



Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS

Michael W. Sitar Jr, Chief

Michael Robinson, Deputy Chief

February 9, 2015

Public Hearing for Budget Committee

Budget Committee members present Donny Stevens (Chair), Tim Sattler, George Sanders, Paul Blaisdell, Chief Sitar and Paul Auger (Commissioner). Not present Peter Fogg and Jane Alden. Donny Stevens opened the meeting at 7:00pm. He read each line item and invited any questions.

Career Salaries and Wages – Budget Committee agreed with the Commissioner’s recommendations. Gretchen Wilder asked if this was following the salary step and grades established a few years ago. Donny said it does. Chief had requested an additional 1.5 men added to the force.

Holiday Pay - 12 hour pay on holidays.

Overtime - up about \$10,000 from last year due to pay raises.

Call Salaries – up quite a bit from last year to adjust for this budget line being over budget last year.

Elected Officials – Moderator was given more money. Treasurer stayed the same. They had taken \$500 off but gave back last year at the District meeting.

Group Health Insurance – change is due to a few employees moving up from singles to family plans.

Life Insurance – no questions.

Social Security – there is only one person on social security.

Medicare – no questions.

Retirement – the current rate is 29.75% for Group 2.

Unemployment Comp – no questions.

Workman’s Comp – no questions.

Auditing – yearly audits are done every year, but they are not as thorough as full audits.

Legal Services – lowered by the Budget Committee. Gretchen wants to know why we have so much in this line when we only used \$46 last year. Donny said it’s just for insurance.

School Training – there is currently one person in the paramedic program, other are in EMT school and other Fire Fighter Certifications like rescue certification and pump operator certification. Tuition reimbursement policy is in place. Paramedic Program is the only one that requires them to pay back some of the tuition if they leave employment within 3 years.

Bank Charges and Interest – housekeeping line item.

Telephone – Gretchen thought this would go down when the fire alarms came down. Chief said that is a different line item that is no longer in the budget. This line includes cell phones, internet access from the ambulance that can send EKG information to hospitals, Verizon for Wi-Fi, and the office phones.

Information Technology – up this year. Gretchen asked why. Chief said it is due to IT support \$780/month – 24-hour support, Microsoft Office, Adobe Photoshop, FireHouse, Cloud. Not managed by staff any longer because it is beyond their capabilities. This may go up as the station becomes more IT dependent. Chief ensures they are looking at ways to keep these costs low.

Medical Services – The fire department is implementing the same kind of physical well-being as police - agility testing. Chief says this includes the physical required for all fire fighters.

Vehicle Repairs – labor charges. We do what we can in-house, but most is being sent out. We have new sources than were used before.

Elections – Supervisors of the Checklist, ballots, advertising, etc.

Other Professional Services – only \$1. Public asked how this line went up to \$18,000 last year. Chief said it was due to the Comstar budget mishap.

Electricity – no questions.

Heating Fuel – Center Street Station uses natural gas and Park Street Station uses propane.

Water – no questions.

Sewer – lowered a bit to match actual. Gretchen asked if there were any anticipated increases. Donny said there were not.

Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings. Public asked if there was anything expected in this line item. Chief said vinyl siding, doors, asphalt, pothole repairs, back flow preventer, and lots of other items that need to be addressed since nothing was worked on last year.

Property Liability Insurance – no questions.

Printing – Public asked if this included letterhead. Chief said letterhead is usually printed through the computer. This includes items like business cards, envelopes, shift calendars, and other professional printing needs.

Dues and Subscriptions – Gretchen asked why this line was increased by \$1,000. Donny said it was jumped up a couple years back. Chief said it was for dues and association fees for professional associations (for the entire Fire Department – not just Chief).

Pressurized Fire Hydrants – Commissioners have an agreement with the water department. Because we have to shovel out our own hydrants and pay our guys to do so, the Budget Committee decided that \$50,000 would be reasonable. \$125,000 is the agreed upon amount. They only use their equipment to clear in front of the hydrants on Main Street. This is just a fee for the hydrants – whether we use them or not. Donny said we are paying for a service. If they are buried under 3 feet of snow, they are not a service. Donny is thinking the Commissioners from the Water District will be at the District Meeting to discuss this amount.

Supplies Office – no questions.

Postage – no questions.

Equipment Maintenance and Repair – Gretchen asked why so high. Chief said it includes all the department equipment, but does not include apparatus on the fire trucks. This line does include radio repair.

Service and Testing – Donny said Chief wanted vehicles tested twice per year rather than once per year. Chief would like rescue truck (primary ambulance) tested 3 times per year. This includes checking the shocks, frame, and bushings to keep up in front of repairs rather than behind them. He would like engines tested twice per year and vehicles tested once per year.

Gasoline – Gretchen wanted to know what the figure was for gasoline. Chief said it is a contracted price for both gas and diesel (same as School District). Budget Committee lowered this number down from \$7,000.

Diesel Fuel – no questions.

Vehicle Repair Parts – includes oil changes, tires, and filters.

Books and Periodicals – Gretchen asked if these are electronic or printed. Chief said we get them in printed form.

Departmental Awards – Gretchen asked why this has gone up so much. Chief said it includes awarding certificates, pins, and ribbons for years of service. Appreciation to the members of the department for the amount of time they put in. They have an appreciation night in April, but people usually bring things in for a potluck.

Fire Prevention – no grant money for this. Chief said sometimes there is and sometimes there isn't.

Uniforms – Gretchen asked why this item has gone up. Donny said it was for phasing in dress uniforms. Chief is taking inventory of what each firefighter has and fill in what is missing. The cost is about \$1000 per person. There is no uniform service; Chief says they get put out to bid. The firefighter then owns the uniform and they are responsible for keeping it cleaned and neat. Call fire fighters pay for their own dress uniforms. All firefighter's pants, shirt, jacket, hat, hat badge, and brass are paid for.

Miscellaneous – Gretchen wants to know what the \$100 might be used for. Chief said it could be something that does not fall into any other category. Public feels this would be better at \$1.

Land – looking for new place for a possible new station.

Fixtures and Furniture – mattresses for the cots, chairs, rug replaced by vinyl tile.

Dry Hydrants and Cisterns – Gretchen asked why this has gone up. Donny said there are five that are not working. This would bring all dry hydrants and cisterns in working order. By doing yearly preventive maintenance, these were found. The work was sent out to bid. This bid was for budget estimate purposes only.

Contingency Fund – Gretchen asked for this item to be defined. Chief said it was for unanticipated expenses that cannot be put off until District Meeting. It requires a vote of the Commissioners. Examples could include the boiler breaking and no money in the budget for its repair. The DRA would have to approve of this kind of problem. A catastrophe. We do not have to raise and appropriate this money; it's already in the unreserved fund balance. The DRA prefers that we have a contingency fund before coming to them. Chief talked to the DRA about this in depth. Gretchen strongly suggests a policy to define how this line can be used for public protection.

Health Insurance Reimbursement – Paul Auger said it's been in there for 3-4 years. This puts the line back to \$5,000 from all the expenses taken out over the past 3-4 years. Chief said they bought a cheaper policy. For the family plan, 11% is paid by the firefighter. Family of 3 costs about \$2,000 per year.

Ambulance Billing Service – Comstar is based on a percentage of what they bill. Revenue was down a bit this year.

Equipment and Apparatus Fund – After the new fire truck was paid in full, there would be about \$30,000 left in this fund. Chief would like to add another truck, not replace any. Total calls have gone up since last year – about 100 calls. Chief will give Gretchen a call statistics sheet. Capital improvement plan has a fire truck in 2015 and ambulance in 2016. Chief will not bond any vehicle or equipment. We will not buy anything if we do not have the money for it. There is room in the garage for the new truck. Gretchen says that because budgets are going up and her pay check is not, she would suggest looking for support from other towns rather than buying a new truck. This is for reserve – not a spare – and used when one of the other two pumps are out being repaired or maintained. It would also be used once per month to ensure that it is working. ISO (insurance) requires this reserve to keep the cost lower – could lower the ISO rating.

Fire Equipment – Gretchen asked why this has gone up. Chief said it is for fire equipment like a thermal imaging camera. We own two and this would be a third one but the technology advanced from last purchase in 2006. Also for vehicular repeaters, and portable radios signal booster (safety issue). This item will work in our community with our terrain.

Rescue Equipment – new set of spreaders and cutters that can cut through the new material being used to build cars these days. No grant money available in this area. Gretchen asked if there were any grants we could apply for. Chief said there were none this year.

EMS Equipment – Gretchen asked why this went up. Chief explained that we used up all our stock and only bought exactly what we needed last year. The stock room is completely empty. Chief would like to have one back up of everything to reduce wait time with ordering it after used. Gretchen asked if supplies are stored in a secured area. Chief assures that they are.

Motion to adjourn by Tim Sattler and seconded by George Sanders. Donny Steven closed the public hearing at 8:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Katina Provencal
District Clerk