

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET WORKSHOP
March 7, 2012
Meeting Room A**

<u>Present:</u>	Norman Needleman	Jim Francis
	Joel Marzi	Kelly Sterner
	Stacia Libby	Robert Dixon

Norman Needleman called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

In reference to the information in these minutes, please refer to the attached information on the budget, also its been forwarded to the Board of Finance that the cost of living raise for all non-union employees will be 2%.

BUDGET REVIEWS:

Mr. Needleman stated that as of tonight the budget is showing a 3.43% increase. This meeting is still a Budget Workshop and the Selectmen will be going page by page through the budget. Mr. Marzi stated that the operating budget includes General Government, Donations, and Sinking Funds.

Mr. Needleman reported that this year they will be implementing a flyer which will be called Citizen's Guide to the Essex Town Budget. This flyer is a set of facts that will be distributed. The Director of Finance, Kelly Sterner, has done a phenomenal job on the budget this year.

Selectmen - Mr. Needleman stated that the Board of Selectmen and Treasurer have agreed to freeze their salaries. Mr. Marzi inquired about the new line item in the Selectmen's budget entitled Other / Consultants. Mr. Needleman stated there are no procedure manuals and there are no standard operating procedures for what this line item is for a consultant to implement these.

Assessor - an increase in office supplies for printer cartridges

Central Services - a decrease of \$10,527 due to a change in the cleaning service and a decrease with a new telephone contract at a lower cost

Elections – a salary increase of 11.82% for the two registrars and decrease in the equipment maintenance and repair

Probate Court –will be assessed for the shared services

Tax Collector –a step increase as well as a budget increase

Town Clerk – a slight decrease

Treasurer / Finance – there is an increase due to shifting of responsibilities and additional support for the payroll and data entry

Zoning Enforcement Agent – the increase includes a step and budgeted increase

Fringe Benefits – Several options were discussed in reference to medical benefits; increasing the employees share as well as increase the employee's share could be increased with a percentage each year. Perhaps looking at participating in the State Insurance Pool, which is much larger. Union employees get the same benefits as non-union employees.

There was a discussion on the Retirement Plan whether it should go from defined benefit to a defined contribution plan. You would have to phase out one plan and phase in the other.

General Insurance –Worker's compensation represents most of the increase because our experience rating has not been good over the last two years.

Legal Services –increase of \$1,250, a 1.76% increase

Public Restroom Facilities - no change

Technology – Mr. Needleman added a new line item of \$5,000 for the new web site. The Capital Equipment Leasing increase is due to the new equipment lease agreement of new servers and total upgrade of office equipment. The town offices are on multiple software platforms. We spend approximately \$82,000 for software support. These are annual fees. Most are land use software. We are looking for a common database platform.

Board of Assessment Appeals – no change

Board of Finance – no change Mr. Francis stated that the contingency account has approximately \$63,000 left. Anything not used does not roll over.

Clean Energy Task Force – the budget decreased because there was a non-renewal of a subscription

Conservation Commission – had an overall 8.33% reduction

Economic Development Commission – Mr. Needleman added \$1,400 to be used for advertising to better promote the town

Inland Wetlands Commission – had an overall 8.23% reduction

Park & Recreation Commission – there is an increase in park operation primarily due to park maintenance and mowing costs. There is a \$16,376 increase. The full time payroll includes a step increase and budgeted increase.

Planning Commission – Mr. Needleman is agreeing with the request of \$44,000 for the planner because the planner has generated in grants over five times what we pay him for his salary. This is a \$3,746 or 6.39% increase.

Tree Committee – no change

Zoning Board of Appeals - decreased due to lowering of clerking and advertising costs

Zoning Commission - decreased due to part time payroll costs being allocated to another department

Ambulance Association – their worker's compensation insurance increased

Animal Control – no change

Building Department –increase due to payroll and supplies

Emergency Management – an increase of \$3,850 with a total budget of \$14,400

Emergency 9-1-1 is for Valley Shore with a minimal increase of \$4. This is a regional facility and they need to upgrade their site and their equipment soon.

Fire Department – no change A request to restore their sinking fund to \$150,000.

Fire Marshal – increase due to step and budgeted salary increase

Harbor Patrol – increase due to part time payroll to allow for more coverage on the river this year

Police Services – decrease due to the plan of reducing our present force, to having 3 full time police officers, 2 part time officers, and 1 resident trooper.

State Trooper – there is a 30% subsidy, and the town pays 70% of the trooper costs. We also pay 100% of all the overtime including their benefit costs. A trooper can run up to \$80 dollars an hour. There has been a significant increase of parades, thus more police coverage. A 1.74% increase from last year is due to salary increase.

Water – increase due to water contract

Estuary Transit – increase due to a rise in transportation and fuel costs.

Health Department – there is an increase over last year. Our new Director of Health and Sanitarian Lisa Fasulo, MPH is training with our current Sanitarian. Our contracted Registered Sanitarian services are still in the budget, but will be phased out as we utilize our own health department.

Transfer Station – increase of \$6,474 or 2.45%

Sanitary Waste Commission – has a \$560 decrease

Social Services –also to the Estuary Council of Seniors an increase of \$1500

Visiting Nurses – no change

Water Pollution Control Authority - slight increase for the quarterly well water testing

Highway Department – increase for union salary increases. There are currently four full and one part time employee. The Selectmen are proposing four full time and two temporary summer personnel. About 75% of the park maintenance is done by public works. There are other increases, like fuel.

Town Garage – small increase for utilities

Interest – is down by \$21,586 because we have been paying off the bonds

Note Payable – decreased

Libraries – were recommended to keep both budgets the same as last year, \$265,000 for Essex Library and \$100,000 for Ivoryton Library.

Capital & Sinking Funds – had an increase The Capital Equipment Leases increased to replace a sander truck. Sinking Fund Allocations increased \$78,550. These accounts are like putting money into a savings account. The Fire Department building is 15 years old and will need maintenance. Harbor Commission Sinking Fund was lowered. Based on lower fees, the revaluation will cost less.

Mr. Needleman reported that at the next Board of Selectmen meeting on March 21st will be at 7:30 p.m. at Essex Meadows.

Questions or Comments

There was a question, what is a revaluation? Mr. Needleman stated it is a full revaluation of property in the Town of Essex, where they go door-to-door and go into your home. There is currently \$216,000 in the sinking fund. The Request for Qualifications is on the web site already for revaluation firms to bid on the project.

There was discussion on the Town pension plan and different types of plans that are available for municipalities. Mr. Needleman is going to put together a small working group to look for options.

John Ackerman congratulated the Selectmen on the process of the budget this year. He appreciated the fact that the citizens were informed and included in the process.

Mr. Needleman stated that one of the reasons we did not increase Tri Town Youth Services is because Park and Recreation provides the same services.

There was discussion of whether the Town of Essex should continue to contribute to organizations through Social Services, especially since several citizens of Essex already give to charities of their own choosing. Mr. Needleman stated that if citizens feel strongly about this and they don't want it, then that needs to be addressed at a Town Meeting.

There was discussion on how to present a flat budget. Mr. Needleman stated that in order to decrease the budget you'd have to cut services.

There was discussion on salaries for Town of Essex employees. Mr. Needleman stated that the police and public works were both unionized.

ADJOURNMENT at 9:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Lucarelli