

**Minutes of
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting**

Held on October 2, 2008

PRESENT: B Lemire (Chairman), P Parker, D Miller, M Falzone, R Peeples, B McCue, G Lambert (Selectmen's representative)

ABSENT: J Harte (Vice Chairman)

Chairman Lemire called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m.

1. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Approval of the minutes was deferred until the next meeting.

3. RECEIVE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON POLICE DEPARTMENT BUDGET

Chief O'Brien handed out information on court cases from 2005 –2008 which the Budget Committee had requested at the previous meeting, providing an explanation of these. In response to Chairman Lemire's question regarding whether a prosecutor could determine a time frame for time at court to hear a case which could mitigate waiting time, the Chief explained this would be a difficult thing to do and he provided an explanation of the process. The Chief provided a comparison of prosecutor salaries for various towns, which also stated whether each town has a police prosecutor. In addition the Chief handed out information on overtime, broken down per officer.

The Committee agreed they would postpone voting on any accounts until the end of the month, and until all backup information backup from the departments has been received, and Chairman Lemire explained why they should wait. Chairman Lemire told the Chief the Committee would invite him back when it has reviewed the information they had been given, stating he would e-mail him with any questions.

4. TOWN BUDGET REVIEW

Fire Department (a/c 4220)

Chief Schofield handed out backup information on his department's budget to the Committee, stating he was asking for nothing additional for 2009.

Firefighting (a/c 4220.20)

The Chief stated his part time staff has agreed not to ask for an increase, but he requested that full time staff excluded from this as their main source of income comes from the Town. He also spoke about step increases, stating there is only one employee due for a step increase and it would not take effect until September 2009.

Line item 125 (Call Firefighter Wages): There was a discussion between Messrs. Falzone, Lemire and Schofield regarding a vote which had been taken by the Budget Committee which had not appeared in the final amount for the budget. Chairman Lemire clarified this had been a Budget Committee error.

Line item 636 (Diesel Fuel): In response to a question from Mr. Falzone regarding whether the amount in this line would be sufficient for 2009, the Chief stated they were not anticipating a driveway repair next year and would handle fuel costs accordingly. He added he had pre bought diesel and heating oil last year.

Line item 740 (Equipment Purchases – Computer): Chief Schofield stated this line item has remained unchanged for several years, and agreed to provide a list of what he has expended to date along with details of what he would like to obtain next year.

Repair Services (a/ 4220.60):

In response to a query from Mr. Falzone regarding tire purchases, Chief Schofield chief explained they usually buy their tires around November in order to have them new for the winter.

In response to questions from Messrs. Falzone and Lemire relating to equipment maintenance and repair, the Chief responded that he would like to have a maintenance schedule, and that next year is the final year for payments on the new truck.

Training (a/c 4220.40):

Line item 127 (Training Wages): Chief Schofield explained why he had only used \$19,381 through August, stating also that they had skipped a couple of training events in August when people were on vacation.

Chief Schofield stated that the large Halloween event which is scheduled at Mel's has a mandated fire watch, and explained that he has taken \$1,200 out of payroll for this detail, but that the revenue received would not go back into his budget. There followed a discussion with Chairman Lemire who explained that unanticipated overtime reimbursed from an outside source is allowed back to the budget and he suggested the Chief discuss this with the Board of Selectmen. He also pointed out that it is not uncommon to charge for a detail up front. Chief Schofield spoke about the preparation for the venue and stated the fire inspections were complete and successful.

Mr. Dilworth Jr. confirmed that the Emergency Management and Ambulance accounts have been addressed by the Board of Selectmen but no spreadsheets are available as yet. Chief Schofield stated these accounts were level funded. There followed a discussion regarding encumbering funds rather than having to appropriate more next year to enable departments to purchase items next year which they had been unable to obtain this year.

Chairman Lemire asked for spreadsheets with the Board of Selectmen recommendations, stating the Budget Committee would appreciate any additional information the Chief can provide to help them with their deliberations. He also confirmed he would forward questions from the Committee to the Chief on e-mail to provide him with the opportunity to obtain answers prior to the next meeting. Chairman Lemire confirmed the Committee did not wish to compromise the safety of the Town, and will work with departments on their budgets.

5. RECEIVE ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PRESENTED ON TOWN BUDGETS

In response to Chairman Lemire's request to receive anything additional from the Board of Selectmen, Selectman Lambert reported the Board is working on Patriotic Purposes. He also provided a status report on updating the phones, copier and printing costs when led to a discussion on these items.

Selectman Lambert stated he had constructed a list of action points for the Conservation Commission but had no further information from other departments as yet.

6. SCHOOL DISTRICT BUSINESS

Mr. Miller handed out copies of the MS-24 Estimate of Revenues, explaining the only revision is on line 3230 (Catastrophic Aid). He provided an explanation of why the line had changed. He reported on the progress the School District are making with their budget presentations to the School Board, stating the big issues are with GMS, a they are on their third year of conditional approval, with a list of things to fix from the State. Mr. Miller explained it is the opinion of the Department of Education that the things on the list need to be addressed before anything else in the budget, and reported on the possible consequences from the Department of Education of not completing the list. Chairman Lemire clarified that the MS-24 handed out is for 2008 and 2009 as there was no date on it, and Mr. Dilworth Jr. provided an explanation of the MS (Municipal Services) numbering system for towns and schools. Chairman Lemire clarified the Town budget is through December and the School is through June. Mr. Miller reported that State aid was level funded for three years and is \$6m approximately.

7. Member Input

In response to Mr. Parker's query on account 4130.10 (Board of Selectmen) as to why the backup information matches the Board of Selectmen approved amounts, rather than the submitted amounts, Mr. Dilworth Jr. explained he adjusted the amount going forward indicating where changes were made as he thought this would be more useful to the Budget Committee. There followed a discussion, and Chairman Lemire clarified that the amounts in the backup should reflect what was submitted by the departments.

Chairman Lemire clarified that the budgets to be discussed next week would be Planning Board, Health Department and Code Enforcement. Additionally any small accounts which the Board of Selectmen has reviewed could be added to the list.

MOTION: by Mr. Falzone
Move to adjourn the meeting
SECOND: Mr. Miller
VOTE: 7-0-0
The motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Sandra Maxwell (Recording Secretary)