

**SELECTMEN'S BUDGET WORKSHOP**  
**Minutes of 01-05-09**  
**4:00 p.m.**

*Selectmen:*

*Peter F. Brothers, Chairman*  
*Miller C. Lovett, Vice Chairman*  
*Robert C. Flanders*  
*Charles G. Palm*  
*Colette Worsman*

*Co-Interim Town Managers:*

*John C. Edgar*  
*Brenda L. Vittner*

*Recording Clerk:*

*Karin Landry*

Call to Order: Chairman Peter Brothers called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

There is an approximate \$300,000 shortfall in anticipated revenues for 2009. The Board is tasked with identifying general areas of the 2009 budget where revenues can be generated and cuts can be made. The Chair expressed the Board's appreciation for the work done by individual departments to come in with a level-funded budget.

The Chair highlighted the January 2 Budget Workshop. The Board considered the reallocation of approximately \$25,000 from the Downtown Parking Fund to offset one of this year's Expendable Trust Funds for Main Street renovations. There is consensus that \$250,000 is an appropriate amount to reserve in the Downtown Parking Fund to take advantage of future opportunities for expanded parking. The Board agreed that \$100,000 could be reallocated from the Downtown Parking Fund as an additional source of revenue in 2009. The Board also considered reducing the Expendable Trust Fund for Phase II of the parking improvements to Prescott Park. There is a potential cost savings of \$100,000 if the Batchelder Hill Rd. project is phased. The Departments were asked to look at their operating budgets to effect further reductions, and to carefully consider the purchase of new equipment.

Director of Public Works Mike Faller explained the proposed phasing of the Batchelder Hill Rd. project. Phase I of the project will span from Old Roxbury to Eagle Ledge, and then to Black Brook Rd. The improvements will meet the standards for road construction. Phase I will be affected partly by Town staff - the paving and gravel hauling will go out for bid. Phase II includes paving from Camp Waldron Rd. to Roxbury Rd. The Phase II work is a little more time consuming, and will go out for bid. Dialogue ensued regarding the timing of the RFP, the opportunity for cost savings in the present construction climate, and benefits to bundling the project. As represented at Town Meeting, the completed project will go from pavement to pavement. Selectman Worsman asked that the phasing of the project be set forth in writing. She is concerned that the taxpayers understand the direction the project is taking. If the Board wishes to phase the project, the Warrant Article for \$100,000 will not be included in the 2009 budget.

There is a potential opportunity for additional revenues of \$30,000. The Board will be provided with additional information on the matter at the next Budget Workshop.

Further reductions in departmental budgets have been identified by department heads. Water & Sewer Superintendent Brian Carroll identified a reduction in the funding of water system improvements in the amount of \$50,000. Director of Parks & Recreation Vint Choiniere found an approximate \$9,000 reduction in his budget by delaying the opening of the beach to coincide with the end of the school year. The reclassification of a Public Works position will save \$10,000.

Selectman Flanders urged his fellow Board members to look for budget cuts beyond \$300,000. Identifying additional reductions in the budget will put the Town in a better position if there is a shortfall in revenue projections for 2009. Selectman Worsman is in favor of reductions closer to \$381,000. The Chair pointed out that while \$300,000 is not as aggressive as some Board members wish to see, it gives the department heads a clear direction. There is consensus among the Board that this year's process has worked very well. The department heads have been charged with finding efficiencies and making suggestions throughout 2009 to look at ways to keep costs down and find additional sources of revenue. The Co-Interim Town Managers and department heads know where further reductions can be made. If further reductions are identified by department heads, the Board would most likely agree to them.

Dialogue ensued regarding having to make additional cuts in 2009 if revenues do not come in as projected. The Board agreed that they do not wish to make cuts in personnel or the 2 ½% COLA. Selectman Lovett expressed concern with the future effect of cuts in capital improvements, and would like to have further dialogue with department heads.

The Board discussed implementing an accounting procedure that reflects the actual cost of fuel by department. Doing so will identify how much an individual department is over expended because of fuel prices.

Department budgets will be reviewed at the budget workshop scheduled for Wednesday, January 7. Not all departments have been asked to make a presentation to the Board. The process will be less detailed than in the past, but will allow for the opportunity to ask questions. Department heads will respond to various questions and comments posed by the Board during their presentation.

Selectman Worsman proposed reducing the funding of the Greater Meredith Program from \$15,000 to \$10,000. Although the organization does many valuable things, it is a place to scale back in the current economy without ill effects to the taxpayers or the Town. She does not see the same level of taxpayer benefit as she sees in funding other Outside Agencies. In addition, she asked that the Greater Meredith Program be reclassified as an Outside Agency. Dialogue ensued regarding significant benefits the Town has reaped from the Program, including tax revenue generated by refurbishing a façade on Main Street, the implementation of the beautification program that generated \$40,000 in 2008, and the Community Center gardens. The remaining members of the Board generally agreed that funding for the Greater Meredith Program should not be cut. Resident Dave Sticht believes this is a matter that should go to Town Warrant for approval. The Board is in general agreement that the Program should be moved to Outside Agencies and that the addition of a new Outside Agency should go before the voters.

Selectman Flanders highlighted the benefits of leasing a police cruiser including reduced maintenance costs, less down time, and safer equipment. If a leased vehicle is turned over at the end of a three-year period, it will have a higher residual value than a Town-owned vehicle that is kept for a longer period of time. The dollars expended over the life of a lease are slightly higher. The Board is generally not in favor of leasing. The Board requested mileage and maintenance history for the vehicles currently used by the Police Department. Additional dialogue will take place when Chief Morrow presents his budget.

Dialogue ensued regarding the application of salt to the roads during the winter season. There is a \$20,000 increase projected for salt in 2009. Selectman Lovett is concerned with the use of salt on roads that are close to the lakes. There are liability issues to be considered if enough salt is not used. Mike Faller will be prepared for a discussion on the use of salt during his presentation to the Board.

Ms. Vittner asked the Board to email any further questions to her by noon tomorrow. Selectman Palm asked for additional information pertaining to the Highway Block Grant and the allocation of gas at the Highway Department.

The Board scheduled Budget Workshops for Wednesday, January 7, and Thursday, January 8 at 4 p.m. at the Town Hall Annex.

*Selectman Flanders motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 p.m. Seconded by Selectman Palm. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

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John C. Edgar, Co-Interim Town Mgr.

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Peter F. Brothers, Chairman

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Brenda L. Vittner, Co-Interim Town Mgr.

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