

MINUTES
ANNUAL PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING
FEBRUARY 13, 2013

The Board of Selectmen met at 6:30 p.m. at the Municipal Building for the Proposed 2013 Budget. Board members that were present were Selectmen, Craig Keeney, Charles Cheney, Charles Wheeler, Sharon Davis, Marsh Morgan and Ann Marie Foote, Town Administrator with approximately 65 people (Town employees and the public) in attendance.

At 6:30 p.m. Chair Keeney called the meeting to order. Chair Keeney informed the public that on Monday night the Board of Selectmen opened the bids from 4 contractors for the Blair Bridge Project. As a result, Arnold M. Graton Associates, Inc. came in under budget at \$2,242,482.00 and was awarded the Project. Chair Keeney explained that the State still has to sign off on the bid; however the construction is tentatively scheduled for May with a 300 day period before completion.

Chair Keeney then called on Ann Marie to review the Proposed 2013 Budget. Ann Marie informed the public that before she proceeded with the Budget she would like to explain the Pay and Classification Study that the Board of Selectmen had performed by the NH Local Government Center and Municipal Resources and she proceeded with an excellent presentation of explaining how the Study was performed, the purpose and the results. The results of the Study revealed the employees' compensation that were in a competitive range, some employees who were paid higher than the competitive range and three employee's positions that were under the competitive range. The Board corrected the three positions that were in the low range and agreed to set a maximum merit raise percentage this year at 2.5%. The 2.5% maximum was proposed for all employees (with adjustments depending on their annual evaluation), with no cuts in pay for individuals in the high competitive range.

Ann Marie then continued by explaining the Proposed Budget that was distributed to all persons present at the meeting. She stated that she would review one page at a time, line by line and then inquire if there were any questions after each page was reviewed. On the first page there were increases in salary and wages as a reflection of the Pay and Classification Study. She pointed out that her position, as Town Administrator was one of the three positions below competitive range; hence the increase to \$53,000.00. The Town Clerk/Tax Collectors compensation was determined on an hourly basis, with overtime and even though the Pay and Classification Study suggested that this position be salaried, Hannah Joyce, Town Clerk/Tax Collector chose the hourly rate (the hourly rate being \$20.40) as opposed to salary, which set her compensation for 52 weeks, plus overtime at \$46,125.00. The additional help wage line for the Town Clerk/Tax Collector was another position that the compensation was under competitive pay (\$11.50 per hour); hence, that line was increased (reflecting \$13.58 per hour) together with increasing the hours worked for that individual. Ann Marie also pointed out that the Town Moderator's compensation was increased. As Ann Marie continued with the review, some of the

increases she pointed out were Legal fees, Retirement, (due to a higher percentage contribution rate due by the Town this year). Ann Marie indicated that the Gen. Gov. Bldgs. Lines categories were adjusted high because of the unknowns the first year in the new Municipal Building. However, Ann Marie did comment that the recent heating bill for the Municipal Building was less for the entire building than the heating cost for the present Town Office Building which is attributed to energy efficiency. There was discussion concerning the telephone system at the Municipal Building and Selectman Davis explained that the system that is presently in existence at the Town Office is antiquated. The new system covers an 8,500 square foot area equipped with alarms, etc. and is needed for the implementing of an emergency operation center which the Municipal Building's Community Center room will serve as if an emergency situation should arise. Selectman Davis also pointed out that this capability will enable the Town to be eligible for grant funds. Ann Marie continued the review with the Fin. Admin. Assessing bottom line indicating an increase due to the pay increases and a small amount added for accounting assistance. Legal was increased to \$24,000.00. A question was raised as to a breakdown of legal fees last year. Ann Marie stated that approximately one half of the legal fees represented for last year (\$25,314.74) were attributed to personnel issues and one half was attributed to Beebe River District. Personnel Admin. Line increased due to a higher contribution rate to NH Retirement. Ann Marie did comment that they were able to hold the price of insurance by increasing the deductible and Opt. Out is offered to employee's who wish to purchase their own insurance and the Town reimburses the employee for 70% of the amount of a "single" premium. The Planning and Zoning lines remained the same. The Advertising & Regional line stayed about the same because of less dogs (under Human Society/Dog Officer line), but the Board felt an increase to CASA was needed. The Police Department's bottom line went down. Ann Marie informed the public that the Police Department had some money left from last year's budget and this saved some costs for the new building as the Department used the money saved for the purchase of new office furniture. Fire Dept. line increased due to pay to employees and more call coverage. The pay increases were established by the Fire Department's separate Pay and Classification Study and then set by the Fire Commissioners. Ann Marie pointed out that the renovations that were done on the Fire Department building were paid for from the George Durgin Trust Fund and the Bump Bridge was saved through the generosity of the Durgin family. The family has contributed over the years, approximately \$188,000.00 to the Town. Funds from the Durgin Trust will be used for the renovation of the old Police Department for the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's Office. The Highway Department budget is up due to increased compensation pay; however, the Department now has part time seasonal help rather than hiring sub contractors which saves the Town money. A new salt shed was built and paving was included in the budget. The Solid Waste/Recycling bottom line is down and Ann Marie commended Kevin McGuire for doing such a fine job as Manager. Ann Marie stated that the Town now has a new Health Officer who is Charlie Brosseau and that line stayed the same. May Brosseau is now the Welfare Director and Ann Marie stated that she is doing a terrific job at keeping the budget under even with an increase in welfare clients. Ann Marie is now the Deputy Welfare Director. The Library is down and the Trustees chose not to give employees an increase in pay this year as they were given an increase last year. (Library employees are governed by the Trustees of the

Library and therefore their compensation is determined by the Trustees). Ann Marie indicated that \$774,735.93 was spent on the Municipal Building and there is still money left to complete the remaining work. She informed the public that in 2013 only interest will be paid on the Municipal Building and next year and there after there will be principal and interest due. The Capital Outlay Equipment line increased due to purchasing a new cruiser and new copy machine for the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's Office. The Capital Reserves line went down reflecting on the Municipal Building Fund. The bottom line included 2 new computers, a laptop and an updated version of QuickBooks. Ann Marie did mention that the Town would be purchasing a new tax/assessing program (Avitar) in the approximate amount of \$5,000.00 to replace the old DOS tax system and Vision. The money will come from the Capital Reserve set up for office technology. Ann Marie explained the issues relating to having two programs running (Vision for the assessing and BMSI for taxes). This causes double entries, double the work and cause for errors. In addition, every 5 years a re-evaluation is performed which causes additional problems of re-entering lost data.

At this point, Hannah Joyce, Town Clerk/Tax Collector, expressed that as she was discouraged by the fact that she was not notified that there would be a new tax/assessing program purchased and that she did not have the opportunity to present questions pertaining to her office regarding the program. Ann Marie reminded Hannah Joyce that a meeting was held with Avitar (which Hannah and the Selectmen's Office staff attended) to acquaint everyone with the program and to ask questions. Ann Marie also mentioned that the purchase of the Avitar program would be made this year in order for staff to become comfortable with the program before the re-evaluation occurs in 2014.

Ann Marie stated the bottom line for the proposed 2013 Budget is \$3,179,768.19.

Fire Chief Tobine wanted to mention that the Fire Department renovations were also completed by firefighters and volunteers and he wanted to commend everyone involved and thank them for their generosity for the fine job that was achieved. Chief Tobine explained that the renovations did not increase the foot print of the building; however created more office space, storage space and a shower for the firefighters to remove hazardous materials encountered in their role as firefighters.

The Budget Hearing ended at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eleanor M. Dewey,
Office Assistant to Ann Marie Foote, Town Administrator