

**TOWN OF CHESTERFIELD
BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 11, 2012**

Present: John Koopmann, Chairman, Rich Kalich, Sue Newcomer, Dan Cotter, Mike Wiggin, Spofford Fire Precinct Representative; Elaine Levlocke, Selectboard Representative; Frank Underwood, Chesterfield Fire & Rescue Precinct Representative

Absent: Bayard Tracy, Marty Mahoney, School Board Representative; Jeff Morse, Charlie Perry, Cliff Emery and Steve Laskowski

1). *Rich moved the November 13th minutes for discussion. The motion was seconded by Susan.*

Rich moved the November 13th minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Susan and passed unanimously.

2). Highway – The Road Agent, Bart Bevis was present to discuss some looming significant repairs. There is no funding for Capital Improvements Plan. Repairs to River Road are 300 to 600 thousand dollars. The Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for the CT River. There is a 60/40 split with the Town. This is the Town's portion. The new 35,000 GVW truck is \$160,000. The large culvert on Pond Brook Road estimated cost to repair is 300 to 400 thousand dollars. Bart has no estimate for repairing North Shore Road as there is no budget for an engineering consultation to get started. The backhoe is 120 to 140 thousand to replace. Bart stated that replacing the backhoe will be put off 2 to 3 years. The Highway Roof needs to be recoated for approximately \$20,000. Bart stated that the company was able to gauge the sealant remaining and will guarantee a resealing for 10 more years.

There is no easy answer here. Rich asked if the money were limited what projects would he prioritize? Bart stated that it has gone beyond that. That is a process that was being used 2 to 3 years ago. Bart stated that carbides for the snowplows used to cost \$16 per linear foot. They are now over \$60. His supplier had a sale a while back and Bart purchased a surplus that he is still using. Bart stated that the Selectboard could post weight limits on roads and raise revenue by charging for overweight permits on Town Roads. There is \$127,592 left in the Highway Budget with \$56,280 of expenditures left. There should be around \$76,000 left over at year end.

3). Police – Duane made a power point presentation about the crisis at the Chesterfield PD. The same presentation was made to the Selectboard in 2010. Duane stated the bonus plan has been taken away and employees have seen a significant increase to costs for benefits. Until recently, there were 2 officers scheduled on call all the time. There are 1,758 calls on record in 2011 Town Report. These are only calls that require a written report. There were 8,348 calls from dispatch in 2011. So far in 2012 there have been 7,296. The Police are called for everything. Duane stated that the Highway Garage

is the back-up. The Police Department works very well with other agencies in Town. Other towns can't say this.

Duane stated that he was shocked to see Dave Eldridge leave for a promotion in Hinsdale. With Dave's departure the Town has lost 27 years of experience, the sole detective, crime scene analyst and firearms instructor. Noah Sanctuary left for a patrolman's position in Walpole. With Noah's departure the Town has lost 4 years of experience, the investment in training and the last firearms instructor. The Chief is scheduled to retire in 2013 and Kevin White is also eligible for retirement in 2013. Duane could be the only experienced officer left in Chesterfield.

There is a potential 12 year-veteran who resides in Chesterfield willing to take a \$2.00 per hour decrease in pay to work here as a full-time officer. Training an officer is approximately \$93,000 plus the time invested by other officers. The Police Academy is 4 months. Field Officer Training is 4 months. There are oral boards, a polygraph and a physical examination. An officer starting at step 2 only gets 3 years of raises. Duane stated that he went from contributing zero dollars to \$118 per pay check in health benefits. That is a 10% reduction with no increase in pay. The Bonus program has been removed so there are no raises after 5 years. The annual COLA was tied to an index that has not been followed for several years. It is always a bad year. Susan asked about working with other communities to reduce costs like the Regional Prosecutor program. There are 8 full-time officers in Hinsdale and about 1,000 more than Chesterfield in population. Hinsdale is looking to increase pay for part-time officers as well. Susan stated that the police are really good at privacy. The only visibility the department has is traffic stops on Route 9 or an accident. Lester stated that it is his job to make sure people feel safe in their community. He doesn't want to sacrifice that safety for a raise. Duane presented a possible revision to the pay scale.

Rich asked if the police were to get a 5% raise, what could be done within the budget? Duane stated that in order to comply with previous Committee requests there is no fat in the budget. The Chief has been working over 100 hours a week to cover shifts. There are around 100 people employed by the Town. The School employs around 65. Rich stated that he thinks there should be fewer better paid employees. He is against raising taxes.

A 20 year officer, such as Kevin White, trains new officers, makes less per hour and has no opportunity ever for a raise. Kevin used to do DARE and was a firearms instructor. When the bonus program was taken away there was no incentive to keep excelling. Lester stated that the current situation is unsatisfactory. He has been delaying service on cruisers, working crazy hours and is worn out. Bart stated that he is seeing the same thing at the highway garage. An employee for 5 years is making the same as two 20-year employees. The highway garage employees do not take vacations from November to April due to possible weather conditions. Lester proposed a 3% raise after 10 years, 3% after 15 years and 3% after 20 years. Bart stated that a 2% raise would raise his budget by 1.7%. He returns much more than that every year. Rich looked at the salaries in the police budget. There is \$180,000. A 5% raise is \$9,000. He is hoping the savings can be found elsewhere in the budgets.

4). Recycling Center – The new proposal includes the cost of insurance and capital equipment replacement so the payoff will be in just over 4 years. The Selectboard is in

support of the new recycling program. Susan stated that if there is an extra \$50,000 in the budget it should go to personnel instead of equipment at the transfer station. She would like to have an outside consultant opinion on the efficiency at the transfer station.

5). Parks & Rec – Ruth Van Houten stated that there was over \$30,000 in revenue this year. The North Shore Beach being closed to non-residents made a difference in attendance at Ware’s Grove, in addition to good weather, more accountability and other beaches being closed due to storm Irene.

6). Ambulance – Ruth reported that she is a member of the Board of Trustees of Rescue, Inc. The ambulance budget is up 5.7% with Keene Ambulance being the biggest increase.

7). Other – The meeting on January 28th has been cancelled. There is a conflict with the secretary and the room. Deliberations will be January 29th and 30th.

8). Adjournment – *Dan moved to adjourn at 9:35 PM. The motion was seconded by Mike and passed unanimously.*

Respectfully Submitted,

Amy LaFontaine
Secretary