

**SELECTMEN'S MINUTES  
BUDGET HEARING  
JANUARY 6, 1996**

**Present:** William C. Mullin, Nancy C. Tavernier, F. Dore' Hunter, Wayne L. Friedrichs, Herman Kabakoff, Town Manager Don Johnson and Assistant Mgr. Murray, Sharon Summers, Comptroller, and Tony Rassias, Finance Director. (The meeting was not televised)

**Also Present:** Sharron Gaudet, Fincom Chairman, Fincom members Tom Mackey, Rheta Roeber, Jean Sifleet, Bob Miller, Jim Corwin, Sidney Johnston and Joe Bolger. Art Harrigan was also present.

The purpose of this meeting was to bring together the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen and have each individual department head present their budget to both the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee at the same time. The Board felt that this would enable interaction between two committees and department heads.

Don Johnson, Town Manager stated that this was the 10th budget he has presented to the Board and that unlike the past few years the town is favored with a large free cash amount. Don also stated revenues, excise tax collection and new growth have been a factor in the free cash amount.

**TOWN MANAGER'S BUDGET**

Don Johnson presented an overview of the Town Manager's budget. The budget will be increased by approximately 4% plus steps if due. Don also stated that the legal costs have been a significant factor in the Town Manager's budget. Don stated that the manager's budget used to carry clerical overtime for all budgets and now it has been disbursed into various department budgets. Don also stated that the maintenance for copy machines has increased due to an upgrade in town hall and the police station. Don stated that employee development has risen due to the cost of the computer training for the new system. Don asked the Board's opinion regarding the amount if any that the Board wanted in the Business Outreach account.

Sharron Gaudet stated that she would like to see an overview on computer spending. Jean Sifleet asked what elements are considered in the spending of the business outreach account. It was stated that the money would be for paper production and printing, and production of a tape to show potential commercial tenants. Tom Mackey asked the definition between what the Town considered maintenance versus a major expense regarding the fixing of xerox machines. John Murray stated that a major expense would be a replacement of a whole machine. Herman questioned the article concerning printing costs for town meeting warrants. Don stated that the costs reflected in the budget were for both the Town meeting warrants and the annual report. Don s'

that he would summarize and provide to the Board of list of FY95 legal expenditures by category.

### **ACCOUNTANTS BUDGET**

Sharon Summers presented her proposed budget. Sharon stated that her budget reflects 5 employees and proposed cost of living increases and step raises. Sharon stated that the new computer system has impacted her budget tremendously. Tom Mackey asked how many employees are working on this computer upgrade. Sharon stated that she has three full time employees, one temporary worker and pentamation help. It was asked what the contract with pentamation covered. Sharon stated that the contract we have with pentamation includes training days and an 800 phone number which we use for \$10.00/month.

### **FINANCE DEPARTMENT BUDGET**

Tony Rassias, Finance Director, gave a quick overview of his background since he is a new employee to the Town. Tony gave an overview of his budget. Tony stated that his budget was increased due to pensions, insurance and debt service plus approximately 4% increase in salaries. The increase is needed to accommodate a possible increase in employees changing insurance coverage at the open enrollment period in May. It was asked that we provide the number of employees that participate in Blue Cross Insurance and insurance coverage for the town fleet has also decreased due to changing from an individual insurance policy to a blanket policy. Fincom members asked us to come up with all MIS costs in an object format which shows the total MIS costs for the entire system. Herman asked if the banks could bill the Town separately for service fees in order for us to keep track and monitor these fees. Joe Bolger asked if we could provide a listing for what the numbers mean.

### **ASSESSOR'S BUDGET**

Brian McMullen, Assistant Assessor, presented an overview of his budget. Brian stated that his salaries have increased by approximately 4% and the remainder of the budget is level funded. Brian stated that FY98 will entail a reevaluation of all Acton properties. Herman asked what the costs were for a reevaluation and asked to be provided with this list with the breakdowns for the last few years.

## TOWN CLERK BUDGET

Cathy Belbin presented an overview of her budget and stated that like all departments she has approximately a 4% increase in salaries. Cathy stated that her Elections line has increased due to the fact that there is a presidential election this year and approximately 96% of the voters will turn out to vote. Postage has gone up due to new State requirements.

## PLANNING DEPARTMENT BUDGET

Roland Bartl, Planning Director gave a brief overview regarding his budget. He stated that his budget has risen by 4% in salaries. Roland is seeking a new employee and the Board asked him if all costs were included in budget request. The State requires the Town to formulate a master plan which was done approximately 5 years ago. Some updates need to be done regarding the master plan which will require expenditures.

## ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

David Abbt, Engineering Administrator, stated that his budget is pretty much level funded for FY97 with an increase in salaries of approximately 4%. He stated that there has been an increase in repairs maintenance due to the traffic signal installed on Main Street/Post Office Square. David would also like to see an additional traffic signal installed at Hayward Road/Main Street due to traffic congestion at that intersection. A traffic study would need to be conducted for approximately \$10,000. David also stressed that we do not have DEP approval for the landfill cap which will require additional monies. The sidewalk fund presently is budgeted for 75,000. The Board asked David to come up with a breakdown of cost regarding the sidewalk priority list.

## MUNICIPAL PROPERTIES BUDGET

Dean Charter, Municipal Properties Director, stated that his budget will rise approximately 5 1/2% due to cost of living increases and increased monies will need to be paid for contract services based on the Attorney General's interpretation of the prevailing wage law. Dean also stated that the Council on Aging building is budgeted for \$3,000 due to not knowing what the expectations are regarding expenses. Dean stated that there are numerous playground committees in the works and that they will be seeking monies for those upgrades of the department. The Board asked Dean to show the number of Full time equivalents for both his regular and seasonal employees.

### **POLICE DEPARTMENT BUDGET**

George Robinson, Police Chief, gave an overview of his budget. George stated that one of the problems he faces is the need for a Central File System. Joint dispatch is also being recommended between the Fire station and the Police Department. George stated that he felt it is important to have all calls come to one location and that approximately 3 1/2 new employees will be needed for dispatching purposes. The Board asked George what the benefit is for providing joint dispatch. Fincom asked if a tour can be scheduled of both the Police Station and the Fire Department. It was also asked how much it would cost to fix all of the Police Departments problems. Staff also asked George and Bob Craig, Fire Chief to prepare a cost benefit analysis for a combined Dispatch program.

### **SENIOR CENTER BUDGET**

Carol Lake presented an overview of this budget. Carol has asked for an extra six hours per week in clerical time. This time is needed due to lack of coverage.

### **COUNCIL ON AGING BUDGET**

Joe Bolger stated that he would like to meet with Carol to go over her budget. Carol gave a quick overview on her budget.

### **HEALTH DEPARTMENT BUDGET**

Doug Halley, Health Director, gave an overview of the Health Department's budget. Doug stated that office equipment and maintenance has increased due to two laser printers and a microfiche printer. The impacts of the new Title 5 have also increased the need for additional Health Department training sessions. The septage enterprise funds remains the same as previous years. Doug stated that a consultant has been hired regarding the South Acton Sewers.

### **BUILDING DEPARTMENT BUDGET**

Garry Rhodes gave an overview of his budget. Garry stated that he has decreased his budget by \$8,000 by putting it -into a revolving fund to pay some clerical hours and sign enforcement staff.

## **HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT BUDGET**

Dick Howe, Highway Superintendent, gave a quick overview of his budget. Dick has proposed to have some equipment added, bridge repairs, and extra crack sealing. Under NESWC revolving fund, Dick has asked for a new truck, backhoe and employee. The Selectmen asked Dick to prioritize this list.

## **ACTON MEMORIAL LIBRARY**

Wanda Null, Librarian, gave an overview of her proposed budget. Wanda stated that she would have a modest turnback from her present budget. Wanda also discussed the proposed library expansion. Wanda estimated that the full cost of the expansion would be \$6.3 million dollars, which includes all costs. Wanda stated that the expansion will triple the existing library space and will provide the town with additional meeting rooms. The question was asked as to what class of library this expansion would give us. Wanda stated that compared to Concord, Acton would have approximately half of the volumes that Concord has, however, Wanda stated that Acton circulates more volumes per year. The Board questioned whether a regional library would be a better solution. The Board asked what other alternatives were considered. The Board asked that these questions be asked to the Trustees. It was also asked what kind of library we could get for \$3Million. Herman questioned whether or not grant monies would be applied for. Wanda state she would apply for grant monies and estimated that we could potentially get 2.2 Million in grant monies.

## **WEST ACTON CITIZENS LIBRARY**

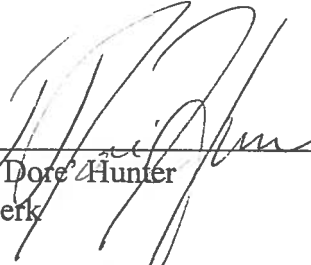
Suzi Pomeroy gave a brief overview of her budget and stated that every thing remains level funded.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES/CEMETERY**

Tom Tidman, Natural Resource/Cemetery Director, gave an overview of his proposed budget. Due to the reorganization of these two office Tom's budget has increased. Tom discussed the North Acton Recreation proposal in length and showed a design of the proposed area. Herman questioned whether or not Tom knows of any opposition regarding the development of this area as a recreation facility. Nancy asked about a backup plan.

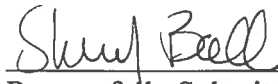
Having concluded the budget hearings Sidney Johnston, presented the Board with his version of the first quarterly report for the Board's review.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM.



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Clerk  
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Respectfully Submitted,  
Sheryl Ball