

**Minutes of  
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting**

**Held on 18 September, 2008**

**Present:** B Lemire (Chairman), J Harte (Vice Chairman), R Peeples, B McCue, D Miller, M Falzone, P Parker, G Lambert (Selectman's Rep.)

Chairman Lemire called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

**1. PUBLIC INPUT**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

**2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**MOTION:** by Mr. McCue

*Motion to approve the minutes of the Litchfield Budget Committee meeting of August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007, as written*

**SECOND:** Selectman Lambert

**VOTE:** 6-0-2 (Mr. Peeples and Mr. Falzone abstained)

**The motion carried.**

**3. TOWN BUDGETS**

**POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**Pest Control (a/c 4414)**

Officer G. Pilon, Animal Control Officer presented his budget, reporting that the Board of Selectmen had reduced the overall budget to \$17,738.

*Line item 190 (Mileage Allowance):* This has increased by \$100.

Chairman Lemire clarified that Board of Selectmen has not set wages and therefore the line should show level funding until this has been decided.

**Action:** Chairman Lemire asked for this to be rectified prior to voting.

In response to a query from Selectman Lambert, Chairman Lemire confirmed that step increases should be included in the figures at this point.

**Discussion:** Officer Pilon clarified for Chairman Lemire that mileage is usually a stipend, but the Board of Selectmen wished to base the rate on mileage. Mr. Peebles asked whether another Town vehicle was available instead of paying mileage and the Chief explained the vehicle needed to have special lights etc.

**Line item 291(Uniforms & Accessories):** Officer Pilon stated for Mr. Falzone that the increase last year in this line had been for a tazer.

**Line item 328 (Public Notices):** Officer Pilon explained what this line item was used for. There was a discussion regarding whether it was necessary to have money in this line item, and encumbered, as there has been nothing expended over the last five years.

**Line item 341 (Telephone):** It was explained that the increase in phone charges was due to a switch to Verizon.

**Line item 352 (Veterinarian Services):** Officer Pilon pointed out that he does not know how much he will use in this line item each year, but that he is required by law to take care of any animals in his custody.

#### **Police Administration (a/c 4210.10)**

Selectman Lambert explained that some categories have been added and some names changed to more appropriate ones. He pointed out there is only one Lieutenant this year. He then handed over to Chief O’Brion to present the budget for his department.

**Line item 110 (Salary – Police Chief):** This is level funded for 2009.

**Line item 111 (Wages - Lieutenant):** These have decreased due to abolishing one Lieutenant and adding two Sergeants.

**Line item 141 (Overtime – Lieutenant):** This has also decreased due to the changes in staff (as previously mentioned).

Chief O’Brion clarified for Mr. Peebles that they do not currently know what the increases in benefits will be.

**Line item 620 (Office Supplies):** The Chief reported that this line was increased for 2009 as they had overspent this year.

**Line item 000 (Contract Service – Prosecutor):** The Chief reported that a recommendation of the MRI report had been to look at other ways of obtaining prosecutor services instead of using the Lieutenant, and they had decided to use a contract service. He explained he had used the average of the Hudson and Bedford prosecutor salaries to come up with a price for this service.

**Discussion:** There was a discussion between Chairman Lemire and Chief O’Brion regarding the process used to obtain new positions. Chairman Lemire explained the need for consistency with the school and that new positions should be on a warrant article. The Chief explained this would be a contracted position requiring 32 hours/week which could be stopped at any time. Selectman Lambert talked about the implications for the Police department if a warrant failed. The Chief explained for Chairman Lemire that Lieutenant Millette who has been performing these duties has now been moved into a Sergeant’s position. He also provided an explanation of the time spent in court and that changing to a contract service would cost less and free up a member of the command staff, as level of service and safety to the public are currently being compromised.

**Action:** Chairman Lemire requested that the Chief provide information to the Budget Committee for the next meeting on the number of hours spent prosecuting.

Mr. Peeples asked about a training plan and there was discussion with Selectman Lambert. The Chief explained that the Police Standards and Training Council send out a calendar of what training is available, and he explained what training officers obtain over a period of time. There was further discussion regarding where the Town allocates training and also regarding reporting restrictions.

Mr. Peeples confirmed with Chief O’Brion that a RFP (Request for Proposal) has already been done and will go out to bid for the prosecutor contract.

**Line item 341 (Telephone):** Mr. McCue obtained clarification that the increase in telephones is due to air cards in cruisers, explaining how these are used and what the advantages of these are.

Mr. Harte joined the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

**Crime control (a/c 4210.20)**

**Line items 110, 140, 143 and 144:** It was pointed out that the additional Sergeant costs have been added to these line items.

It was pointed out that Health and Dental Insurance have been left out in this section.

**Action:** Chairman Lemire requested that Chief O’Brion look at Training and let the Budget Committee know for the next meeting what training is really needed as it should be level funded.

**Line item 693 (Minor Tools and Supplies):** Chief O’Brion provided an explanation of the items budgeted in this line for 2009.

**Line item 430 (Equipment Maintenance Contract):** The Chief explained about computers and the Police department’s own network. He also explained about a Project 54 grant through the Department of Justice.

**Traffic Control (a/c 4210.30)**

The Chief explained how he had organized line items for benefits. Chairman Lemire requested this be changed to make tracking of costs easier and there followed a discussion of how the account could be changed to provide a clear picture of each functional section.

There was a discussion about Special Officers and whether the 2008 budget for this would be expended. Mr. Falzone asked whether training could be shown under that line item, rather than under overtime. A discussion took place between Chairman Lemire and Mr. Dilworth Jr. regarding how this could be achieved

**Action:** Mr. Dilworth Jr. agreed to look into setting something up to make tracking training easier.

There was further discussion on training and overtime, with Chief O’Brion explaining that most things are charged to overtime due to the department not being fully staffed. An explanation was provided of how shifts are covered with regard to overtime and salary.

Mr. Harte stated that the Budget Committee needed to be able to see a breakdown of overtime and court time to help them work with the Chief to reduce the number of overtime hours. Chairman Lemire pointed out that the money saved on overtime could be used to pay for the prosecutor services.

In response to a query from Mr. Parker, the Chief provided an explanation of the training provided for officers. He also explained what he needed his officers trained on, stating he cannot always rely on

assistance from outside resources. There was also a discussion regarding fees for training. Chairman Lemire asked Chief O’Brion to take a look at the figures again to see whether there were opportunities to reduce the figures, and to bring these to the next meeting as they would be helpful when the Budget Committee votes on his budget.

***Line item 635 (Vehicle Fuel):*** In response to Mr. Falzone, the Chief explained where his department gets its fuel from. There followed a discussion regarding police vehicles and fuel efficiency, and the Committee asked Chief O’Brion to look into this further and report back at a future meeting.

***Line item 662 (Tire Purchases):*** In response to Mr. Falzone, the Chief confirmed that tire prices have risen drastically. He also reported there is an outstanding invoice which is not shown in the expended to date figures. Mr. Peeples pointed out the cost of tires could be offset against the cost of smaller cars.

***Action:*** The Committee requested an update of the mileage on the police cruisers from Chief O’Brion for the next meeting.

#### **Training (a/c 4210.40)**

***Line item 691 (Ammunition/Equipment Purchase):*** In response to a query from Mr. Peeples, the Chief explained that ongoing tazer training costs can be seen under ‘use of force’. He also clarified for Mr. Harte as to why he wishes each officer to qualify on arms use twice per year.

#### **Support services (a/c 4210.50)**

There was a discussion regarding Dispatchers, with Chief O’Brion clarifying that the increase in overtime under line item 140, Overtime – Secretary/Dispatcher was due to having a full time staff member out. He also provided an explanation of the money left in the line.

***Line item 291 (Uniforms & Accessories):*** Chairman Lemire pointed out that nothing has been expended so far in this line and the Chief explained that he was putting off obtaining new uniforms, recommended by MRI for the dispatchers, until the end of the year.

***Line item 336 (Emergency Response Team Fees):*** The Chief clarified that the fees increased last year and this was the reason for the increase seen here.

***Line item 350 (Medical Service Charges):*** The Chief explained that the Federal Government mandates Hepatitis B vaccines for new employees under OSHA regulations. He also explained about blood work required if someone is taken to hospital in an accident. There followed a discussion on the four part time open positions and the possibility of reducing the Hepatitis B vaccines to two instead of four.

***Line item 433 (Internet Maintenance Contract):*** The Chief explained the average cost for web protection.

**Police Grants (a/c 4210.80)**

In response to Mr. Peeples, the Chief confirmed the department had not applied for any additional grants.

***Line item 331 (OHRV Wages – Grant):*** In response to Mr. Harte, the Chief confirmed they do not always get the full amount budgeted back when they receive the grant monies, and this is why the full amount is shown as a cost in the line item. Chairman Lemire suggested other ways of dealing with this, including using a place holder and taking the money out of Contingency or surplus in other lines to offset. There followed a discussion regarding how this cost is dealt with.

In response to a query from Mr. Harte regarding the Police Union Contract, the Chief confirmed the contract ran out last year.

**Warrant Articles (a/c 4210.90)**

***Article 1 – Hire of Two Police Officers:*** The Chief stated this is the same request as last year, and the figures are unchanged. He provided an explanation of why the officers are required, providing examples of the difficulties they experience operating with one officer on duty. Chairman Lemire asked if there would be a correlation to obtaining officers and a reduction in overtime, requesting figures prior to the next meeting.

In response to a query regarding changes to the Budget Review schedule from Chairman Lemire, Selectman Lambert reported what the changes were, confirming the Budget Committee would discuss Administration, Patriotic Purposes, and the Board of Selectmen next week.

***Action:*** He also offered to find out whether the Committee could have some of the smaller departmental budgets with backup information in time for the next meeting.

**Action:** Mr. Dilworth Jr. agreed to e-mail backup information to the Budget Committee members.

**3. MEMBER INPUT**

Mr. Peebles complimented the Board of Selectmen for their decision not to take any remuneration for 2009. There followed a discussion on this subject.

There being nothing further to discuss the meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Falzone

***Move to adjourn the meeting***

**SECOND:** Mr. Peebles

**VOTE:** 8-0-0

**The motion carried unanimously.**

***Minutes by:***            *Sandra Maxwell, Recording Secretary*