

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET WORKSHOP
February 1, 2012
Meeting Room A**

<u>Present:</u>	Norman Needleman Joel Marzi Stacia Libby Kelly Sterner	Robert Dixon Members of the Press Audience Members
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Norman Needleman called the meeting to order at 6:01p.m

BUDGET REVIEWS:

Park & Recreation

Park and Recreation Director, Rick Audet & Recreation Program Coordinator, Mary Ellen Barnes presented their budget. The three budgets being presented tonight are Operating, General and Special Revenue, as well as the Capital & Sinking Fund.

Mr. Needleman recommended the Community Events request of \$12,000 be kept at \$10,000. Mr. Audet reported that the cumulative amount budgeted on the park expense in the operating & general budget over the last 5 years has increased only \$830.

Mr. Audet reported that there are serious capital projects that have not been funded that have added a burden on their operating budget. The Elementary School tennis courts are closed. The Grove Street Park playground is deteriorating. The Grove Street Park tennis courts have been repeatedly repaired. The Phragmites at Viney Hill Brook Park must be taken care of. All these things are major concerns.

Mr. Audet stated that when there is damage to the parks, insurance may cover some of the damages, but there is still a \$1000 deductible that comes from the Park & Recreation Budget for each occurrence. Mr. Audet is asking the Board of Selectmen to approve the \$176,681 Park & Recreation Budget Request. Mr. Needleman thanked Rick Audet and Mary Ellen Barnes for their presentation.

Mr. Audet commented about the safety of the Grove Street Park. The playground currently meets safety standards; however, this equipment is approximately 24 years old. When equipment breaks, parts are no longer available. Mr. Audet stated that there is an annual safety inspection of all parks and playground equipment. Mr. Marzi inquired about the tennis courts and asked how many years a repair would last. Mr. Audet said a couple years. There is currently over 100 linear feet of cracking and there is bubbling on the courts. It will cost approximately \$15,000 to patch the cracks. There are four tennis courts. Two are permanently closed. The courts would cost about \$90,000 to replace.

Mr. Needleman stated that Park & Recreation is requesting \$31,350 to maintain all of the parks. Mr. Needleman stated that the \$90,000 includes mowing and reasonable maintenance and repairs needed to keep the parks open.

Mr. Needleman recommended \$30,000 to the Park and Recreation Sinking Fund for replacement of the tennis courts and play-scapes.

Mr. Marzi stated that the park on Main Street, Essex there is a concern with the embankment. Mr. Marzi requested that Mr. Audet present to the Selectmen a report on the embankment at a future Selectmen's meeting. Mr. Needleman stated that all the Park & Recreation programs are spectacular.

Assessor

The Assessor, Jessica Sypher, presented her budget. The Other Consultants line has been reduced. The Revaluation Sinking Fund will be kept at the same level. A revaluation will start by the end of 2012. The last full revaluation was done in 1999 and cost approximately \$300,000, but there is more competition now and the cost is expected to be less.

Vision Appraisal is now called Vision Government Solutions. They recently presented a software package so that all departments at Town Hall could use the software and it would integrate the information. Quality Data also does a revaluation system. Mr. Needleman stated that whatever system the town joins we should do thorough comparisons.

Planning Commission

Tom Danyliw, Chairman of Planning, and John Guskowski, the Town Planner presented their budget. Mr. Danyliw stated that Mr. Guskowski has brought in approximately \$700,000 in grants and his services have increased. Mr. Danyliw stated that the engineering fees have also increased. The planning fee structure has recently been updated to reflect a more current fee structure for developers while approving applications. Mr. Needleman stated that he is inclined to approve the additional \$4,000 for Mr. Guskowski's services.

Zoning Commission

Al Wolfgram, Chairman of the Zoning Commission, presented his budget. Mr. Wolfgram inquired about moving the State & Permit Fees out of the Zoning budget and into the Zoning Enforcement Officer budget. Ms. Sterner stated that these types of fees generally come out of the Commission budgets. Ms. Sterner stated that we currently do not have a land use department, but a land use group.

Mr. Wolfgram reported that there is a new line item in the budget which is used to track outside services in order to review which are reimbursed by developers. It is an offsetting number.

Mr. Wolfgram stated the Legal Fees were placed in the budget for \$30,000. The Selectmen reduced this down to \$25,000. There was discussion as to why an attorney is present at all the zoning meetings. Mr. Wolfgram stated that it has been traditional to have counsel attend, but they are trying to use counsel more judiciously and that counsel has started to attend only when needed. The amount of phone calls that were made to council has also decreased. Mr. Wolfgram reported that next year the Zoning Commission is going to be working on the zoning regulations and they will need legal counsel.

Health Department

Mr. Needleman introduced Lisa Fasulo, who has been our Director of Health and recently took the Registered Sanitarian exam and passed. Lisa Fasulo has a Master's Degree in Public Health (MPH) and has her Registered Sanitarian (RS) certification. We currently have our own health district and it is not nearly as expensive as it used to be. Also effective today, Ms. Fasulo is now our Director of Health and Sanitarian starting at 25 hours and she will eventually be increased to 28 hours. Mr. Brad Cheney from CME has been our Sanitarian. Mr. Cheney will be assisting Ms. Fasulo with the transition and he will eventually be phased out as Ms. Fasulo's experience increases.

Ms. Fasulo presented her budget. She reported that they are looking at updating the fee structure in the Health Department. The fees have not been updated since 2006 and definitely need to be updated. Ms. Fasulo stated that restaurants must be inspected four (4) times a year.

Social Services

Marge Baroni, a Board Member representing Essex, and Paula Ferrera, the Executive Director of the **Estuary Council of Seniors**, presented their budget request. Ms. Ferrera stated that the Town of Essex has a healthy bunch of Essex seniors that participate in their programs.

Ms. Baroni stated that this is the first year that they have requested an increase. In past years their request has always been flat at \$30,000. This year they are requesting \$31,500. The reason for the request is because some of their funding has been cut completely, like the transportation services, Meals-on-Wheels for the 10 towns, and the nutrition programs. They are operating on a deficit budget and are asking all towns for a slight increase in funding. They are having a hard time making ends meet. Mr. Needleman stated that the Meals-on-Wheels service is not only a meal delivery service; it is a social visit for shut-ins.

Ms. Baroni stated that they experience about a 10% funding cut per year and currently there is no transportation outside the 9 town transit area. They have about 300 volunteers and approximately 40% of their funding comes from fundraising. They also have a thrift shop that raises over \$130,000 a year.

Mr. Needleman stated that the Social Services part of the budget is based on the generosity of the town and the overall requests come up to \$83,604 a year. Mr. Needleman thanked them for presenting.

Phyllis Cappuccio, Development & Outreach Director presented the **Shoreline Soup Kitchen** budget. Their request is for \$5,000, which is the same as last year. They served 7,703 people in 2011. The state does not subsidize this program. Ms. Cappuccio stated that last year \$11,500 was the combined donation by the 11 towns.

Public Comments

There was an inquiry made on how many parks the town is responsible for. Ms. Libby stated there are ten (10) parks. They are: Clark's Pond, Comstock Park, Dickinson Park, Essex Elementary School Park, Grove Street Park, Hubbard Field, Ivoryton Green, Main Street Park, Sunset Pond, and Viney Hill Brook Park.

The Park & Recreation budget maintains the parks with help from the Garden Club. The Garden Club would like people to come to their May Market, which is their annual fundraiser. There was discussion on the possibility of recruiting more volunteers to help with maintaining the parks.

There was discussion about the grass dying in the town parks due to the over grown tree canopies. Mr. Needleman stated that he would bring it to the attention of the Park and Recreation Commission and to possibly incorporate this maintenance into a capital plan.

There was discussion on presentation of the budget workshops and the possibility of doing overhead slides during the workshops. Mr. Needleman stated that tonight there were handouts of the entire budget, and several copies were made available to attendees.

There was discussion on the new system that was mentioned by the Assessor and how the information would be entered. Vision and Quality Data and the Land Use records are all in separate databases. The initial entry may be time consuming, but the end result would be a cost savings and would also alleviate the repetition of data entry in each department.

There was discussion on lawyer fees and whether they could be on a retainer and whether lawyers could assist at meetings only when needed. Mr. Needleman was questioning whether a lawyer needs to come to every meeting. There was also a discussion on what the responsibility of the lawyer is after the meeting. We have one lawyer that writes the memorandum of decision and at another meeting the clerk writes it and get the legal opinion after it is written.

ADJOURNMENT at 7:48

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Lucarelli