

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2018

Presiding: Ed Morgan

Members Present: Paul Donnellan, William Jones, Steve McLean, Sue McIntyre, Ed Morgan, Justin Reinhardt

Members Absent: Howard Burnham

Selectmen Present: Dottie Richard

Guests: Jason Johnson, Fire Department Chief; Laura May, Town Treasurer; John McIntyre, Limerick Resident; Pete Proctor, Assistant Chief for EMS; Rick Richardson, resident; Cindy Smith, Librarian/Director.

1. Call to order – count for quorum

The meeting was called to order at 7: 02 p.m.
A quorum was established

2. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes of October 4, 2018

A motion was made by Paul Donnellan to accept the minutes of October 4, 2018, seconded by Bill Jones. Motion passed with all in favor.

3. Review and Recommendation for Proposed Library Budget

Cindy Smith, Librarian/Director, came forward before the Committee with a proposed budget totaling \$70,614.00 for 2019. She proceeded to provide the group with a very detailed and well explained breakdown of all expenditures as well as the many programs offered. This was followed by a brief question and answer period. Cindy and the Library staff were commended for the many well-rounded programs that the Library offers to Limerick residents.

A motion was made by Steve McLean to accept the proposed Library budget as presented, seconded by Paul Donnellan. Motion passed with 6 Yes.

4. Review and Recommendation of Proposed Fire Department Budget

Jason Johnson, Chief of Limerick's Fire Department presented the Department's proposed budget for 2019. The operational budget for 2019 totals \$136,665.45. This is a decrease of about \$22,000 from the 2018 budgeted total which was at \$159,345.45. Jason explained the reasons for the projected decrease. For instance, there will be no membership this coming year with the NFPA. The "vehicle repair and maintenance" budget fund was decreased by half due to the purchase of two new pieces of apparatus which will reduce the number of vehicles that will need repairs and maintenance. Medical Supply purchases were also reduced. Some of this is due to getting a better price for cost of medications through the hospitals. Vehicle fuel costs and heating fuel were broken down to show a decrease in fuel for vehicles as compared to heating costs. It is expected the Department will need a total of approximately 2300 gallons of fuel this year for both funds combined. Jason noted that there are two furnaces to heat the apparatus bay / garage. They do keep that bay at about 60 degrees in the wintertime which sometimes still gets cold with the wind coming in from the field. A question was asked about the cost for vehicle fuel and whether the Department is allowed to purchase fuel oil from other companies vs. the current one location only. The reply was "no". The Department can only purchase the fuel for vehicles from that one location only.

They have yet to receive a card that would allow them to purchase vehicle fuel at other places. When asked if he felt that this one location for fuel purchase was the best price, Jason replied that he wasn't sure since he is not allowed to purchase fuel from anyone else.

Jason additionally stated that last year the Fire Department was able to retrieve about \$2,000 back to them in fuel taxes. He is planning to file again this year to take advantage of that tax credit. However, it was noted that these credits / returned funds go back to the general fund account and not the Fire Department.

A review of the projected stipends followed. A detailed description was provided including the names of those receiving stipends, their titles, their job descriptions as well as duties and responsibilities. Other items were reviewed including the importance of wellness training including debriefing and support as it pertained to addressing PTSD among the crew. The importance of updated protective gear and the maintenance of such items was also reviewed. The cost for protective gear for a firefighter is about \$3,000 per set. When a firefighter from another Town responds to a Limerick call, he brings his own gear and vice versa. It was noted that prudence should be taken in inspecting other firefighter(s) gear for safety when it is someone coming from another Town. It was also recommended to have all stipulations in writing to protect the Town from having to pay for gear that may be damaged during a call.

Jason then moved on to the projected personnel costs for 2019 which totaled \$273,296.42. This would include two people during the day from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Two at night from 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. and then have a pool of names to handle the calls from 11 at night to 7 a.m. Jason noted that 17% of calls happen between 11 to 7 a.m. This staffing scenario he believes provides the Town with the best coverage at the best reasonable cost. The Fire Department currently has coverage from 8 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Hence, the schedule would change. The third shift 11 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. would consist of two people who would be "on call". These "on call" night shift individuals would get \$5.00 per hour for simply being "on call" with the pay changing when responding to a call. The downside to this is that these individuals would be responding from their homes and, depending on where they are coming from, it becomes a time factor, sometimes a matter of life and death. The two, 3rd shift / nighttime on-call individuals would consist of at least one EMT and one driver. Jason noted that people who respond to calls need to be certified. A driver may not be "certified" which could present a problem, or even lawsuits if not certified to handle certain situations. Limerick only has a small pool of individuals that are licensed to do EMS. An explanation of how the Volunteer Firefighter's Pool of names is generated, and its process followed, as well as a review of the application process. Once an individual is accepted, training is provided according to the choice of the trainee. Fire Departments are continually facing challenges with recruitment. Many towns now rely on mutual aid. There is a time commitment factor that is required. An EMT basic course is 4-months long and two nights per week. Re-certification hours have additionally become more stringent. A basic EMT used to need 32 hours of training courses for re-certification. This has recently changed to a requirement of 54 hours. Jason added that this is in addition to responding to calls. Many today are also working further away from their communities with their regular jobs, so these requirements simply present an additional challenge. A brief discussion followed pertaining to solutions and how other Towns have been addressing these challenges. Jason replied that there is one Town in Connecticut that has significantly increased their pool of Volunteers by not billing them for their property taxes. They don't pay property taxes. Other incentives to increase recruitment were briefly discussed.

A question arose pertaining to the calculation of the total amount for the proposed personnel budget. Discussions followed pertaining to staffing, rates, incentives, etc. The issue of 2nd shift staffing and its challenges were brought up, since staffing first shift is a current issue as well. How will this be solved?

Jason replied that in an effort to address those issues he has increased the hourly rate in his personnel budget based on an individual's licensing and certifications. Right now, firefighters /paramedics in Limerick make \$15.00 per hour. Jason is proposing an increase to \$17.00 per hour as an incentive to increase staff. This rate is somewhat competitive with other Towns, with Limington paying \$17.00 per hour as well. However, in Hollis, these same firefighters/paramedics are paid \$25.00 per hour. Having access to a pool of "per diem" people was discussed as well as "outreach" programs among the high schools in the area. Limerick does offer a "junior firefighter" program. Another short discussion took place pertaining to full time vs. per diem during the daytime, as well as the topic of revenues. It is anticipated that there will be an increase in revenue with this new staffing schedule.

Ed Morgan noted that the Fire Department's budget reflected one year. He believed it should reflect from March to December since the Town votes in March. Subsequently, he felt the total budget cost should amount to \$350,000.

Paul Donnellan motioned to accept the proposed amended budget. There was no second. Discussion continued with all in agreement to table the Fire Department Budget until the next scheduled meeting with Jason returning with updated budget calculations.

5. Other Business

Ed distributed a written budget request submitted by the Sokokis Lake Association. They are seeking a budget amount of \$3,000.

Next Meeting: Thursday, October 25, 2018 at 7:00 p.m.

The following Departments will be presenting their Budgets:

- Board of Selectmen
- Recreation Department
- Charities (if there is time)

Sue McIntyre noted that she had additional questions pertaining to the Solid Waste Budget. The Solid Waste Budget has not yet been approved by the Budget Committee.

A short discussion took place pertaining to the definition of "stipend". It is not a salary, it is basically a form of "thank you" for volunteer services rendered. Due to continuing annual requests by some Departments for an increase in their "stipend" funds, it was noted that the Board of Selectmen may need to reconsider if some of these volunteer positions should become actual paid part-time positions since a stipend is not an official paid position with a salary, hourly rate or per diem rate. This issue will be discussed with the Board of Selectmen following final review of all Budget presentations.

The group reviewed the master of list containing the list of Departments that have yet to come before the Budget Committee. Scheduling for the November 1st, 2018 Budget Committee meeting will be determined and finalized at the next meeting.

Steve McLean made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Justin Reinhartd. Motion carried with all in favor.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Suzanne McIntyre
Recording Secretary