**Minutes of Budget Committee Meeting 30 January 2017**

**Call to Order:**  A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 6:05 PM by Chair Win Williams.

**Roll Call:** Win Williams, Chair; James Dyer, Vice Chair; Jack Rogala; Rita Anderson; Len VanGaasbeek Jr.; Lenny VanGaasbeek III; Martha Turner, Secretary. Select Board: Mike Seely.

Others present: Meg Gardner, Martha Huff, Dana A. Gray, Vera Littlefield, Nancy Conway, Roberta Ramsdell, John Paul Rondeau.

**Review of Minutes**: Motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of 6 September 2016. Motion carried unanimously. Motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of 23 January 2017. Motion carried unanimously.

**Budget Review:**

0100 Administration

Committee members asked questions to be addressed by Mr. Seely. Lenny asked about the increase in wages. Mrs. Anderson also commented on the increase in the total request. Len asked about computer expenses, as well as office furniture. Mr. Williams asked about outside services, as well as “tax acquired expense.”

Mr. Seely noted that the increase in wages will appear in each department’s budget request this year. He praised the work being performed by the town employees, and expressed the desire of the Select Board that the town’s employees should be fairly compensated for the work they do. He stated that according to the State of Maine Personal Income Growth, Hollis is 2.7% behind the state average. He also noted that the minimum wage has just been increased to $9.00/hour.

Mr. Seely reported that the total number of Select Board members’ weekly hours has been increased to 75 hours per week. He expressed his concern that a member of the Select Board should always be available to town residents during regular business hours. He stated that each Select Board member shares the various duties required, although each also has some special areas of interest. E.g., River Payne is the General Assistance specialist, although all Select Board members are also “Overseers of the Poor.”

Mr. Seely presented amendments to the first 0100 budget that was presented last week. The new total request is $157,001.

In response to concerns about the office furniture expense, Mr. Seely noted that this year an Administrative Assistant for the CEO has been hired for the first time, and her position will require a new desk and computer. He also noted that some furniture items may need to be replaced as they age.

Motion was made and seconded to table 0100 Administration for the next meeting. The motion carried unanimously. 0100 Administration is tabled.

Under public comment regarding 0100, Mr. Gray expressed his concern that an across-the-board wage increase is not good business practice. He suggested that some employees need a wage increase more than others. He also referred to the current Computer Price Index of .3%. He emphasized the need to adhere to the Budget Committee Bylaws and handle public comment in an orderly manner.

0101 Broadcasting

Lenny expressed concern about the large increase in the new budget request. Mr. Seely explained the need to build a new control room downstairs in the Community Center, as the old storage room was removed due to mold. A new secure broadcasting room will be constructed that will contain all electronic equipment, which can then be controlled from that room, rather than being required to move the equipment around for every meeting.

Under public comment regarding 0101, Mr. Rondeau explained that a grant for new equipment has been received from Time Warner, but the Town will have to pay for the cost of building the room.

Mr. Seely noted that the increase in the number of broadcasting hours is a result of the Select Board’s desire to televise all Board and Committee meetings except workshops, to provide Hollis residents better access to records of Town activity. He also noted that the two individuals involved in this department have not had a raise in pay for several years.

Motion was made to approve $8114.18 for 0101 Broadcasting. The motion was seconded and discussed. The motion was amended to approve $8115.00 for 0101 Broadcasting. The motion carried 6-0-0.

0150 Legal Fees

Mr. Seely presented a budget that has been amended, but has not changed the total amount requested. Foreclosure Fees will be increased. This is for the attorney’s costs related to each foreclosure. Mr. Seely noted that there are potentially up to 29 more foreclosures that are pending for the coming year.

Mr. Seely gave a brief review of how the foreclosure process works. The Hollis Tax Collector files a lien against the property for unpaid property taxes. Eighteen months later, if the issue is unresolved, it goes to Mr. Seely, who must get a legal reading on each one. The process can be lengthy. The lawyer may have to go to bankruptcy court.

Mr. Seely explained that the Code Enforcement Officer does not have legal fees in his department’s budget, so any legal fees required for Code Enforcement will come out of 0150.

He also emphasized that legal fees tend to be unexpected, making it harder to create a realistic budget.

Motion to approve $10,000 for 0150 Legal Fees. Motion was seconded and discussed. Motion carried 6-0-0.

0400 Facility Maintenance & Operations

Mrs. Anderson raised questions concerning the Cleaning Contract. She also expressed concern about the purchase and use of Town equipment. She also asked if the newly hired maintenance worker/handyman is receiving health insurance.

Mr. Seely explained that the new $7200 cleaning contract covers the weekly cleaning of the Town Hall building, and cleaning the Community Center twice a week.

He stated that the handyman is hired to work twenty hours per week and thus is eligible for health insurance. He noted that the handyman works at all Town facilities as well as recreation areas and ball fields. He mows as well as providing repairs as needed, in all areas except electric. Mr. Seely explained that there is a capital expenditure of $3000 requested to purchase a used pick-up truck for the use of the handyman. He also noted that town already owns a tractor, but other tools and equipment may be needed.

Regarding supplies, he noted that the Cleaning Service provides its own supplies, but other supplies are required such as soap, towels, and toilet paper.

Mr. Williams asked if the cleaning contract was put out for bid. Mr. Seely replied that since the amount is less than $10,000 a bid process is not required.

Motion was made and seconded to approve $61,580 for 0400 Operations and Maintenance. The motion carried 5-1-0.

1300 Insurance

Mr. Seely explained that Maine Municipal Association administers all Town insurance. The annual fee to MMA is $1500 per person for each individual who is insured, which is the same as last year.

Mr. Williams stated that he is unaware that the Town has been authorized to provide dental as well as health insurance. He asked whether dental coverage was authorized by a Town Warrant. Mr. Seely will investigate.

Motion to table for next meeting. The motion was seconded, and carried unanimously. 1300 Insurance is tabled.

1600 FICA/Medicare

This item is a fixed amount and is not negotiable. Motion was made and seconded to approve $75,691 as requested. The motion carried 6-0-0.

2000 Streetlights

Mr. Seely noted that there has not been any change to the Town’s lighting plan. The increase in the request is due to paying for half the lighting costs for the new Bar Mills Bridge.

Motion was made and seconded to approve $75,691 for Streetlights. The motion carried 6-0-0.

2298 Veterans’ U.S. Flags (protected account)

Mr. Seely explained that the requested $700 will be placed in a protected account to be used only for this purpose. A donation of $1500 has been received which will cover the rest of the costs. Moved and seconded to approve $700 for 2298 as requested. Carried 6-0-0.

2308 Veterans’ Graves and Ancient Cemeteries (protected account)

Mr. Williams noted that State law requires the Town to maintain these cemeteries and ancient tombs, and to keep them fenced. Mr. Seely stated that some of these graves have been neglected for a long time, but they have now been mapped and will be repaired this spring. There is no monetary request for this item this year, so no further action is required.

**Other comments:**

Mr. Rogala asked for clarification regarding the proposed TIF amendment and extension. Mr. Gray read from Paragraph 5, concerning the Select Board’s authority to spend any and all TIF funds without consulting the town’s voters or the Budget Committee. Lengthy discussion followed. The consensus is that this would effectively bypass the existing system of checks and balances. Although eager to extend the TIF for another five years, the Budget Committee’s recommendation is to not pass the amendment as currently written, but to vote it down and rewrite it.

**Next Meeting**: Monday 6 February 2017 at 6:00 PM at the Community Building.

**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Minutes submitted by Martha Turner, Secretary

Approved by Budget Committee 6 February 2017