

**TOWN OF CANAAN  
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING  
October 29, 2009  
Canaan Fire Station  
Approved Copy**

Members present: Chair David McAlister; Eleanor Davis; Dave Barney; Denis Salvail; Al Posnanski; Russell Lester; and Craig Lawler. Also present were Selectmen Robert Reagan and Tim Lewis, Michael Capone, and Shirley Packard.

David McAlister called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M. and took attendance.

The Budget Committee reviewed the proposed 2010 Selectmen's Budget, as presented on the budget worksheet dated October 29, 2009. Robert Reagan offered to highlight only the budget line items that the Board of Selectmen chose to change from what the department head had proposed. The following explanations were provided:

The town report printing line item under the meeting budget was reduced since fewer town reports will be printed and since the Town Administrator is formatting the report in such a way that will help to reduce the processing charge.

The unemployment line item in the public administration budget was adjusted due to federal changes and the increased number of individuals unemployed.

All salary line items were level funded and benefit costs were adjusted to reflect 2009 expenditures.

Eleanor Davis asked what line item the funds were taken from for the lawn mower purchase. Robert Reagan responded that the lawn mower was a 2008 purchase and is not reflected on this budget worksheet. Michael Capone responded that the funds might have been taken from the repairs and maintenance line item of the government buildings budget but that he would need to verify this.

Eleanor Davis asked what the encumbrance listed in the government buildings budget will be used for. Michael Capone responded for the fire department doors.

Robert Reagan explained that the previous full time position for cemetery maintenance has been reduced to twenty hours per week and will work twenty hours for the highway department. The part time cemetery position will then be increased a few hours, as needed.

The equipment line item of the police department budget includes \$30,000 for a police cruiser as a negotiated agreement between the Police Chief and the Board of Selectmen in order to help reduce the overall police department budget. Dave Barney suggested that the police cruiser purchase would be more transparent if the purchase was listed in the capital outlay budget. Eleanor Davis suggested adding a capital outlay line item to each

budget. There was general discussion that a police cruiser can not be purchased in any way if the cruiser purchase is defeated as a warrant article. It was explained that the cruiser cost is approximately \$27,000 and the extra \$3,000 is for the changeover and equipment installation costs.

The water and sewer line item was reduced in the fire department budget since the trucks can be filled from the street fire hydrant at no cost, except during extremely cold weather, instead of with metered water. It was noted that filling from the fire hydrants would provide training opportunities and would help with flushing out the water lines.

The dry hydrant line item of the fire department budget was reduced since no dry hydrants have been installed in many years and since there are requirements for a site to qualify for a dry hydrant installation. Robert Reagan summarized that the Board of Selectmen is gradually implementing a policy that a department head plan is needed to justify requested budget funds or else the operating budget will continue to remain inflated with unused budgeted funds.

The salary line item for the emergency management budget was reduced since emergency management is already the responsibility of the Police Chief and Fire Chief. Tim Lewis explained that the salaries should not be double funded unless grant funding requires salaried positions.

Michael Capone explained that last year's budgeted amount of \$46,500 for the dispatch service line item for the emergency management budget included funds for an antenna installation that was never completed. An increase for dispatch service is not known at this time.

The increase in the FT salaries line item for the highway budget reflects the change in the FT cemetery maintenance position to being part time in the highway department.

The paving line item of the highway budget was reduced to zero since the request will be posed as a warrant article.

The winter sand and gravel line items of the highway budget were reduced since the town owns a sand screen, has three years of screened sand already, and is creating gravel product from the 137 acres behind the transfer station. Tim Lewis estimated that material should be available from this site for the next twenty five years. It was explained that a few dollars need to be budgeted for sand in case of any emergency needs and since the town does not have any sand sheds at this time.

Dave Barney asked how many road miles were mowed. Robert Reagan responded that as many miles were done as could be completed during the rental period of the mower. Michael Capone added that another week of rental would have completed all of the town's roads.

Eleanor Davis asked what the cost was for the dump truck. The response was \$64,000 for a fully outfitted truck.

Eleanor Davis asked when the sand screen was purchased. Michael Capone responded in 2008 for \$37,000 but the sand screen was not delivered under January of 2009.

Dave Barney requested the cost of road salt versus the cost of Magic Salt plus the amount of salt product used on Goose Pond Road.

It was explained that the \$25,000 in the gravel line item of the highway budget reflects the crushing cost for 5000 yards.

The street lighting line item has been reduced since the intent is to discontinue use of many street lights after completion of a survey.

The water and sewer line item of the transfer station budget has been reduced due to a change in contract for the portable toilet.

The C&D Hauling Services line item of the transfer station budget was reduced to zero since the residents will be able to deliver items themselves as part of the dual stream recycling program.

The rent assistance line item of the welfare budget was increased to reflect this year's projected need.

The director position of the recreation budget was reduced to zero since the position will become a volunteer position.

Robert Reagan summarized that the undesignated fund balance is healthy again and that the town can petition the court and schedule a special meeting if emergency operating funds are ever needed. Robert Reagan added that the Board of Selectmen chose not to add any contingency funds in the operating budget in order to stabilize the tax rate next year due to the economic times. The goal was a ten percent cut in the operating budget with a detailed review of the proposed department head budgets but only 8.5% was identified for cuts.

There was general explanation of needed funds in 2011 for the revaluation fund but not for the bridge repair fund.

Al Posnanski suggested revising the site improvement line item of the transfer station budget to site improvement/maintenance. Michael Capone offered to check into the possibility.

There was general discussion of the town's and school's increased contribution to the retirement system for this year and next year.

Eleanor Davis requested the number of full time employees that are covered by the town's health insurance plans and the number of employees who receive stipends in lieu of health insurance plans. Eleanor Davis also requested the difference in the health insurance cost for the employees compared to the health insurance cost of all of the employees' family plans.

**Approval of Minutes:**

The minutes of October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009, will be available for review and approval at the next meeting.

**Chairmen's Report and Selectmen's Report:**

There were no reports provided at this time.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled on November 5<sup>th</sup>. Michael Capone noted that the Fire House may not be available for the December meeting dates due to the renovation schedule. There was general discussion that the December meetings could be held in either the library or the Senior Center.

Eleanor Davis requested review of the default budget and the projected revenues at the December 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Michael Capone noted that the deadline for petition warrant articles is January 12<sup>th</sup> and the posting deadline for the warrant is January 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Public Comment:**

Shirley Packard requested confirmation whether salary raises were being considered for next year. The general consensus was that no salary increases are being considered.

Shirley Packard commented that the funds for a police cruiser can not be included in the operating budget and on the warrant. Committee members responded that funds for the police cruiser in two places would not be the intent.

Shirley Packard suggested that the Budget Committee should consider adding funding for the summer field hockey program to the proposed budget.

Denis Salvail suggested that a legal opinion be sought whether the intent of a petitioned warrant article can be changed.

There was general discussion regarding the ramifications of being a Senate Bill II town and school district.

**MOTION** by Dave Barney and seconded by Craig Lawler to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 P.M.

**VOTE: Unanimous in the affirmative**