

Bob Thompson

John Allen

Richard Bennett

Selectmen's Budget Meeting #2

February 9, 2017

Present: Bob Thompson, Chairman and Richard Bennett, Selectmen

Chairman Bob Thompson called the meeting into public session at 4:30 PM.

Selectman Thompson: Some minor changes from last meeting. The total operating budget is down \$8,843 from last year. We went through the budget line by line last meeting. This meeting we'll skip over anything without questions.

Joyce Allen: Asked how the Town Clerk, Karen Burton, is paid. How does her salary come about?

Selectman Thompson responded that the Legislative Body decides her salary. Elected officials salary increases must be approved by the Legislative Body they are not part of town staff increases. We use a town Warrant Article to do this. This year we're tying future increases to the same as town staff with a Warrant Article.

Joyce wanted to know why every year town employees get a 3 or 4 percent salary increase every year. It's not like people on Social Security get that every year. What do we base this on?

Selectman Bennett remarked that people on Social Security aren't working. You really can't compare that to people that are actually doing the work. We figure the percentage out to keep up with the rest of the county area.

Selectman Allen said that a raise has to do more than keep up with cost of living and keep wages competitive to keep good employees.

The Chief said because he has a government-backed pension his Social Security benefits are not equal to non-government employees.

Selectman Thompson stated that the wage increases over the last few years were driven by an inequity in police salaries about five years ago. Officers were well below the average in the county. When looking at the officers we realized that other town employees were also being underpaid. We feel it's important to provide a fair and competitive wage.

Jay noted that during the same time frame he examined the highway salaries and found them to be on average. He feels keeping it there is very important for employee retention.

Sarah talked again about wishing there was more of a breakdown on what we pay individuals do to their jobs including salary and all benefits. She said the Bartlett School Board does this in their town Warrant. This way we could figure out exactly what each employee costs us.

Selectman Allen wondered how that would matter since only the bottom line can be changed and not individual employee benefits and pay.

Sarah responded it was informational.

The comment was made that in the private sector that a 3 or 4 percent wage increase plus benefits every single year adds up.

Jay talked about employee retention being important to keep quality employees especially in the highway department. He thinks the increase is fair and reasonable.

Selectman Thompson feels that the 3 percent increase is a small part of the overall budget. It's a major investment to train someone and then lose him or her to someone else.

Karen brought up the point of how much it costs to live here in the valley. It's not cheap so it's important to make a good wage.

Selectman Thompson said no one on the staff is getting rich on what we pay them. He's proud of the staff and when the pay levels off he would expect to have a smaller increase in wages.

The Chief talked about retention and getting quality employees. You have to compare municipal workers with municipal workers in similar locales. We're average to slightly below average on wages and slightly above on benefits. If we hire a civilian to be a police officer it cost the Town \$13,000 to train them. It also takes 35 weeks.

Sarah questions the town's need to expand the police force. She feels we can rely on backup from the State and the County.

The Chief responded that mutual aid is assisting each other as needed. Budgets are lean all over. Other agencies have their own responsibilities and will assist us if they can after covering their own sectors. We have to be responsible and staffed for the day to day running of our force. At least three officers are needed to do that. I'd also like a pool of part time officers to help supplement when needed.

All the selectmen feel that the chief's logic and reasoning on a third officer are well founded.

Jay asked about progress with Bartlett on a new ambulance.

Selectman Allen answered that he just found out Bartlett wished to table it until next year. We're not in dire need to replace it but it is getting older. We did look at a Mercedes fully equipped for about \$140,000. We have to wait for Bartlett to put up their half. After a short discussion it was decided to remove both warrant articles dealing with the ambulance.

Selectman Allen, seconded by Selectman Bennett, made the motion to remove the two warrant articles. The motion passed unanimously.

Each of the warrant Articles were voted on. All were approved unanimously except for the following:

Exemption of Renewable Energy Sources- **Selectman Allen voted no, Selectman Thompson abstained, Selectman Bennett voted yes.**

All Veteran's Tax Credit-**Selectman Allen and Thompson Abstained, Selectman Bennett voted yes**

The Meeting was adjourned at 6:15 PM

Respectfully Submitted by:
Amiee Murphy
Recording Secretary