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**Budget Advisory Meeting Minutes**  
**taken by Tina Rushton**  
**Approved 1/13/14**

OFFICE OF THE MANAGER

Saturday, January 3, 2015

In Attendance: Terri Benton, Ritva Burton, Michael Knoras, Walter Martone, Everett Hammond, Hugh Putnam, Tina Rushton and Marilyn Thompson.

Everett Hammond started the meeting at 9:20am. He presented the RSMS (Road Surface Management System) as presented to the Board of Selectmen in December. Walter asked if there was any gas tax that could be implemented to help offset the cost of local road programs. He stated that where he was from zero property tax dollars were used for roads, 100% was funded by a gas tax and they had a surplus left over. Terri and Everett stated that the Budget Committee made the recommendation last year for a statewide 0.02-cent statewide tax on gasoline, which would be returned to the local town and only utilized for that purpose. The Select board was going to meet with our local state representatives, but as far as we know nothing was presented. The presentation recommends funding the pavement budget at \$600,000.00 for FY15-16 and increasing that by \$100,000 per year through 2019. After 2019 increase at a rate of 5% per year. Mike asked how we get the execution of this plan. Hugh said we should go on record as supporting the concept of this road program as presented.

Tina made a motion to recommend the adoption of the RSMS plan as presented by Everett and the motion was seconded by Terri. The motion passed by a vote of 8-0.

Marilyn stated that Springfield used to be the diamond of the State. Hugh stated the once the shops went instead of fixing the town with more industry, we fixed it with social services. The social services are costing us more than we are getting from them. Terri mentioned that Tom wants to tie up this budget this week. Walter stated that an increase of 19% in this year's budget is not sustainable. Mike stated there needs to be a ways and means.

Walter stated again that there needs to be some kind of gas tax to support local roads. Ritva stated that Vermont cannot handle any more taxes. Walter stated right now you are getting hit in your property taxes; it needs to be put on the users of the roads. Tina stated it amounts to about .50 cents increase when you fill up. Everyone agreed it would be more sellable as a statewide tax. Mike stated that it would have to be a separate bucket at the State, and not diverted to other purposes. He used the lottery as an example for funding education, and no funds have gone to education.

Ritva brought up the paving of Pleasant Valley Road, and if that project could be delayed and the funds better utilized in other areas of the town. Everett agreed this was a very good idea and that project could be delayed to get as much life as we can out of it, at least 3 to 5 years. Hugh made the motion to recommend the delay of the Pleasant Valley project. The motion was seconded by Ritva. The motion passed by a vote of 8-0.

Everett suggested going through the budget by department:

### ADMINISTRATION

Tina asked what the additional \$11,420.00 was for in Personnel Director line. Terri stated it is to hire a new part-time director due to Linda Rousse's retirement. Mike stated that it is the Town Managers job to be the personnel director, but he can delegate it. He has at this time delegated it to Jeff Mobus. Mike asked why do you need a special pay category for this, Terri stated this is to help support Jeff out. Tina also questioned the increase of \$1320.00 in the telephone line. Terri stated that this is for a smart phone for the Town Manager. Mike asked what the \$900.00 in travel is for. Terri stated it is something the new manager asked for, Bob Forguites chose not be reimbursed for anything.

Terri brought up the subject of the funding of Springfield Regional Development and Springfield on the Move for Economic Development. She added that they should be a special appropriation. Hugh Putnam stated that Springfield's new logo that we paid \$10,000 for, is identical to Middlebury's logo other than the name of the Town. Mike stated that the charter states that we do not put non-profits in the budget. Terri stated the town attorney allowed it under the notion it is a contracted service. Mike said the Town has no control, and no written agreement. He stated we do not even tell them what we want. Hugh stated by doing what we are doing, it is basically a donation. Ritva asked if we see their financials. Mike stated the that we do not. Mike also stated that the funds for Springfield On The Move basically pays Carol's salary. Walter asked if it could be a performance based contract with specific deliverables, with payment based on performance. Hugh stated that painting downtown storefronts is wonderful, but if they remain empty for 20 years what good is that. Terri said that if we put up the fake facade like Disney World it looks beautiful for people driving through, even through there's nothing there. Hugh stated the Town should have some control over this, or it should be a special appropriation. Everett made a motion to recommend that SRDC and SOM funding be based on performance based contracts or a special appropriation. The motion was seconded by Hugh. The motion passed by a vote of 8-0.

Ritva brought up that the Select Board has the right to reject, alter, or reduce any special appropriation requests. Have they ever? Mike stated the Board of Selectmen should be looking at special appropriations, the State Legislature states it has to be an agency that performs for the good of people in the town. Terri said we are not saying these are not valid, but they should have to work for it.

Terri stated that the increase of \$2325.00 for Zoning Administrator was a merit increase approved by the new Town Manger. Hugh stated that how can you give increases when you haven't been there long enough to determine the performance level of the staff. Mike stated as a new manager he is trying to buy their support. Terri just said this is just odd, how this is being done. It is what it is. Hugh stated that we should ask if the phone in Central Support included Internet. Everett stated we should ask that question. Terri also said that she understands that Chester is not going to be using Springfield to dispatch any longer, that is a decrease of \$20,000.00 in revenue.

## POLICE

Terri stated that Chief Johnston is once again asking to re-align the Police Department. Tina asked if the salary increases were step increases, Terri stated that they were contractual. Marilyn stated she hopes that with the new hires that overtime would go down. Mike stated that it would probably not be until July, and then maybe a 30% reduction. Mike asked about the vehicle replacement fund of \$16,000.00. Terri said it's not a fund it's a wash. Mike said Chief Johnston said it was monies taken from this fund to pay for sub-spring wash out. Terri said they do not have a truly designated Equipment Fund. Mike stated Jeff Mobus said they did not lose a thing. Mike stated this needs to be investigated more. Hugh stated that they want \$56,000 to buy two vehicles next year. Terry suggested they need to have an designated equipment fund so the funds do not get shifted. Everett recommended a motion to set up a vehicle equipment fund for the \$56,000.00. The motion was seconded by Terri. The motion passed by a vote of 8-0.

## FIRE DEPARTMENT

Tina stated that the Fire Chief should be applauded for keeping his budget so evenly funded. All agreed what a wonderful job the Chief did this year.

## PUBLIC WORKS

Hugh stated the biggest increase is winter road materials of \$60,000.00, which we have no control over. Mike stated that we are really short in Public Works in the summertime due to comp time from the winter.

Hugh stated that we are out of space in Oakland Cemetery and are looking into buying some land. The Church is willing to sell it for the cost of the Land Survey. It will give us approximately 300 feet by 980 feet. Ritva asked about \$12,500.00 for a Kubota mower. Everett stated they should look into something less expensive and it would have to be bid out anyway. Hugh stated that the rates in the cemetery increased effective January 1<sup>st</sup> to be more competitive with neighboring towns.

## PARKS AND RECREATION

Everett stated there is not much change in Parks and Recreation this year. Mike stated that Andy is a guy that gets paid for 40 hours and puts in 80, because he loves what he is doing. Hugh stated we get a lot for the buck here.

## SENIORS

Everett stated the only increase is in Regular Pay. Terri stated we really do get a lot of bang for our buck.

## LIBRARY

Tina asked why the postage has gone up \$3,000. Hugh stated that it was due to joining the Catamount Consortium. This allows us to borrow books from other libraries. He stated other line items would have gone up if not for this consortium. Mike stated that Russ said we are sending out about 80% and requesting about 20%, so how is that helping us? Hugh said we are lending more than we are receiving but it's more like 60 to 40%. Ritva asked why

can't we keep the books line at \$33,000.00, and use the consortium. Mike stated that the population in Springfield has dropped. Hugh stated that computer usage is way up and people are in there reading the papers everyday. Terri stated that we level fund it. Ritva recommended a motion to level fund the library book line at \$33,000.00. The motion was seconded by Mike. A vote was taken, which resulted in a tie of 4-4. The motion dies, Mike stated we can say we tied and let the Select Board decide.

### CAPITALS

Terri stated that there is a bond note that is shifting over. Hugh stated that it makes up a large percentage this year. Hugh stated that the people want a full service town. Mike stated the voters would tell you when they vote in March. Tina stated people keep voting yes, most residents in Springfield get a subsidy from the state toward their property taxes, if voters looked at their tax bills to see what they would have to pay without their subsidy or the State took away that subsidy it would be a different story.

Walter stated that the way the capitals requests are listed, it is confusing. Terri asked if the road construction should be in the operating budget and not capitals? Everett stated he believes it should be in capitals. Mike stated it should be in operating budget. Walter asked if there are State requirements as to where it should be.

Hugh asked about the funds for the sidewalks on South Street, which was funded last year. Mike stated the funds have been set aside.

Everett was concerned over the size of the loader requested by the Department of public works in the amount of \$280,800.00. He stated that the town does not need a loader of this size and should be able to purchase a 3yard loader with a plow and wing, which is totally adequate for around \$180,000.00. Terri stated that we should level fund this at \$315,000 as last year, put it in the Equipment fund and not commit to a piece of equipment and let Jeff decide. Everett was concerned that they would go for the large loader. Terri stated the Public Works and Water Sewer are always exchanging vehicles. She stated they kept saying they needed a sidewalk tractor but it lasted for 6 more years. She stated public works capitals have been under funded for years, last year we set up an equipment fund. There is still \$310,000 in that fund from last year. Tina stated when making our recommendation the size of the loader should be brought up. Everett stated there is good used equipment out there to purchase such as a blower. Everett stated the blower is not as essential as some of the other equipment, he would rather see the grader, trucks first. Tina stated we shouldn't micro-manage. Hugh agreed that the Department Head should make the decision; they still need to go before the Board. Hugh stated we should have objected against putting \$8000.00 into the Durango. This vehicle is worth less than the cost of the repairs. Terri stated you wouldn't put that money into your own vehicle.

Hugh stated that as far as police, he agrees with the cameras in downtown, and in the vehicles. But Hugh recommends not funding the data driven policing. Terri stated if the Police Department does not know where the high-crime areas are in Springfield, we are in trouble.

OTHER BUSINESS

Everett asked if we should meet with the Board of Selectman regarding the Budget Advisory Guidelines as presented by Tom and comments made by Tom in regards to the Budget Advisory Committee. Mike stated we should ask, do they value our opinion? or do we walk away. Walter stated it should not be done in public due to reporters, the headlines would be new Town Manager and Budget Committee at odds. Tina asked if we could request a private meeting? Mike said Everett should email Kristi Morris and request an Executive session with the Board. A vote was taken to request a meeting with the Select Board, the vote was 8-0 to request such meeting. Meeting was adjourned at 12:45.