

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9

APPROVED
TOWN OF PELHAM
BUDGET COMMITTEE - MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, September 17, 2015
APPROVED – September 24, 2015

CALL TO ORDER – at approximately 7:30pm

PRESENT: Mr. Daniel Guimond, Mr. David Cate, Mr. Bob Sherman, Ms. Daryle Hillsgrove, Mr. Michael Bilby, Mr. Leo Rush, Ms. Donna Dube, Selectmen Representative Doug Viger, School Board Representative Megan Larson

ABSENT: None

10
11 Also present: Town Administrator Brian McCarthy and Finance Director Cindy Kelley,
12 Assessing Assistant Susan Snide, Town Clerk/Tax Collector Dorothy Marsden, Deputy Town
13 Clerk/Tax Collector Linda Newcomb, Fire Chief James Midgley, Deputy Fire Chief Paul
14 Leischner

15
16
17 **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

18
19
20 **MEETING MINUTES**

21
22 **September 14, 2015**

23
24
25 **MOTION:** (Cate/Sherman) To approve the September 14, 2015 meeting minutes as amended.

26
27
28 **VOTE:** (7-0-2) The motion carried. Ms. Larson and Mr. Bilby abstained.

29
30
31 **2016 BUDGET PRESENTATION**

32
33 ***Assessing Department - \$164,874 requested – an increase of \$12,122 over 2015 budget.***

34
35 Assessing Assistant Susan Snide came forward to review the proposed budget.

36
37 *Salaries* – Contractual increase.

38
39 *Supplies* - slight increase for copy paper and postcards, which are used for notification to residents of interior inspections; two quadrants of the Town would be done. Ms. Snide explained they would have double the mailings in the coming year because of interior inspections. In addition notification of change in value would be mailed out. Pelham is under fair market value. When the complete change in values is done throughout the entire community, they have to offer everyone the opportunity to come in for a hearing to challenge the value if they so choose.

40
41 Mr. Sherman confirmed the assessment was done by using the five year cycle, and understood the end of that cycle would be next year. Ms. Snide stated that was correct.

43 Mr. Guimond questioned why the telephone line was so small. Ms. Kelley replied the cost was
44 for one line which she believed was a fax line.

45
46 Mr. Cate questioned the large increase in the contractual assessing consulting fees. Ms. Snide
47 replied they had been using Corcoran Consulting for a little over 10 years, and they had never
48 seen an increase in their budget during this time. She believed the increase was due to Corcoran
49 offering his employees a raise. Mr. Cate wanted to know if the raise was contractual. Ms. Snide
50 answered yes. She pointed out the increase in specials for the cyclical reevaluation was also
51 contractual, through this process a report is done for the Department of Revenue Administration
52 as the Town changes values. It was last done in 2011.

53
54 Mr. Sherman wanted to know if Corcoran's contract was up next year. Ms. Snide answered yes,
55 at the end of the year.

56
57 Mr. Guimond asked what the Town's assessed value was. Ms. Snide replied it was a little over
58 \$1.4 billion, which would change when the revaluations were done.

59
60 **Elections - \$23,227 requested - an increase of \$13,762 over 2015 budget.**
61 The increase to the budget was due to the number of elections being held during the year. There
62 was one election in 2015 there will be four elections in 2016.

63
64 Mr. Guimond questioned when ballot clerks received their last raise. Ms. Marsden replied their
65 rate was increased two years ago from \$50 up to \$60. That payment is for working half a day
66 (approximately 6-7 hours).

67
68 Mr. Viger questioned the status of the voting booths. Ms. Marsden replied they were doing well.

69
70 **Town Clerk / Tax Collector - \$228,024 requested – an increase of \$3,881 over 2015 budget.**

71
72 *Salaries* - contractual increase.

73
74 *Expenses* - increase due to mortgage searches, specifically deeds. Mr. Guimond asked how tax
75 collection was going. Ms. Marsden replied it was going well, they are 98% collected.

76
77 Mr. Bilby wanted to know what mileage reimbursement was used for. Ms. Marsden replied
78 mileage reimbursement was used for traveling to and from conferences and transporting ballots
79 after the elections.

80
81 **Fire Department - \$2,021,002 requested – an increase of \$47,582 over 2015 budget.**
82 Fire Chief James Midgley and Deputy Fire Chief Paul Leischner came forward to present the Fire
83 Department budget. The Chief introduced Deputy Chief Leischner.

84
85 Mr. Cate observed that the budget with the exclusion of the contractual increases came in
86 approximately \$34,000 less than the previous year.

87
88 *Salaries* - Chief Midgley noted the increase to the deputy chief salary was due to last year only
89 being a partial year. This year's budget reflected a full year. Overtime lines are contractual. Chief
90 provided brief description of the disability line that had been used during the past year. He said
91 each year they put in a reasonable number and hoped for the best; however, (2015) this year they
92 had gone over.

93

94 Mr. Guimond questioned how many ambulance and fire calls they had to date. Chief Midgley
95 replied they had a total of 1,387 calls (with 815 being ambulance calls and 5 structure fire calls)
96 last year, as of today they were at 1,064 (7 structure fire calls) and projected to be at or around
97 1,500 calls for 2015 (a 9.2% increase). The increase in call volume was mostly on the medical
98 side. Mr. Guimond asked if the Fire Department had a big concern in the event the pipeline went
99 in. Chief Midgley replied he had discussions, but didn't feel they would be a huge hazard from
100 the pipeline; he would be more concerned about the existing pipeline that was 20+ years old
101 which would remain in the ground. He noted the new pipeline would be done using newer
102 technology with automatic welding technology.

103
104 Mr. Bilby wanted to know of the emergency calls what percent were in connection with heroin
105 overdose. Chief Midgley replied there had been nine heroin overdoses as of a month and a half
106 ago, since that time there had been a couple more along with a death. He stated it was a
107 significant issue and on the rise. Mr. Cate asked if the Department was using Narcan more often.
108 Chief Midgley answered yes, it was used any time they responded to any type of narcotic
109 overdose. He said unfortunately it didn't solve the problem of why society was having the issue
110 and how people could get help.

111
112 Mr. Rush heard a rumor that one of the pipelines was totally empty. Chief Midgley stated that
113 was untrue, they were both pressurized.

114
115 Mr. Sherman asked if the Department was fully staffed. Chief Midgley replied they had two
116 people that were out on long-term disability, but now are down to one still out. To help the drain
117 on disability they've hired two temporary employees, with the understanding if the position were
118 to become full-time they would be given first option. He said this action saved the budget, and
119 had worked out well for the department and the individuals. One individual had already been
120 offered a position, subject to passing paramedic school.

121
122 Mr. Rush wanted to know if the Chief had ever considered going to eight hour shifts. Chief
123 Midgley replied they would still need the same number of people. He spoke of study done by
124 Salem, who found if they start breaking of the shifts, people called out more, which increases
125 overtime. Deputy Chief Leischner added it had the potential to double the Department's exposure
126 because they were more times of people coming and going, and more times they would be an
127 incident during that shift change. Mr. Rush asked if there was a reason why five other towns had
128 changed over to use private ambulance companies. Chief Midgley had no knowledge of
129 communities changing; surrounding communities such as Windham, Hudson Derry etc. had not.
130 Mr. Rush believed Atkinson, Sandown, Kingston used private companies. Chief Midgley replied
131 those communities used private ambulance companies before he was even a paramedic. He stated
132 he had done a report in past years for the Budget Committee on the topic. Mr. Guimond indicated
133 the topic would be a policy discussion for the Selectmen.

134
135 Ms. Hillsgrove saw there was a decrease in the call Fire Department. Chief Midgley discussed the
136 fluctuation in the call fire personnel. He noted at this point they pretty much level off and were
137 holding steady at about 11 employees. The decrease was representative of the previous number
138 which was approximately 19. He added with the decrease in personnel, they were having a higher
139 percentage of men show up. He discussed the training that went into certifying the call
140 department which had changed, and increased from the past.

141
142 Mr. Guimond saw there was a decrease in ongoing medical education. Chief Midgley explained
143 the consolidated lines to try to level out the spikes. He informed the Board there was a national
144 transition occurring to merge hours of continuing education and refresher courses for EMS. He

145 said most of them were opting for the refresher this year (2015), which may be the last time they
146 could do so. With the shift in requirements, the future budget will show a shift in the lines and
147 designations. Under the line item for Cooper's Test (Police standards and training physical agility
148 testing), Chief Midgley explained there'd been a change in the design. Previously the test was
149 given once in the spring, now it's given twice per year; however, an employee could only be paid
150 for the incentive once. Although there are two opportunities per year to take the test, prior to
151 taking the test an employee has to designate which one will count.

152
153 Mr. Rush asked for an explanation of the Fair Labor Standards Act ('FSLA'). Chief Midgley
154 stated it was a legal federal obligation. Ms. Kelley included an explanation at the back of the
155 budget. In summary it's the statute that governs how and when overtime is applicable for
156 nonexempt (hourly) employees. She provided an example of how an employee was paid in that
157 type of situation. Mr. Rush questioned how many people fail the Cooper's Test. Chief Midgley
158 said they occasionally got a couple but most people who take it pass it. The test is not mandatory.

159
160 There was a brief discussion regarding the Call Fire Department and how the budget was
161 previously decreased to allocate the Deputy position, given that the previous Deputy was a call
162 firefighter. Funds from other parts of the budget were reallocated into the call line to fund the 11
163 employees within that line.

164
165 *Supplies* - Chief Midgley explained that the new EMS coordinator went through the ambulance
166 supply budget consolidated some lines and reallocated where certain items were listed. That
167 portion showed a \$284 decrease. Mr. Guimond questioned when the department needed to
168 replace the next ambulance. Chief Midgley believed it was designated for replacement in 2018.
169 He noted last year's revenue was approximately \$254,000 they were looking at pushing towards
170 \$285,000 this year. He noted Deputy Chief Leischner had renegotiated the Comstar contract rate
171 and the department has gone from paying 7% down to 5% commission fee, a savings of
172 approximately \$8,000. He added the Deputy Chief Leischner renegotiated their oxygen contract
173 and saved the Department an additional \$2,000.

174
175 Chief Midgley told the Board they were trying to keep their office supply lines down. He noted
176 that Deputy Chief Leischner was working toward having the department use a paperless system,
177 which will show a savings in toner and paper. The software line increased because of the Apple
178 license. The Department is already utilizing iPads. Ms. Hillsgrove questioned if the software had
179 other benefits such as maintaining patient histories. Chief Midgley replied there was a "previous
180 history" section that could be utilized. He provided an explanation of how information is stored
181 and what programs were being used to do so. He said they were trying to take technology to the
182 next level and service the community as best they could.

183
184 Mr. Cate pointed out the supplies bottom line had an overall decrease of \$40.

185
186 *Telephone* - cell phones had a contractual increase. Chief Midgley spoke of the New Horizon
187 communications line. Mr. Rush asked if they shared a tower with the Police Department. Chief
188 Midgley answered yes; the Jeremy Hill tower is privately owned, but rented/shared with the Fire
189 and Police Departments. Mr. Guimond questioned if the Town had 100% radio coverage. Chief
190 Midgley replied they would never get 100%, however they were much better than in the past. He
191 told the Board he received grant money during the past year to bring up the south end of Town's
192 cell tower. He believed the Town now had approximately 97% coverage. He commented their
193 system was much better than other departments in the area, and had gotten it approximately 80%
194 from grants.

195

196 *Vehicle Maintenance and Repairs* - Chief Midgley explained the decrease had been realized by
197 having a new vehicle and not the high cost of repairs as in the past. They've also noticed items
198 made by petroleum such as tires were showing a decrease as well.

199

200 *Equipment Repairs -Radio Maintenance* - Chief Midgley told the Board they tried to get at least
201 three years out of their batteries and stated they had an aggressive deep cycling program, they
202 were able to increase life expectancy. The proposed budget showed a decrease in the batteries line
203 item because of this. As they get to the end of the lifecycle with a battery that line increases and
204 decreases accordingly.

205

206 *Equipment Repairs – SCBA's* - the Department had done an evaluation of their packs and found
207 they were holding up a little bit better than they had expected them to. Chief Midgley spoke of a
208 grant they would try to receive to replace their air packs. If they can't secure funding for the air
209 packs, they will come forward to replace them in the budget because they would be pushing 15
210 years of age; the life expectancy is 12-13 years. Mr. Guimond wanted to know the cost. Chief
211 Midgley replied the replacement cost for 22 packs was in the range of \$125,000-\$145,000. He
212 told the Board they were cycling out their bottles, a couple every year. In 2018 they are going to
213 lose 40 bottles; however, because they have been on the replacement cycle under new equipment
214 it will bring them down to a number they need to stay at. They will be able to buy packs without
215 bottles. Mr. Sherman noted the CIP approved it, but they hoped the Department would receive a
216 grant.

217

218 Mr. Guimond saw that the bottom-line figure for repairs had decreased by approximately \$8,300.

219

220 *Equipment Rental* - Chief Midgley spoke about the decrease in hydrant fees being attributed to a
221 previous lawsuit filed with the utilities commission through which Pennichuck Water was able to
222 recoup hydrant and water fees that the Town had to pay (\$20,000) in addition to their 16% rate
223 increase. He said 11 months had been captured in 2015, and only one month carried over to
224 2016.

225

226 Mr. Cate asked what shape the Town cisterns were in. Chief Midgley replied they had an
227 aggressive cistern maintenance program and were fortunate that none were found to be dry. They
228 were in good shape at this point. He noted there was a warrant article for \$30,000 to repair
229 cisterns in the event they required a repair. Mr. Rush questioned if Emergency Management
230 cisterns were a separate budget from the Fire Department. Chief Midgley answered yes they are
231 separate budgets; the \$3,500 line for cistern maintenance in Emergency Management was the cost
232 to clear snow away from them (one-time sub-contract to clear them). The Department clears
233 them after every storm. There are 80 cisterns within the Town and growing.

234

235 There was a brief discussion regarding the certification and training the Department provided to
236 the Town through CPR, First Aid and AED. The course cost is \$20 they make no money.. Ms.
237 Larson questioned if there was an age restriction for the training. Chief Midgley stated if a person
238 could physically do the CPR and compressions they could be certified. Mr. Sherman asked if they
239 worked with the Scout troops. Chief Midgley believed they had. He said they were trying to reach
240 anyone they could with their community outreach. He noted Rob Horne, the ALS Coordinator has
241 helped the Town achieve Heart Safe certification, with the placement of AEDs and CPR and First
242 Aid classes.

243

244 *New Equipment* - based on the department needs these budget lines showed a decrease of \$5,548.
245 Chief Midgley briefly reviewed the items listed.

246

247 *Expenses* - Chief Midgley spoke to the Board regarding the Mutual Aid District. He explained in
248 the past the district would divide its equipment between towns; however, because some
249 departments were consolidating they could not house the district's equipment any longer. The
250 Mutual Aid District rented space in Windham to house their equipment, which was an additional
251 cost to the district and why there was a line item specific to this. It was a brief discussion
252 regarding professional development and the cost savings by having trained individuals in-house
253 versus contracting out.

254

255 Mr. Sherman asked for a brief explanation for the brush permits line. Chief Midgley explained
256 instead of the warden getting paid from the Division of Forest and Lands, the Department places
257 the money within the line item and later recoups the money through the Division of Forest and
258 Lands. He said they had to have some place to pull money from in order to get paid back to.

259

260 *Miscellaneous* - the line for tuition reimbursement showed \$0. Mr. Cate suggested leaving the
261 line at \$1 in the event someone requested reimbursement since it was contractual. Chief Midgley
262 noted that was a new line for EMS training subcontractor, which came from other areas of the
263 budget and were consolidated into the miscellaneous line. He will provide the Board with the
264 areas it was pulled from.

265

266 ***Emergency Management - \$8,296 requested – an increase of \$188 over 2015 budget.***

267 The only increase was in salaries. Chief Midgley explained this budget was the place money was
268 pulled from and replaced back into for declared emergencies. He said during such situations the
269 federal government reimbursed 75% of the cost. If the line item is not used it is returned to the
270 general fund.

271

272 **ADJOURNMENT**

273

MOTION: (Sherman/Cate) To adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: (9-0-0) The motion carried.

274

275 The meeting was adjourned at approximately watch the time 8:45 pm.

276

277

278

279

Respectfully submitted,
Charity A. Landry
Recording Secretary