

**Town of Pittsfield, NH
2016 Budget Committee
Meeting Notes
January 13, 2016**

Meeting called to order at: 6:04 pm

Members Present: Chairman Bob Schiferle, Vice Chairman Louis Houle, Mark Riel, Fred Hast, Faith Whittier, Gail Nickerson, Helen Schiff, Helen Schoppmeyer, Mary Thorpe, Jacob Kitson, Mary Paradise, Selectmen Representative Gerard LeDuc, School Board Representative Ray Ramsey

Members Absent: None

Guests/Presenters: Selectman Eric Nilsson, Selectman Al Douglas, Selectman Nick Hayes, Selectman Larry Konopka, Town Administrator Cara Marston, Fire Chief Pete Pszonowsky, Police Chief Jeff Cain, Officer Rich Walter, Town Clerk Erica Anthony, Carl Anderson, Valerie Anderson, Clayton Wood, Bill Elkins, Carol Dodge, Paul Nickerson, Rene Drolet, Beverly Drolet

Public Input:

Selectman Eric Nilsson made a public statement regarding the Board of Selectman's lack of tolerance for any unfounded allegations made against Town staff members, and that legal action would be taken as warranted against those making such allegations.

Chairman Bob Schiferle made initial remarks regarding the goal of this special meeting involving the Board of Selectmen. He stated that the goal is to improve communications with all those involved with or impacted by the budget. He also stated that the current tax increase as proposed was simply too much to impose on the taxpayers, and that everyone needs to work together to find solutions that represent the best interest of the Town.

Vice Chairman Louis Houle made statements of \$1.97/thousand increase for the Town, plus \$2.27/thousand increase for the school district. Louis

asked the Select board to cut somewhere, and that it is not really up to the Budget Committee to just make the cuts. He asked for department heads, the Select board, and the public to join our meetings to help.

Fred Hast discussed his concerns regarding increases in salaries. He felt that people with 15-18 years of experience were making less than new staff. Union raises were roughly 2% of the increase in this budget.

Chairman Bob Schiferle asked the selectmen to go back to department heads to ask where they can reduce the budget. Selectman Eric Nilsson stated that they had originally asked department heads to submit budgets for where they needed to be, at a stable number.

Helen Schoppmeyer expressed options regarding new police cruisers, and Mary Paradise spoke of fixing vehicles.

Carl Anderson spoke of how we all want new, but we just now are getting taxes where needed, and are not the black sheep anymore. All our personnel are great people, but we can't afford more and more money.

Jacob Kitson asked about how many new businesses have opened or new construction projects have occurred in Town.

Selectman Eric Nilsson said that the Board of Selectmen will meet with department heads and discuss next Tuesday, January 19th. He said there is no guarantee of finding \$200,000 in reductions.

Selectman Nick Hayes stated that it would be very hard to make a dent in the budget.

Vice Chairman Louis Houle stated that if reserves get cut by just over \$1.00/thousand it will just make it harder next year.

Selectman Larry Konopka stated that he is looking forward to making cuts, and that he was not a member of the board at the time when the budget was proposed.

Gail Nickerson asked Police Chief Jeff Cain how they come up with the number of cars. Chief Cain replied that he could go with only one new car, but can't get up certain area roads. The 2010 cruiser with 98,000 miles needs a new motor, and that two vehicles need \$7,000 in repairs.

Mark Riel asked about police call frequency, such as how many calls are received daily, and also nightly. Chief Cain replied that there is one person on duty nightly, and that nobody from other departments would cover them without a charge.

Vice Chairman Louis Houle expressed concern for people not being able to pay their taxes, particularly the older generation. He also asked about properties being taken back by the Town. Cara Marston stated that things are actually getting better, according to the data. Town Clerk Erica Anthony stated that the Select board is very willing to work with people, and getting them on tract.

Chairman Bob Schiferle asked what would be a reasonable goal for a tax impact to be considered acceptable, and if setting this would be helpful in determining cuts. Mary Paradise and Selectman Nick Hayes both suggested that it would not be helpful, and Selectman Hayes compared it to a tax cap.

Vice Chairman Louis Houle stated that it is not going to help enough just by cutting things like Street Lights, Copier expenses, etc...

Selectman Nick Hayes stated that we need to keep communication open, and to please provide Selectmen Representative Gerard LeDuc suggestions to bring to the Select board.

Meeting Recess: Meeting was recessed at 7:00 pm, and was resumed at 7:10 pm.

School Budget:

The school budget was reviewed by committee to identify any questions they may have. Much of the discussion revolved around enrolment numbers, and the impact on revenue.

School Board Representative Ray Ramsey will be forwarding questions on to school district representatives in preparation for the January 27th Budget Committee meeting to discuss the School Budget.

Town Budget:

General discussion on various budget items and potential areas for reductions were discussed. The consensus was to wait until the department heads and Board of Selectmen identify areas for reductions, and continue discussions at that point.

It was decided that the next meeting would be dedicated to the Town Budget since it follows one day after the next Board of Selectmen meeting where they will be working on the budget as well.

Reading & Motion to approve minutes of 01/06/16: 01/06 minutes submitted to and approved by the committee.

moved by Gerard LeDuc
seconded by Ray Ramsey
minutes approved: All in favor

Meeting adjourned at: 8:55 pm