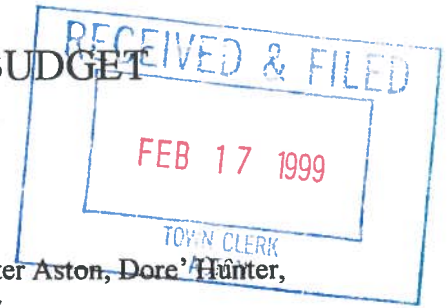


SPECIAL BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S BUDGET
PRESENTATION MEETING
JANUARY 9, 1999



PRESENT: Wayne Friedrichs, Herman Kabakoff, Nancy Tavernier, Peter Aston, Dore Hunter, Town Manager Don Johnson and Assistant Town Manager John Murray.

Also Present: Sharon Summers, Finance Committee Members; Jack Reetz, Bob Miller, Bob Evans John Prendiville, Sidney Johnston and Tom Mackey. Rheta Roeber came late. Also present was Ann Chang.

Citizens Concerns: Ann Chang, would like the Town to offer a \$1000 tax relief for seniors The Senior Tax Relief Committee is currently working on getting \$1000 relief for citizens. Peter stated that the relief would probably be placed on an article at Town Meeting.

Tom Mackey thanked the Board for inviting them to this presentation. Mr. Mackey stated that this a fact finding and information gathering meeting.

Chairman Friedrichs made opening remarks and gave an overview of the agenda and rules of order for conduction of the meeting.

Town Manager Don Johnson stated that budget preparation begins for the Town in September. Don read his opening remarks stating that the FY2000 budget includes a 4.5% increase and the budget complies with agreements reached at ALG. Department heads will give a brief overview of the budgets. Peter asked that we touch on revenues this year, and John will give the board a brief revenue. John Murray stated that revenues are broken down in four major categories, Tax revenues New Construction/Growth, Overlay Non Tax Revenue Motor Vehicle Excise, Municipal fees. Peter Ashton asked if free cash was certified we are anticipating 1.9Mil. State Aid of 4.2 %. Wayne Friedrichs asked how we arrived at the New Growth Figure. John Prendiville asked if the expenses of the Town would result in an override. John Murray answered no. Sidney asked if there is any new Growth component that calculates the receipts. John stated that we will not get the actual New Growth figure from the state for a year.

ACCOUNTING/MIS

Sharon Summers stated that their department consists of three people responsible for accounting and MIS. Ms. Summers indicated that the Accounting Department had gone through a lot of transitions to keep up with technology. Mr. Ashton asked about Y2K line item for \$50,000. Don indicated that there is a Y2K expert at Palmer and Dodge and also a person that resides in Acton that is an expert. Don indicated that this money will be used for any support if necessary. The town will consult services to try to ensure that there will not be an issue with public safety needs. Mr. Ashton asked if there will be wider spread internet access throughout staff. Don indicated that he is not comfortable with opening up access stating that there is open public meeting. John indicated that there will be multiple internet access for staff at the Library. Dore' asked about the money to create a web page for Acton. Tess indicated that she has spoken with the person that created the web page for Concord and this money includes this quote. Dore' asked about

our work with the schools. Tess indicated that she has lost 1/3 of her department and it would be difficult to keep up with the schools. Herman asked about materials budget decrease. Herman suggested that more money be placed in this account to allow for unexpected modern contingencies. Herman questioned the money for GOEY based software and the upgrade GIS. Bob Miller asked what the benefits of getting the GIS maps on system. Don indicated that these upgrades tie in with matching grants and that this year will need digitizing which costs the most with monies. Mr. Miller indicated that he would like to see a long range plan over multiple years of the costs associated with these upgrades. Tom Mackey stated that he is concerned with the 6 months lapse of getting the School Department fully operational with standard system. Tom Mackey asked if the \$50,000 was enough for Y2K. Bob Evans indicated that the School has a web page and that we should work with the schools. Don indicated that we have a web page but we need more help. Nancy asked about Information Consultant money. Tess indicated that she spends 50% of her time doing this work. Nancy stated that she will work hard to get Accounting this position since it is hurting. Wayne asked about supply decreases. John Prendiville indicated that Tess is running a tight ship. Tess thanked the Board.

ASSESSORS

Brian McMullen indicated that the Assessing Office is a three person staff. Brian stated that the proposed budget is level funded with salaries adjusted 3% COLA. Nancy asked about the software upgrade three years ago and wondered if it was working. Brian indicated that the software helps the department keep more current. Nancy asked about Town of Hopkington acceleration program. Brian indicated that he thought we are currently using it. Herman asked about the money under the Tax Appellant Board money. Brian stated that the \$10,000 is needed in case a person files an abatement. Herman asked for the current cases that are before the Appellant Tax Board and amounts that are issued.

BUILDING/ZBA

Garry Rhodes, Building Commissioner, gave an overview of his budget stating that his budget is level funded. Peter asked whether the amount in the Professional Development budget is sufficient. Garry indicated that there are more avenues for schooling through the Town Managers budget. Nancy asked about building revenues and how they tie in.

CLERK/ELECTIONS

Don representing Cathy Belbin, indicated that the proposed budget has a 4.5% increase based on steps and 3%COLA's. Nancy asked how this budget will handle all of this years Special Elections. John indicated that a Reserve Fund Transfer might need to be done.

COA: [COA van enterprise]

Carol Lake indicated that her budget indicates an increase in printing due to the COA newsletter and for a part time exercise instructor. Carol also pointed out there are numerous volunteers that help alleviate her budget needs. COA Van is moving toward a tax subsidy this year. This van is controlled through the LRTA and is repaired through the LRTA and repairs are lacking. Dore'

questioned the petition currently pending for the Town to take care of the outside of the Senior Center and were to pass it would need to be budgeted.

COLLECTOR/FINANCE

John Murray, Finance Director indicated that there is a 3.85% increase in the Collector's budget. Peter Ashton questioned the 23% increase in the supplies budget. John indicated that this is in line with current spending. John indicated that there is going to be 3 vacant positions in these departments. John stated that he would like to hire a Information Consultant and an Assistant Finance Director to fill the vacant position. John indicated that a Lock Box service will be needed since we will be short staffed and also due to a move over to Pentamation since we will have to run parallel services doubling our current workload. John indicated that Professional Legal services are for CDL printing of bills. John also indicated that we have collected monies from tax delinquents, thereby, requiring the need to spend more money on legal services to get the rest. John Prendiville asked about getting a Treasurer/Collector Finance person on line. John stated that we are interviewing in the next couple of weeks. Don indicated that Tess is severely overworked and we need to do something to relieve her.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

John gave an overview of all the increases in the Finance Budget. Peter asked about the status of the Streetlight purchase. John indicated that we won on all major points except we have not got a ruling on electricity cost. We have asked for a \$2 rate and as soon as we put the last pieces together then we can budget rates. Bob Miller questioned whether we have gone out to bid with other commodities. Mr. Miller indicated that there are state bids out with current contracts. Sidney Johnston questioned how much ownership we would have of the poles. John indicated that we get the whole pole for \$60,000. We are hoping that MMA joins us with this fight. Herman asked about professional services increase. Herman stated that benefits are up 7%, workers compensation 19%, and huge jump in Middlesex County Insurance. John indicated that other department monies will need to be scraped to pay for an increase this year. Tom Mackey asked about trend of Middlesex County Retirement. Mr. Mackey questioned what kind of monies will need to be spent in 15 years. John indicated that health insurance open enrollment is in May and we need to carry money for any changes. Workers Comp has increased due to more accidents, some resulting from the school system. Herman expressed his frustration with our support of the schools in workers comp and accounting support. John indicated that we could provide a schedule 19 to the Board which would answer questions. John indicated that we have a blanket policy with an \$18 million per structure fee. Don indicated that insurance have been reworked and our done. John Prendiville asked about debt service for both towns and schools and stated that the debt will be doubled by 2004. Finance Committee is willing to make this known to citizens and Fincom would like Board's support in doing this. John Prendiville asked at what debt capacity is. John indicated that we will have a 100 million at our peak, however, it is a good time to go out. Bob Evans asked if the open enrollment could be moved back to April. John indicated that May works out best.

ENGINEERING

The Engineering Department consists of three full time and one ten hour employee. This budget is level funded. Peter asked about sidewalk funding. David indicated that we have surplus in

sidewalk funding that we need to catch up on. Peter also asked about bridges and culverts money. John indicated that Chapter 90 monies are needed. Don indicated that we are asking for and additional \$60,000 for sidewalks even though we have a surplus because this is going to be a construction year for us. Herman asked about Landfill issues starting in year 2000. David stated that we do not have the dirt from the Big Dig project and we are waiting for the dirt before additional monies are needed. A new program could possibly be in the works to allow for us to re-open the landfill long enough to collect enough money to pay for the cap. Rheta Roeber questioned whether we always do our own sidewalks. David indicated that some developers have constructed sidewalks. David indicated that contracting out sidewalks would double the costs. David stated that the quality of work that the developers would do on the sidewalks would not be equivalent to our construction. Bob Miller complemented the Engineering Department on the outstanding job that they did on Windsor Ave, and stated that an outside contractor could not have provided that kind of service.

FIRE

Chief Craig gave an overview of their budget. The budget is leveled funded with step increases and COLA's. Bob touched on three capital items that need to be replaced which are a snorkel pumper, digital imaging camera, and a Microvax computer system. Nancy asked about the replacement pumper asking if a snorkel truck was really needed. Chief Craig indicated that the ladder truck would compensate for the snorkel so a replacement will need to be replaced only by a pumper. Herman asked about a 50% increase in overtime. John Prendiville asked about sick policy. Chief stated that we are still working on this policy, dealing with extended sickness and retirements and indicated that they are currently negotiating with the Fire Department regarding a wellness program. Chief Craig indicated that a thermal camera is being requested to allow a fire fighter to see through the smoke by sensing body heat. This camera can also find where the fire is in the wall is and minimize destruction. Dore' stated that we have to reduce the sick time. Nancy asked if other mutual aid towns have already purchased this camera and wondered if they would lend it to us. Chief Craig indicated that he looked into purchasing this camera mutually with other towns. Herman asked about jaws of life. Chief Craig stated that we currently have two jaws of life and one needs to be replaced. Wayne asked about longevity. Chief Craig indicated that this would be a bonus paid out to employees based on their years of service.

HEALTH/NURSING

Doug Halley, Health Director and Meg Low, Nursing Administrator were present to discuss their budgets. Meg indicated that the Nursing budget is level funded with the exception of COLA's and steps needed. Nancy congratulated the Nursing Service on their accreditation. Meg stated that the accreditation is contingent on some conditions which she does not foresee as a problem. Don indicated that the accreditation process has caused us some personnel issues and that the preliminary score was 88 out of a 100.

Doug indicated that the proposed Health budget is level funded with the exception of COLA's and steps. Nancy asked about Kelley's Corner drainage cut. Doug indicated that the drainage cut for Kelley's Corner will be located near Roche Brothers. Nancy asked about Water quality testing. Herman asked about the personal services raising 8%. Doug indicated that the numbers represent many turnovers, the department faced. Doug indicated that Hazardous waste day has increased since costs were lower when we were a part off NESWC. Peter asked about catch basin cleaning and street cleaning. Doug explained that this allows for contract for street

cleaning. Wayne asked if the sealers of weights and measures is adequately funded. John Prendiville asked about \$300,000 sewer waste management system and wondered why it did not make the priority list. Don indicated that \$300,000 would be eaten up in legal fees by just trying to get onto the property to do Title 5 inspections.

HIGHWAY/NESWC

Dave Brown, Highway Superintendent, has several increases in budget one being for overtime for highway and transfer station budget. Other increases are due to uniform increases and assistant superintendent being removed from hourly to salary. Signs have been increased due to vandalism. Highway Contracts have also driven up costs due to bargaining. The sidewalk funds are decreased due to the ones that need the repairs are in the sewer district and would be pointless to be repaired. Nancy asked David for all the sidewalk work that his crew has done. Nancy asked about a sign truck and stated that it is truly needed. Herman asked about road repair decrease. John stated that we have had our chapter 90 increased and that we have caught up on our backlog. Herman asked about gasoline increase. Don stated that we need to operate equipment regardless of price and we have had mild winters and we still need to budget for a winter. Herman asked about 100% increase in tires. David explained that our fleet is older and also this covers repairs. Herman asked about bridge repair. David explained that it costs about 70-75 just for the culvert at North Acton. Wayne stated that between the Highway and Fire Department we are spending major money on vehicle replacement. Tom Mackey reinforced that equipment replacement should be projected out over the years. John indicated that we should do a vehicle maintenance log which will formulate what you are asking for. We are hitting our functional debt level, so we need to take it out of our operational budget. Rheta asked about cardboard recycling requirement since she has noted cardboard in the regular percent. We are mandated to recycle 46% and we are currently operating at 48%. We encourage all our people to recycle even though it costs us money. Rheta asked why sidewalks on Summer Street have been taken off the priority list and when would they be put back on.

NESWC

Peter asked about appropriation to spot trading in trash.

HR/VETERANS' SERVICE

Charles Jones, Director of Human Resources, gave an overview of his budget. Wayne questioned the employee recognition program and why it hadn't been spent. Charlie indicated that agreements need to be reached on how to spend the monies.

VETERANS

Charlie stated that there was a decrease in membership, since he deemed that it was not in the best interest of the town to belong to services. Veterans agent is mandated by law full time based on our population. Massachusetts legal veteran is someone who has served in some kind of conflict within specific dates of service. The veterans agent is involved in speeches outside. The two veterans require unknown services each year. Charlie has been trying to encourage veterans to come out and join the legion.

MANAGER

Don indicated that a budget increase is due to 3% Cola on clerical staff. Legal activity has increased from land use activity. Y2K monies have been added to solve any potential problems. Peter asked about professional services due to education that staff can receive. The workload of some staff is too much that they are not able to attend classes. Equipment maintenance is up a little due to some splitting we did previously and now we are putting it back together. Business Outreach caring at \$5000 should this be ongoing. Could use for other projects that are coming out. Web page is operation of ultranet charges for current web page. Agway and WR Grace all pulled out because of potential lawsuits based on damages we might be able to recoup. Herman asked about \$230,000 legal last year with an increase of 16 to 17%. How come. Concerned with land use issues. Jack asked about department object budget stating that numbers do not compute. There is a replacement page. Rheta asked about Y2K taking assurances since she was told not to trust. We have written to all vendors and asked about compliance. All answers are written by attorneys and are no use to us. All CPU's and software has been rewritten and Y2K compliant. The Board also asked if we had signed unions contracts for all year.

MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Don indicated that we have received national recognition for the Library. The FY2000 budget includes the first year that the new library is fully funded. The proposed budget maintains same level of service as is currently funded. The budget satisfies the municipal appropriation requirement. The Board asked about the national recognition. Wanda indicated that the state survey selects statistics from all agencies and sent to the federal bureau who breaks down statistics by population and then ranked us. Wanda is pleased with this rating. Don stated that we are going to MMA conference with the ranking and we are thrilled. Herman asked if we could segregate out effects compared to the old library. We will get this information out. Peter asked about books and periodicals. Wanda stated that these costs are mandated. Peter asked if we are estimating increased circulation to be higher than 17%. Wanda indicated that it could be more. Bob Evans asked about 50% benefit rate. John indicated that it is due to part time employees being benefited which makes the cost increase.

MUN PROP.

Dean Charter, Municipal Properties Director indicated that this department has under gone reorganization. Dean indicated that some jobs will need to be contracted due to major reconstruction of West Acton Library and Memorial Library. Dean indicated that the RFP's for the Public Safety building are out and interest is shown. A new phone system proposed for the town hall will require alot of maintenance. Nancy asked about contracting custodial services through library stating that this is the way to go. Dean stated that our union is supportive of contracting out the custodial services. Herman asked about buildings and grounds maintenance going up 200%. Dean indicated that windows will need to be replaced and repaired and also unexpected repairs to equipment. Herman also asked about what he uses street lighting for. Dean indicated that he only pays the bills. Herman also asked why supplies went up 30%. John Prendiville asked about funding repairs on an ongoing basis and projecting out within 5 years. Get a program started that would allow this.

Town Hall - Don indicated Dean's budget allows for Dean to focus on specific needed repairs which we have held off.

Fire Station 2 - 2300 in sewer, where is the betterment's. John indicated the 2300 wont be spent if the sewers are delayed.

Windsor Ave - The building is not handicap accessible upstairs and we only use downstairs floor. The 15,000 maintains a municipal facility only.

Citizens Library - Finishing touches needed.

Senior Center - \$5000 upgrade of lighting.

Dore' questioned \$50,000 for Police generator. Town Hall roof repair is \$8,000 to bring in consultant to do a study on the problem. Aerial Platform needed and will be kept in library. Bob Evans asked if the lights at the Senior Center would focus down.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Tom presented the Board with an overview to the budget including where recreation if going, conservation lands, and maintenance of ball fields. Tom indicated that the budget is increasing due to recreation. Peter wondered if we should break recreation out. John stated we would talk later. Supplies are needed to bring in new programs plus structures for North Acton. Peter asked about money for future for beaver patrol. Nancy questioned keeping land stewardship under budget. Rheta asked about NARA asked about donations. Backstop has been installed, irrigation and picnic pavilion hopefully will be. Dore' asked about lease with soccer field. Tom indicated that the next step will be to move into the Morrison Property.

PLANNING

Roland Bartl stated that his budget is level funded except for COLA's. Peter asked about economic developer planner and why didn't it make cut list. Roland indicated that his staff is slipping into this role. Zoning Bylaw is hard to read and this needs to be made simpler and a re-write needs to be done. Peter asked if \$15,000 is enough to hire outside consultant. No. Money transferred to Kelleys Corner traffic improvement last year what is status. It is close and currently at the State level.

POLICE

George Robinson , Police Chief, stated that there is a 3% increase for non Quinn officers and 0% increase in the budget for Quinn recipients. The overtime includes coverage for sick and vacation. Chief Robinson gave an overview of other increases which include some schooling and a new copier. The expenses are level funded. Capital items requested include a Speed Awareness trailer and radio call check. Dore asked about ceilings in Police Station. George indicated that process is working. Chief Robinson indicated that the Quinn bill is relatively neutral except the first year we need to fund the whole thing funded with a reimbursement from the state. Herman asked if we are assured of getting 50% back. Herman questioned dispatcher increase of 9%. Don indicated that is due to a savings in overtime and also for turnover and police office fill ins.

Rheta asked how many sick days there are per person Chief Robinson indicated that there are an average of 7.5 sick days per person. George indicated that injury is factored into that figure. Rheta asked what will happen if the state doesn't fund Quinn Bill. If the state doesn't fund then officers will not receive.

WEST ACTON LIBRARY

Regina Tischler, Librarian in 1998 stated that the Citizen's Library has 150 years of service and has welcomed 150 new families and increased circulation. The Library also has an extensive large print book collection. Ms. Tischler thanked Dean for repairs which also help with added space.

Nancy E. Zaverinis
CLERK

Sheryl Ball
Sheryl Ball
Recording Secty