

**Miranda Bergmeier**

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**From:** claudette brochu <cbrochu30@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 22, 2016 11:03 PM  
**To:** Miranda Bergmeier  
**Subject:** budget talks

I have been present at the last three SB meetings when the budget was on the agenda. Granted, I have not been able to attend the entire meetings but I wanted to share my thoughts.

Over the last two meetings, I have begun to see "budget creep" begin to occur. The initial budget is presented and then subsequent meetings see slow but steady proposed increases. Twenty thousand here, twenty thousand there. Taken individually, these increases may not seem like much of an outlay, but cumulatively may have significant impact. I urge the board to make serious attempts to off-set the proposed increases with matching decreases in other areas.

Some proposals:

1. Since the ITM and Public Works director see the Transfer Station windshield sticker fees as funds to maintain the infrastructure of the facility, shouldn't these fees be shared by all households in town and not just by those households using the facility? That is how we finance other infrastructure projects. So instead, or in addition to, increasing the windshield sticker fee, charge each household a set amount/yr to fund the infrastructure. Those of us using the facility for solid waste disposal already pay, via the coupon card, to dispose of our trash. As it is, those of us using the facility are bearing the bulk of the costs.
  - 1a. As an example of budget creep, there was some discussion on fees for construction debris but if we go with the cost per ton, won't we then have to purchase a scale to weigh the waste? In my opinion, this was a poorly planned addition without thought about fee structure or cost of removal.
  - 1b. Another example, 2 SB members expressed a desire to fund both hazardous waste and food waste. We haven't seen a Norwich based hazardous waste collection in years and collect everything but
  - 1c. We would not have faced the issue of the SB not being aware of main street paving or Hopson Rd humps if the paving budget truly reflected what was warranted for paving. As it was, the paving budget had enough reserve to cover these costs without SB approval.
2. Change the fee structure for Rec to a means based structure. You make more, you pay more. I am not saying this will be easy to accomplish but I believe it can be done. There must be a way to determine the means of a household without being too intrusive. If legal, maybe matching the property tax rebate (that is not a rebate) with rec users.
3. Seriously look at what we are paying for employee salaries and benefits. We already know we pay our town employees significantly more than other towns. For non-contracted employees, keep wage increases at the cost of living. Investigate if what we are paying for health care, disability insurance, HRA/HSAs, etc are comparable to other communities. Most businesses expect employees to "buy" or share in the expense of both short-term and long term disability insurance and to fully fund their HSAs.

At one of the first budget talks by the SB, 3 of the 5 SB members stated their desire to either level fund the budget or look at decreasing the budget. I for one, will be interested to see what the SB comes up with for a final budget.

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