

Norwich Finance Committee

Accepted Minutes of the Meeting of Jan 5, 2007

The meeting convened at 8:17 AM. Members present: Irv Thomae, Karen Kayen (chair), Al Converse, Bill Bender, Henry Scheier, Cheryl Lindberg, and Paul Tierney. Also present: Neil Fulton, Gerald Chapdelaine, Stephen Soares and Roberta Robinson from the Town .

1. Motion to accept the draft minutes of the meeting of Dec 15, 2006 as ammended made by Irv Thomae and seconded by Paul Tierney. Passed unanimously.

2. Norwich Town Budget

2.1 Should the budgets for police, fire, and roads be presented to the voters as separate items on the warning?

This was soon reduced to whether only the police department should be considered separately by the voters. The committee considered two options: (a) that the voters be asked whether they wanted 4 or 5 police officers, and (b) that the budget for the department be presented as a separate item. In responding to a request to review the pros and cons, Neil mentioned that the voters had voted down an advisory to allow separate votes on specific items. He also questioned whether there was good reason to be considering the matter. Henry remarked that he Karen and Paul had studied the police department and done a survey of the town on the level of the police force. Some felt that option (b) would improve accountability. After much discussion **Henry moved: To put to the voters what level of police service they wanted. Seconded by Bill.** Paul favored a separate budget item. Steve commented that if , as a result of any article / vote ; a reduction in force were to be mandated that, part of the process include a proviso that the change not occur until FY 2009 budget. **This motion passed unanimously.**

Paul then moved: That the Finance Committee recommend that the police budget be voted separately. Seconded by Henry After discussion this was **defeated on a vote of 3 for, 3 against, and 1 abstaining.**

2.2 The finance committee then moved on to a discussion of the town budget as a whole.

Neil informed us that beginning this year property exempted from tax by the town, but not by state law, will no longer be exempted from the state school tax; and that this must be made up by the other town taxes.

Recreation department. There was general agreement that the Rec. department programs should be self supporting. Last year this had almost been achieved; fees covered 95% of expenses. However in the current budget this is not achieved due to an unexpected reduction in the extent of one program.

Solid Waste department. Pual commented that the method dealing with hazardous waste through the Hartford land fill was not adequate. Cheryl stated that the GUVSWMD Coupons should not be in the Solid Waste budget because they are a coupon sold for the convenience of our residents and have nothing to do with the Norwich Solid Waste Dept. They belong in the Town Clerk budget.

It was felt that the general waste disposal at the Norwich station should be self supporting. The use of purchased town bags has been considered in the past but has been discarded. It was felt by some that the attendants were too lenient when charging for trash. **Al moved: That the Finance Committee recommend that in order to break even on trash disposal the fees be increased. Seconded by Henry. This passed on a vote of 4 for and 3 against.**

Highway department. There is a 4% increase in the budget but we are falling behind in repaving roads. The forthcoming report from the Two Rivers Panning council should be helpful in future planning. There was discussion about whether this apparent need be addressed through a bond issue or through the yearly budget. After much discussion, **Irv moved: That we recommend that another \$90,000 be added to the budget for repaving roads. Seconded by Henry. This was then amended by Al that the \$90,000 be offset by reductions in other portions of the budget. Seconded by Bill. The amendment passed on a vote of 5 for and 2 opposed. The amended motion then passed on a vote of 5 for and 2 opposed.**

Fire Department. The main point of discussion was the creation of the position of a full-time paid fire chief, a move supported by Neil and Jack Fraser, the outgoing volunteer fire chief. **Paul moved that we don't change the Fire Dept. budget. Seconded by Henry. Passed: 6 for and 0 against.** (Bill had left the meeting by this time)

At the end of the meeting Cheryl suggested that the Auditors review the annual stipend for the Selectboard and consider an adjustment to their

stipend. She also mentioned that the Land Management Council is planning the harvesting of more trees on the Fire District land and wondered whether the revenue from that should be shown in our General Fund report with a line item showing that it is being put into a designated fund.

Adjourned at 11:15 AM.

Next meeting date: Friday, January 16, 2007 at 8:15 A.M. in Tracy Hall

Respectfully submitted,
Alvin O. Converse