

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 8, 2015**

Members Present: Antone C. Vieira Jr., Chairman
Richard M. Spirlet, Vice -Chairman
Steven J. Ouellette
Craig J. Dutra
R. Michael Sullivan, Clerk

Chairman Vieira opened the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

Recognition & Moment of Silence:

Chairman Vieira observed a moment of silence on the passing of Christopher “Chip” Gillespie. Mr. Gillespie, an architect by trade, had served on the Landing and Historical Commissions.

FY'16 Budgets:

Mr. King summarized the FY'16 budget and the allocation of Free Cash. He explained how much money was projected to come in and where he's budgeted it to. The Local Receipts are budgeted to go up \$658,502.00, property taxes almost \$795,000.00 and he estimated that state aid would decrease \$128,000.00 for a net of \$1,331,082.00. He's set aside \$455,193.00 for Westport schools, pension assessment increase of \$198,294.00, debt service increase of \$131,000.00, snow & ice removal \$75,000.00, information technology \$73,500.00, and other municipal budget increases in various small amounts that total just over \$130,000.00. Mr. King also budgeted \$174,000.00 in operating revenues in capital improvements and \$100,000.00 in OPEB to cover the revenue increases of \$1,331,082.00. He noted that there were still some unknowns that would impact the budget: the actual school department budget had not been submitted and may be \$100,000.00 higher, the proposed budgets for the regional schools have not been received and he has not set aside any increase for them, new health insurance rates have not yet been received and no funds have been budgeted for any FY'16 collective bargaining agreements. The Town Administrator then spoke about Free Cash. He reported that \$1,704,320.00 had been certified. He listed the potential demands for Free Cash: the proposed Alternate 1 budget (the budget with no layoffs) would require \$54,031.00, Capital Improvement proposes utilizing \$579,100.00, OPEB would require \$150,000.00, the Town needs to set aside some money for the Middle School for any costs that may be incurred and transferring \$400,000.00 to the Stabilization Fund for a total of \$1,583,131.00. Selectman Sullivan noted that Mr. King had diverted from the past practice of conservatively estimating Local Tax Receipts and was more on target of what they were estimating these would be (\$2,743,200.00). Chairman Vieira stated that this was a departure from previous years where the Town had a conservative approach to not spend money before you have it. They tried to develop a budget with cash in hand. Chairman Vieira stated that looking at the budget and what the departments have requested the budget is out of balance by \$594,000.00 between the two. Lengthy discussion ensued.

Selectman Sullivan noted that the Town was projecting a 3.7% increase of Local Receipts and all other revenue. He said that he would like to take off the top of that the known uncontrollables (increases in pension, health benefits, debt service, regional assessments) and now you have a number that's less than 3.7%. Selectman Sullivan went on to say that he would then like to take off the preferences that the Board has enumerated (increase snow & ice, increase information technology, OPEB, capital improvement). He would then like to take out what would be given to the schools and then we would have what would be left for the Town side. By doing this would show the real increase on a percentage basis. It's a number that is a lot less than the 3.7%. It would set the record straight on the revenue situation. Chairman Vieira noted that manpower drove a lot of what they were doing. They needed to address if there were ways they could do it differently; are they going to have, in good faith, negotiations taking place and money set aside for this and what the impact would be; and how are they going to provide the services people are expecting. He stated that he did not feel they could provide the services people were expecting given the limited funds they had to work with. Selectman Dutra stated that the Board had two approaches before them: the original Town Administrator budget which cut very substantially into Town operations and eliminated 16 positions; and then the second budget which is a little less austere and doesn't lay anybody off and takes some of the Free Cash and puts it into some of the items that were in the original budget (some of the OPEB money, some of the Capital Improvement money and a small amount of money for the operating budget – about \$54,000.00). Chairman Vieira stated that he would like to propose a third option. Build some compromise into this and split the difference in the process and have the administrator go back and make \$400,000.00 in cuts. Selectman Dutra stated he wouldn't mind looking at a third option but you shouldn't exempt public safety and he would like an analysis of current vacancies; are there vacant positions that have been vacant for a number of months or years and are not being filled and are there positions that are filled but were not authorized in the current budget. Chairman Vieira stated that in a time of declining resources they have to set priorities and public safety (fire, police and highway) and education are at the top of the list. Selectman Spirlet stated that he would not like to see employees get laid off and the other employees get raises. He felt it was wrong. Chairman Vieira then made a motion directing the Town Administrator to reduce option two of the operating budget by \$400,000.00 that would allow some available funds and keeping public safety as a priority. Selectman Spirlet seconded the motion. Selectman Sullivan stated that he preferred Selectman Dutra's option of just removing the positions that haven't been filled. The no-layoff option is actually a reduction because they would be deciding not to fill 1½ vacancies. Selectman Dutra noted that if the motion passes he would be voting for the ability of the Town Administrator to develop a third option but it does not mean that he would support it. The vote was unanimous.

Adjournment:

On a motion by Selectmen Ouellette, which was seconded by Selectman Dutra, the Board voted unanimously by roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Bouchard
Secretary to the Board of Selectmen

APPROVED: _____
R. Michael Sullivan, Clerk