

APPROVED

BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, March 6, 2019 – 6:00 PM – Richmond Town Hall, 1529 State Road

PRESENT: Mr. Bob Gniadek, Chair of the Finance Committee; Ms. Pat Callahan; Mr. John Mason; Mr. Bob Youdelman; Mr. Steve Patterson; Mr. Neal Pilson, Chair of the Board of Selectmen; Mr. Roger Manzolini, Selectman; Mr. Alan Hanson, Selectman.

ABSENT:

GUESTS: Mr. Mark Pruhenski, Richmond Town Administrator; Mr. Paul Lisi, Richmond Treasurer; Mr. Steve Traver, Richmond Fire Chief, Mr. Peter Beckwith, Richmond Highway Dept. Superintendent; Mr. Brian Schultz, Richmond Ambulance

Mr. Neal Pilson called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

Review of Ambulance Budget: Mr. Pruhenski began the discussion with reference to the Operating Budget – Tab 6: A \$5,000 increase to provide funding to educate new EMT's, at a cost of about \$1,600 per person, and an increase in payroll. Last year transport rates were down to around 23%, this year from January 1st to date, responses increased to 55% and last month it was at 71% as a result of the availability of four new certified EMT's. It was felt that it would be beneficial to continue to offer EMT training to two new people a year, which would cost \$3,200 – the additional \$1,800 would cover the increase in payroll. Mr. Pilson noted his pleasure at the increase in ambulance responses and congratulated the Ambulance Director on the impressive turnaround.

Ms. Pat Callahan asked whether the expectation was that all the monies budgeted would be spent. The response was that it is rare that all the money in the budget is expended. Usually between \$12,000 and \$15,000 is turned back to the Town. The expectation was, however, that a higher percentage of the budgeted funds will be spent if the increased response to call volume continues with the resultant higher payroll.

There was a discussion of the various costs and revenue issues related to the ambulance service. Mr. Lisi noted that for most volunteer ambulance services in the area, expenses are not covered by collections – it is understood to be a money-losing business.

Section V-Capital: Two requests from the Ambulance Corps. One for a stretcher and one for a new ambulance. If the Town decides to fund the new ambulance, the stretcher will not be needed. If the ambulance is not funded, the stretcher will be needed.

Normally, an ambulance would be replaced every ten years and Richmond's ambulance is fifteen years old right now. The increase in maintenance is getting expensive. In 2015 \$11,748 in repairs were made, which includes a brake-line failure. Preventive maintenance is done on the ambulance every year at a cost of \$500., but \$3,000 of additional repairs a year is still needed.

Ms. Callahan asked whether the money to fund a new ambulance would be raised through increased taxes. She was assured that the money would come from the Ambulance receipts and the Town's Stabilization Fund, so there will be no effect on the tax rate. Mr. Pilson asked what the turn-around time for receiving a new ambulance once it is ordered – the answer was approximately 3-4 months. Mr. Pilson then asked whether the old ambulance retained any value – he was advised that it would not amount to very much at all. There was a discussion of the anticipated cost of a new ambulance, which will vary if the ambulance is a four-wheel drive vehicle or not and what amenity package is included. A discussion of whether four-wheel drive will be needed often enough to warrant the additional initial cost and the additional maintenance costs. The consensus was to stay with a two-wheel drive vehicle which has tire chain capability."

Tab 6 – Fire Department and Emergency Management: Mr. Pruhenski noted that there are only two lines – one for 2.9% and one for a 3% increase. Mr. Pilson commended Chief Steve Traver and his department for their response to the fire last week. He noted that the Highway Department also responded and that there was additional help from other towns. Chief Travel noted that next year his operating budget may have to be increased to cover the maintenance and extra hose on the new fire truck.

Tab 5 – Capital: The Fire Department has two requests this year; one for \$5,000 for new respirator masks for each individual, as required by the State Dept. of Labor and an additional \$25,000 to cover a shed for the rescue boat at the Richmond Pond. Mr. Hanson expressed concerns with possible vandalism to the boat shed. Mr. Beckwith explained his plan to extend the existing chain-link fence to include the new boat shed and that there are surveillance cameras in the immediate area. Chief Traver advised that the budget be approved for the \$25,000 to avoid the need for a Special Town Meeting in case the bids come back at a higher rate than anticipated. The \$25,000 would be coming from Free Cash so there is no impact on the tax rate.

Section 6 – Departmental Budgets: Highway Department 1.71% increase. Mr. Beckwith offered an explanation on the vacations and sick pay line. In the past sick pay

was not budgeted in the account so the Department is always over budget at the end of the year. ~~As of this date his automatic count is \$11,063 and~~ his staff still has about eight weeks of combined vacation time available so he will be over budget about \$5,000. There was a discussion of the method used in the past by the former Highway Superintendent to cover those vacation and sick pay expenses and what system Mr. Beckwith will use. Mr. Lisi will work with Mr. Beckwith to determine the best way to budget for all contingencies and will submit that to the Budget Advisory Committee at their next meeting.

Highway Department Capital Request: Mini excavator (\$28,000) a lawn mower and trailer (\$11,000). The Mini Excavator will be used as a shared service between West Stockbridge and Richmond. Mr. Beckwith noted that he had spent approximately \$5,000 in rental fees in this past year to deal with an emergency and two other projects. West Stockbridge has advised Mr. Beckwith that they spent \$12,000 in that same time. It is obvious that purchasing one makes more sense for both Towns and they can anticipate a return on investment in three to five years and it could be made to last for fifteen years. The Excavator would be housed in the new pole barn being erected across from the Highway Department Shop. It might also be housed in the West Stockbridge barn at times. All such details will have to be ironed out in an Inter-Municipal Agreement between West Stockbridge and Richmond.

Lawn mower and trailer – Mr. Beckwith explained that the Town currently has a 52” ride-on John Deere lawn mower from the year 2000 – which makes it 19 years old and in bad shape. The trailer we currently have is inadequate to transport the big mower that is kept at the school that the Town shares with the school. As a result, it stays at the school throughout the school year, which means that the Town does not have access to use it. With a trailer of adequate size, the big lawn mower and the new one can be transported with it to the sites where they are needed.

In response to a question, Mr. Beckwith pointed out that it is not practical for West Stockbridge and Richmond to share this particular equipment due to expected scheduling conflicts.

Engineering Services for Repairs at the Town Highway Garage: \$18,000. Currently the bottom two courses of concrete at the building's foundation are delaminating and the concrete is crumbling. Mr. Beckwith has consulted an engineering firm and had structural engineers to the site for an estimate of the cost of the engineering necessary to know what needs to be replaced, what needs to be blocked up, etc. Once that survey is completed, the Town will receive a construction repair estimate.

The cost of replacement of the building was discussed. Given the various factors involved in such a move, it was not possible for anyone to suggest an estimate. Mr. Manzolini suggested that an engineering service was not needed to just determine what needs to be done to repair it. He suggested that a contractor be called in to determine what needs to be done and do it. Mr. Lisi noted that both local contractors, Allegrone and Maxymillion have engineers on staff and might be able to do that. Mr. Beckwith will make those calls. It was suggested that it would be wise to check with Mr. Paul Greene, the Building Inspector, to determine if he believes a separate engineering study is required in this case or not.

New Summary Sheet – New Article Sheet: Section 4 – Articles: A few changes were made to the Articles. To help the Sewer Enterprise Fund close a deficit they have related to an outstanding debt. The requested \$9,600 through a resident petition is to offset the shortage associated with that debt that resulted from the lack of interest paid by sewer users that paid the bill early. The theory was that early payments could be invested in order to recoup the lost interest. That was not done. There are elements in place now that would permit the Town to invest those early payments that were not in place previously.

The Richmond Goose Pond Management Plan: Request has increased from the last meeting from \$950 to \$1,250. Mr. Pruhenski was unable to explain the reason for the increase because the request came directly from the Richmond Pond Association. They will provide an explanation at a later date.

Richmond Recreation Commission Bill of \$124 for a prior fiscal year bill. This request was received after the last time the BAC met and is, therefore, an addition to the budget.

School Budget not yet Received:

Mr. Pruhenski reported to the Board that he had just received an email from the School, indicating that they will be adding a \$60,000 Capital Request for Heating System controls to stabilize the system and get it to work correctly. An updated Operating Budget will be forthcoming from the School at the next meeting of the Budget Advisory Committee, as well as a Capital Request. Mr. Pruhenski will get that request to the Board prior to the meeting.

It was also suggested by Mr. Manzolini that the Town residents be asked for approval for the plan to have Richmond and West Stockbridge share the services of a Town Administrator. There was discussion of some of the details as they are outlined

currently. As an alternate method, it was suggested that feedback from the Town be solicited prior to the Town Meeting and incorporate those into a solid plan which can then be presented at the Annual Town Meeting, since it's unlikely West Stockbridge can wait until May 15th. They will need a Town Administrator in place by June/July.

The Next Meeting: March 20, 2019 - 6:00 PM

Approval of October 1, 2019 Minutes: Ms. Callahan moved to approve the minutes, which was seconded and passed by unanimous consent with Mr. Bob Youdelman abstaining as he had not yet been a member of the Committee at the time of that meeting.

There being no further business before the Board a motion was made to adjourn, seconded and passed by unanimous consent.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 PM

Signed:

NOT PRESENT

Mr. Neal Pilson, Chair
Board of Selectmen

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert Gniadek", written over a horizontal line.

Mr. Robert Gniadek, Chair
Finance Committee