints from residents or users.

Chairman Walsh asked about ambulance billing supplies and with Comstar taking care of the billing, what are the supplies that are needed. Captain Hinsley noted that this is for the required forms that the department needs to be signed to submit to Medicare and Medicaid and this is the software that enables them to use the tablets. It is all electronic and they can perform the service, submit the form and get the money.

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Vice Chairman Connolly asked about contractual obligations and disallowed patient billings. Ms. McClain advised that Medicare and Medicaid are very strict about what they cover. This amount shows the correlation between what Medicaid will pay for a fixed amount and our billed rates are higher than that. Ms. Griffin pointed out that the Towns of Lyme and Norwich contributed toward that disallowed amount.

Vice Chairman Connolly asked about the capital reserve amount of \$110,960 which has increased almost 50%. Ms. McClain advised that they will be replacing an ambulance and the cost for replacement has increased.

Chairman Walsh would like to have a list of the run charge rates for different services; charges to Hanover, Lyme and Norwich and the Medicare and Medicaid maximums. He would like to be able to look at the fees and where the Town sits versus the other Towns and what the State and the Federal government are doing. Captain Hinsley advised that they look at this regularly and this is done at the time that the rates and fees are being set. Chairman Walsh would like to see this in conjunction with the budget in the future.

Selectman Baschnagel wanted to get a better understanding of how the costs incurred by the low reimbursements from Medicare are being flowed down. Ms. McClain noted that the President of Comstar, Rick Martin, has offered to come speak to the fees and look at the bigger picture. Captain Hinsley cautioned that Mr. Martin could come speak to the Board about what is happening but he is unable to give the Board information about surrounding communities and what they charge or make any suggestion about what the Town of Hanover should charge. Chairman Walsh would like to see surrounding communities, rate and fee schedule and Medicare and Medicaid figures. Ms. Griffin felt that this might be helpful when setting rates and fees. Selectman Rassias felt that a discussion about the big picture might be helpful also.

Chairman Walsh would also like to see the percentage of runs that are Medicare and the percentage that are Medicaid. Captain Hinsley stated that this could all be broken down by Comstar.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Chairman Walsh invited Hank Tenney to speak to the Board. Mr. Tenney advised that they increased their revenue line items and cut some of the expenditures.

Chairman Walsh thanked Mr. Tenney for being willing to try to cut expenses. Ms. Griffin stated that in spending time with the various Boards to show them the 5 year projections, they were encouraged to look at areas where they could increase revenue. The School District significantly increased the user fees for using the basketball courts and it was felt that these costs should be passed along to the people who use the gym. Basketball registrations would require 2 checks, one to the Recreation Dept and one to the School District to pay for the fees and so that residents understand exactly where the money is going and why.

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Mr. Tenney reported that Sherry Colfer, Facility Manager, offered to work Tuesday to Saturday to keep the building open and help the budget. They are proposing to not increase the registration fees until next year and this would be done in a 2 year phase. Chairman Walsh asked for Mr. Tenney to thank Sherry Colfer for her willingness to change her schedule.

Selectman Christie asked how they help those people who cannot afford to play. Mr. Tenney advised that they have scholarships.

Vice Chairman Connolly asked where the gym rentals are reflected. Mr. Tenney stated that they were under property services. These would be for the youth activities and then the basketball tournaments.

Chairman Walsh asked about the After School Program. Ms. Griffin stated that Dartmouth College Child Care has approached the Town to see if they would reconsider reinstating the HOST program. Ms. Griffin advised that the response to them was that there needed to be a subsidy from the College and coverage of costs through fees. The Town will not subsidize the program, it must be self sufficient. Chairman Walsh asked what happened previously. Mr. Tenney stated that there are so many programs for kids and they did not keep consistent numbers. For this program to be successful, it should target kids in grades 4th, 5th and 6th versus 6th, 7th and 8th.

Chairman Walsh stated that he added all the numbers together and the Recreation Department served nearly 2,000 participants. Mr. Tenney noted that this didn't include public events such as the Pond Party. Mr. Tenney stated that this event is made possible with the efforts of Bill Young, the Occom Pond Community, and Dartmouth College, who provide support and in addition to the donations. He also mentioned that Jack Stinson donates all of their profits to the program on that day.

Chairman Walsh thanked Mr. Tenney and the Parks and Recreation Board. He would like to determine if air conditioning was stopped on each Town building, what the environmental impact would be. Vice Chairman Connolly asked if the building was an all or nothing issue. Mr. Tenney noted that he believes that everything is done in zones. Selectman Baschnagel noted that what prompted this discussion was the report from Charlie Sullivan. Mr. Tenney didn't doubt that his building used a lot of energy.

Chairman Walsh moved on to a general discussion of the tax percentage increase.

Selectman Christie stated that he feels that the presentation needs to start with a factual statement about the increase with an explanation of the impacts that influenced it. He was concerned about confusing the residents if the factual statement was not presented first.

Selectman Baschnagel noted that Ruddsboro Road is in need of repair and he questioned whether the repairs from the damage from this winter will be outside the norm for repaving. Ms. Griffin noted that when Public Works does their mud season survey, she has asked them to keep her apprised at how much the impact will be on the paving budget. Selectman Baschnagel had concerns about the condition of the roads currently and whether it will be a matter of rebuilding

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the roads versus paving the roads. Ms. Griffin noted that this same issue occurred about 3 years ago and right now it is too soon to tell. With this budget continuing to commit to rebuild the investment in the paving fund, it will hopefully help with this. The paving price trends are a bigger issue and a greater potential to impact the budget more than frost heaves.

Chairman Walsh noted that UNH is studying porous surfaces and alternate road treatments. Ms. Griffin advised that the State is monitoring this project over the next 5 years to see how this study holds up. Vice Chairman Connolly feels that whatever needs to be done should be done this year in anticipation of future year impacts on the taxpayers.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS.

Ms. Griffin had nothing to report.

4. SELECTMEN'S REPORTS.

Peter Christie

Selectman Christie had nothing new to report.

Kate Connolly

Vice Chairman Connolly advised that there was a zoning hearing last night and it is possible that there may be about seven articles for the Warrant. There will be another meeting on April 1st to make a final decision about these articles.

Bill Baschnagel

Selectman Baschnagel had nothing new to report.

Athos Rassias

Selectman Rassias had nothing new to report.

Brian Walsh

Chairman Walsh had nothing new to report.

5. OTHER BUSINESS.

There was no Other Business reported.

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6. ADJOURNMENT.

Selectman Baschnagel MOVED to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Rassias SECONDED the motion.

THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY THE ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Athos Rassias, Secretary

Minutes prepared by Elizabeth S. Rathburn.

SUMMARY

- 1. Selectman Baschnagel MOVED to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Rassias SECONDED the motion.**

THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY THE ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:35 P.M.