

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET WORKSHOP
February 2, 2013
Meeting Room A**

<u>Present:</u>	Norman Needleman	Members of the Press
	Joel Marzi	Audience Members
	Stacia Libby	James Francis
	Kelly Sterner	

Norman Needleman called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm.

Public Comment:

Walter Shieferdecker inquired if the CRRA funds recently received would help offset any budget increases this year and wanted to know if there were any plans for the funds. Mr. Needleman stated there are no plans for the funds at this time and the purpose of today's meeting is to review the budget.

John Ackerman inquired what the goals were for the budget this year. Mr. Needleman stated the goal is to have a zero percent increase. Mr. Needleman reminded everyone that more than 70% of the budget is education, which the Selectmen have no control over.

Mr. Needleman stated the first pass at the budget shows a 3.73% increase, but already there has been new and accurate information presented which has brought the budget down even further.

Mr. Needleman stated that \$504,000 in cuts had been made by the First Selectman. He stated that there was a request made for a waste water study. Mr. Needleman stated that he is suggesting not funding this entire project in one year, but setting up a sinking fund for this study.

BUDGET REVIEWS:

Essex Library

Richard Conroy presented. The increases are due to the repairs and maintenance of the building, which is six years old. The copier is older and the boiler needed repairs recently that cost \$2,500. Mr. Conroy also stated that there is a staff member of 14 years who should be brought up to the state minimum salary range for the position she holds. Mr. Conroy stated that there is presently no retirement plan set for the employees and he would like to address that in the future. The original request was for a \$10,000 increase, the Selectmen agreed to a \$5,000 increase in the budget. Mr. Conroy thanked the Selectmen for any increase.

Building Department Page 30

Keith Nolin presented. Mr. Nolin stated that he believed his department paid for more of the part time position than what is reported on the budget request. Mr. Needleman stated that there was reorganization of the land use department. There is now one full time and

one part time administrative assistant. The departments are more efficient and organized. Although the building department generates income, the number of permits remained the same, and work has decreased, therefore, less revenue. Mr. Nolin stated the building permit fees are anticipated to increase approximately 25% for next fiscal year.

Fire Marshal Page 34

Keith Nolin presented. Mr. Nolin reported that the Fire Marshal's office needs some updates. Mr. Nolin recommended obtaining a vehicle for fire investigations. The vehicle could be used to house emergency tools and it would also be used for interviewing fire victims. Mr. Nolin presented a quote to Mr. Needleman for a new computer for his own personal vehicle, the same kind as the police use in their vehicles. Mr. Nolin stated this computer would give the Fire Marshal access to the land records. There was discussion on whether this equipment was mandated. Mr. Nolin stated the only mandate is that the Fire Marshal must write the summons. Mr. Nolin also stated that he would like the ability to print.

James Francis inquired about the frequency of use for this incident vehicle. Mr. Francis suggested investigating whether the Council of Governments (COG) could obtain a vehicle for the region to use. Mr. Needleman stated that COG is spread out, but there is a possibility of looking into a local group of Towns to obtain this type of vehicle. It was suggested looking at a 10 minute radius. There was also discussion on where this vehicle would be housed?

Mr. Nolin requested the Board of Selectmen consider increasing the Fire Marshal's hours from 15 to 20 hours effective September 1st.

Town Clerk Page 8

Mr. Needleman stated that the Assistant Town Clerk has assumed some hours in the Finance Department. This change has reduced the full-time payroll line in the Town Clerk budget.

Frances Nolin presented. Mrs. Nolin reported on the public records administrator and e-recording. There was discussion on this new system. There was discussion on records retention and electronic files.

Emergency Management Page 31

Stewart Schenck presented. There is a zero percent increase but there was a request for additional computers in the Emergency Operations Center in order to have additional laptops and computers at each work station. Mr. Needleman stated that the request has been placed on a capital needs list. Mr. Schenck also requested the purchase of a software package that could be used to take and track emergency information that is reported during an emergency. The documentation from this software would also assist with FEMA reporting.

Finance / Treasurer Page 9

Kelly Sterner reported. The increase in the Finance budget is due to the the current part time staff would be brought into the department as a full time position and also budgeting for longevity. The Director of Finance responsibilities have increased. The Director of

Finance is the informational point between employees and their retirement. Mr. Needleman stated the structure of the Finance Department is modernizing and acknowledging the present salary ranges for this position to manage this town in an appropriate way.

Debt Services Page 51

Mr. Robert Dixon stated there has been an approval to do a refinancing (advanced refunding) on the school bond that is currently outstanding. This would save approximately \$500,000. The refinancing would drop the Selectmen's budget from 3.7% to 2.1%.

There was discussion on looking into another bond for capital needs, but research is needed. The rates are extremely low. There is a Capital Committee that will look at the roof of the school, bridges, and the Town Hall improvements.

BREAK: 2:30 – 2:45

Social Services – Shoreline Soup Kitchens Page 45

Phyllis Cappuccio presented. There is still a need for funding and many Essex residents participate in this program. The Selectmen agreed to the request of \$5,000.

Assessor Page 2

Jessica Sypher stated the building permit contract will be covered under the revaluation. Usually \$20,000 is placed into the revaluation fund, this year \$15,000 was recommended be placed into the sinking fund.

Mr. Marzi inquired about the increase for legal services regarding appeals and inquired whether the surplus from the revaluation fees could be used for legal fees. Ms. Sterner stated that by GASB standards the revaluation fees are not considered a sinking fund, it is a physical process and it is an assigned part of the fund balance. There is currently \$236,000 in the sinking fund, less the \$149,000 for the revaluation.

Economic Development Commission Page 20

Lon Seidman presented as acting Chairman for the Economic Development Commission. The request is the same as last year with a zero percent increase.

Highway & Transportation Department

Dave Caroline presented. There is currently a 3.41% increase due to one employee out indefinitely and the need to hire additional staff to assist the highway department. Mr. Marzi suggested a highway paving sinking fund for roads to be used in the future.

There was discussion on catch basins cleaning and maintenance, and drainage maintenance and storm water. Mr. Caroline stated that the state mandates that the Town track every outfall within the entire town. The \$20,000 in the budget is the funding to continue doing this.

Town Garage Page 50

Mr. Needleman stated that there was only a \$200 increase in the telephone line.

Planning Commission Page 24

Thomas Danyliw presented. There was a request for the cost of living increase for the Town Planner Consultant. There was a decrease in the town dues when it went from CRERPA to COG. Mr. Danyliw stated that there will be some major activities in the Planning Department. They are in the process of revising the Plan of Conservation & Development and there are some open space regulations that need to be addressed.

Probate Court Page 6

Kelly Sterner presented. The budget request was unchanged from the prior year. The Town is obligated to share certain costs such as office supplies and printing cost.

Technology Page 15

Kelly Sterner presented. The increase in this budget is due to the purchase of Virtual Town Hall and People Forms which are new line items.

Mr. Needleman reported that there are several different types of software programs at the Town Hall that do not communicate with each another. The goal is to merge the programs into a compatible program that will work with the different departments to avoid duplication of data entry. Veritech provides all the hardware and technical support for the Town.

General Insurance Page 12

Kelly Sterner reported. The increase to the Liability-Automobile-Property premium is due to additions of town equipment that has been added. The increase to the Worker's Compensation premium is due to the Town's experience.

Fringe Benefits Page 11

Kelly Sterner reported on the expected increase for the pension payment. There was approximately \$50,000 paid out of the retirement plans for legal fees in order to pay for the rewriting of the plans and the issues over the last couple of years. There is also a new line item under part time payroll for a Human Resources and a Risk Manager position.

Clean Energy Task Force Page 18

Kelly Sterner reported on the budget. This budget decreased by 66%.

Selectmen's Budget Page 1

Norman Needleman presented the Selectmen's budget at a .06% increase. Tonight he further reduced the Auto Expense line down from \$1500 to \$750 and the Other Consultants line was reduced from \$5000 down to \$2500.

Central Services Page 3

Mr. Needleman reported there was a reduction to the Central Services budget due to the elimination of the cleaning service and hiring two part time employees. There was an additional \$5,000 added to building maintenance and repair.

Elections Page 5

Mr. Needleman reported there was a substantial reduction for part time payroll.

Tax Collector Page 7

Mr. Needleman reported that the increase is due to the full time payroll position step increase and a cost of living increase.

Zoning Enforcement Agent Page 10

Mr. Needleman reported that the increase is due to the full time payroll position step increase and a cost of living increase.

Legal Services Page 13

Mr. Needleman reported that all the inherited labor issues are coming to an end. There was discussion on the overage in the miscellaneous legal service fees. Zoning is rewriting the Zoning Regulations and will most likely need additional legal fees. Sanitary Waste requested \$4000. WPCA requested \$5000. There was discussion on whether to hire a full time attorney. Mr. Needleman stated that each attorney specializes in a specific field, whether it is our Town attorney, labor attorney, or zoning or planning attorney. Mr. Needleman stated that the Town is paying for their experience at reasonable hourly rates. The pension attorneys are the highest cost at \$495 an hour.

Public Restrooms Facilities Page 14

Mr. Needleman reported this budget is fine.

Board of Assessment Appeals Page 16

Mr. Needleman reported there is no change.

Board of Finance Page 17

James Francis reported the \$75,000 contingency request seems to be working at this time. The Selectmen agreed to reduce part time payroll by \$500 for a zero percent increase.

Conservation Commission Page 19

Mr. Needleman reported there is no change.

Inland Wetlands Page 21

Mr. Needleman reported there is a decrease in part time payroll and in training and conferences. The budget came in with a -.5.52% decrease.

Tree Committee

Mr. Needleman reported Tree Committee's original allocation request was \$3,000. The Selectman had originally reduced this to \$2,000. The Board of Selectmen agreed to keep original request at \$3,000.

Zoning Board of Appeals Page 26

The Selectmen agreed to reduce \$90 from permit fees for a zero percent budget increase.

Zoning Commission Page 27

Mr. Needleman reported the Zoning Commission budget was presented with a -3.94% decrease.

Ambulance Association Page 28

Mr. Needleman reported the request is for Worker's Compensation insurance. The amount quoted is from the insurance company, so no changes to this budget.

Animal Control Page 29

Mr. Needleman reported the \$10,000 is the annual amount for the general dog fund. This is to for the dog pound building, heat, dog food, dog warden salary, etc.

Emergency 9-1-1 Page 32

Valley Shore will be presenting their budget at the next budget workshop. Mr. Needleman stated being part of a regional system is a lot less expensive than doing one on your own. Everbridge is the local broadcast alert system that is used by the Town Hall Emergency Management Personnel. Everbridge is a contracted rate.

Harbor Patrol Page 35

Mr. Needleman reported this budget has a zero percent increase

Police Services Page 36

Mr. Needleman reported the overall increase for the police services is 1.72%. There was discussion on funds being placed in a sinking fund purchase an SUV in the future.

Resident Trooper Page 38

Mr. Needleman reported the numbers are given to the Town by the State of Connecticut.

Water Page 39

Kelly Sterner reported the numbers are based on a rate increase.

Estuary Transit Page 40

Mr. Needleman supports their request. There was discussion on the two types of services they offer, a route service and an on demand service. The Estuary Transit will present their budget at the next budget workshop.

Health Department Page 41

Mr. Needleman stated we currently have a part time Director of Health / Sanitarian and the hours are being increased to be a full time position and also the part time hours of the administrative assistant will increase. Mr. Needleman stated that he felt that this is not the most economically way to provide appropriate services for the Town. But he wanted to make sure to keep this position within the wage scale with experience and education required for this position.

Social Services Page 45

Mr. Needleman stated that the smaller organizations with the smaller requests are not required to attend the budget workshops.

Libraries Page 53

Mr. Needleman stated that he would like to give both libraries their original budget requests. The Selectmen agreed to put back in the original library budget requests.

Capital Sinking Fund Page 54

Cruiser Sinking Fund was increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000 because the police cars are old and an SUV should be purchased.

Fire Department Sinking Fund increased from \$125,000 to \$135,000.

Harbor Management had no increase, kept flat.

Open Space Sinking Fund was reduced down to \$5,000 because they received significant funds recently.

Patrol Boat Sinking Fund had no increase, kept flat.

Waste Water Management Plan, there was a large request for funding, the Selectmen requested to place \$10,000 into the sinking fund for this project.

Road Reconstruction – had no increase, kept flat.

Transfer Station. The original request was for funding to move the shed and to install surveillance video equipment. The request was removed from the budget at this time.

There was discussion on the need for a new phone system and equipment for the Essex Town Hall. There was discussion regarding the 4 year lease on a new public works truck.

Public Comments

Mr. Ackerman commented that he had other ideas for a phone system for the Town Hall. Mr. Needleman agreed to meet and discuss this with Mr. Ackerman.

Mr. Ackerman stated that he appreciated that many of the budget requests came in at zero or lower.

Neil Nichols suggested that when grant funds are requested, the Town should inquire about their endowment fund balance.

ADJOURNMENT at 5:18

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Lucarelli