

**Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS District
Budget Committee Public Hearing
Meeting Minutes February 12, 2018**

Present: Patricia Sawicki, Paul Auger, Robert Petrin, Dennis Manning, Jason Wright, Chief Michael Sitar

Dennis Manning opened the public hearing of the proposed 2018 budget at 5:30pm at the Tilton Town Hall upstairs meeting room.

Robert Petrin went through the Salaries & Wages expense lines, and opened the floor to questions.

Wayne Crowley asked about the difference between the Commissioners and Chief Budget on the salaries & wages section. Chief replied that he requested a step raise at 2.5%, a cost of living at 1.7%, and came up with a policy for an incentive program for higher certifications which would have included an additional raise.

Chief Sitar explained the differences in the Benefits categories, and the changes they have made to their benefits program, and opt out incentive plan.

Chief Sitar explained the differences in the Professional & Technical Services. Under Information Technology, the Fire District had some money left over in their budget in 2017, so they paid the IT services early, therefore the Budget Committee deducted the amount paid from the 2018 budget.

Wayne Crowley asked about looking into Voice over IP, and the cost. Wayne explained how the system works and that both towns and school are all on this plan. Chief added that between the two stations they only have 4 lines total, which only costs about \$2,400, the remaining money covers internet service, cell phones and hot spots.

Chief Sitar explained the differences in the Property Services. Eric Pyra asked for the breakdown of Repairs & Maintenance. Patricia Sawicki stated \$6,272 was for Park St station, \$4,926 is for Center St station, \$3,910 is for custodial services, and \$300 is for grounds keeping.

Chief Sitar explained Purchase Services. Wayne Crowley asked how many hydrants we have. Chief Sitar stated 81-82 hydrants. And there's two more years of this contract.

Chief Sitar went through the supplies line items. Wayne Crowley confirmed the department is using Wex and not paying taxes. Jason Pyra asked about the vehicles repairs and the difference from 2017 actual and 2018 budgeted. Chief replied that in 2017 they spent \$45,000 on Engine 1 and removed the corrosion which was approved at the Annual Meeting.

Dennis Manning went over the bottom line of the operating budget and noted that the Commissioners budget would have come in at \$2,079,782 but they started the budget process earlier this year, before all of 2017 was expended and the monies left over were used on items we would have asked for in 2018.

Wayne Crowley asked about what happens to the left over fund balance in 2017? Chief replied that it goes back into the general fund. The Chief added that the balance of the unassigned fund balance is \$405,000 (unaudited). Wayne asked how it can be spent. Chief stated that the District has a policy that approximately 16% has to be maintained in the fund balance so they don't have to borrow against the anticipated revenue. The balance stays there until it gets voted out. Dennis Manning added that this is usually a confusing topic at the Annual Meeting.

Robert Petrin went over the difference between the Chief, Commissioners, and Budget Committee operating budget total.

Wayne Crowley asked if there was going to be any changes to manpower from 2017 to 2018. Chief Sitar stated that it was approved by both the Commissioners and Budget Committee to add a part-time clerk at 20 hours a week, no benefits, approximately \$15,600 yr.

Wayne Crowley asked what was driving the overtime budget. Chief Sitar replied that it's for when people out sick, vacation coverage, training coverage, etc. Dennis Manning added that it's still not funded to the full amount of time that the staff could use for leave time. Spending on other line items, wait until the end of the year, in case we have to fund the OT, like we did a couple years ago when we had a couple large fires.

Wayne Crowley asked about adding additional people instead of paying overtime. Chief Sitar replied that we'd have to add a person to each shift, plus suiting them, training them, etc. Dennis Manning added that \$160,000 may cover two people on a four shift department and you'd still have to have overtime for coverage. Chief added that \$233,346.25 is the total of the unfunded liabilities. Which would cover all the time off, sick time, training time, but the Chief request is difference because it uses an average over 3 years as to what is used, and then calculates the total training needed.

Dennis Manning went over the Apparatus & Equipment Replacement Fund, and pointed out the differences. The Chief went over the difference in ambulance billing and the Constar fee for service. The collection is up to about 73%. Eric Pyra asked, what are some of the circumstances as to why we wouldn't get paid. Chief replied that it could be a bad address, no insurance, under insured, etc.

Chief stated that the Fire Equipment includes new radios for the stations and portables. This is a safety issue for the employees. Dennis Manning added that the Chief has written requests for many grants the past couple years totaling about \$213,700. Chief added that the monies also includes monies for 8 sets of turn out gear, which only last about 10 years, we are on a rotating system, but every year we have to buy between 6-8 sets of turn out gear. Dennis added that the Chief has also written a grant to assist with the cost of the gear as well for some decent washing equipment for the gear.

Wayne asked about the large increase under EMS. Chief replied that one increase was because we are sending one of our employees to medic school which is \$19,000, \$40,000 of disposal equipment they need to replace due to the increase in the number of calls.

Dennis reminded everyone that this section does not affect the tax rate, we budget for it because if we don't then the remainder of the needs for the department would come out of the operating budget. Chief added that whatever is not used in the Apparatus & Equipment Replacement Budget just goes back into the fund as unused, it is not used in the operating budget.

Wayne Crowley asked does the budget committee look at the impact of the budget to the tax bills. Patricia Sawicki stated that they are not supplied with the information to do that calculation. Wayne suggested that at some point we should get to that point. Chief replied that he knows the dollar amounts that would be billed to each town, but not the tax rate impact. Wayne stated that the Warrant Article is going to be the major impact to the tax rate. Dennis and Jason stated that most of the Warrant Article are coming from other funds and won't affect the tax rate. Patricia Sawicki stated that it would be a good tool to have, and Wayne went over how to breakdown the information.

No adjustments were made to the proposed budget. Members signed MS-737

There being no other business the meeting was adjourned at 6:24pm