

# Budget Committee Minutes

*4:30pm Monday, March 6th, 2017, Vinalhaven Town Office*

## Present

Andy Dorr, Jocelyn McLean, Holly Sault, Janann Sherman, Margaret Qualey, Lucy McCarthy, Gabe McPhail, Eric Davis, Delwyn Webster, Bill Alcorn, Pat Lundholm, Marc Candage.

## Minutes

**Motion** by Eric to approve the minutes from 2/27. Second: Gabe. Vote: 8-0-0. Motion passed.

## Introduction

Delwyn brought in a page titled "Food for Thought" dated March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The paper relates to his own research into the increase in tax rates from FY '09/'10 to FY '15/'16. He noted that in 2010 the mil rate was 8.4 and today it is 11.32. By his calculations this is a 35% increase and an average increase of 5.8% per year. Bill asked about the rate of inflation and whether this could have had an effect on the tax increase. Eric noted that road maintenance does eat up a lot of the budget. Margaret asked if this has all been increases due to the school. The consensus was that no, it's not all the school.

## Section Review & Discussion

### 1. Ambulance

Discussion- Pat: Budget is down from FY17. The biggest increase is the succession plan. Pat is a part time employee but the job is really 24/7. Andy: also Pat was the only advanced EMT on the island until this year. Pat noted that if she is off-island, her responsibilities fall on Marc, who already has a lot on his plate.

Pat: There is also an on-call plan change. On VH, every call is a logistics problem to work out; there are two people on the job, and one person on logistics. Someone needs to coordinate with either the ferry crew, Life Flight, or Penobscot Island Air, and the ICMS provider. On top of this there has to be a report written to hand over once on the mainland. Two people on call isn't enough for this. There has to be three. Pat is making a proposal to have three people on call. Andy: We need to recognize there has to be three people on call. Up until now, Pat has been the one stepping in to fill this role. Creating a recognized position is a way to be prepared for the future and for someone to take over this leadership role. Pat: Another consideration is that Andy and Marc be

compensated for doing ambulance runs. Currently they are not. Andy: So there is an increase in the on call stipend to \$23,000. Delwyn asked for clarification on how many people go to the mainland on ambulance runs. Pat: Two people go. Bill: does the fire engine go with every ambulance run? Andy: No. Marc: the only time the fire rescue will go is if they need a lift assist, or something the ambulance crew isn't trained to do.

There was a question about the accounting aspect of ambulance payments. The patients get billed directly. Andy: the biggest problem is capturing payment. Medicare won't pay for ferry runs. They deny coverage for it. Pat: We are working to collect these payments so they don't have to be written off.

Andy noted that there is no way to predict how many ambulance runs you'll have in a year.

There is an equipment increase. More in field reporting is expected now. Pat: The one computer we have, a Toughbook, is too cumbersome; upgrading this would be a big plus; use in the ambulance would be much faster, and emts could potentially bring up the patient's record for more information.

Pat mentioned the 'binder lift' gadget she has been looking into to that makes lifting patients easier and more comfortable for both staff and the patient. When picking someone up, lifting under the arms is often difficult and painful; this device would sort of diffuse the pressure points and make lifting easier and safer. More info is needed before having a clear opinion on this. Bill recommended asking the company for referrals in Maine. Pat agreed this is a good idea.

Bill suggested taking the \$600 out of the binder lift line and putting it into the Android fund.

Lucy: Do epi-pens get thrown out when they go out of date? Pat: they are brought to a church on the mainland; not sure if the date is arbitrary, but the ambulance is not allowed to keep them regardless.

Bill: Where are we in FY17? Andy: The figure is through Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>; halfway through the fiscal year.

Andy proposes a cell phone stipend credit for Pat, with the expectation that she has access to it and be responding. Andy: Last year we went from one AEMT to four. We are in a good position having that many here. We have also been fortunate with vehicles.

Janann: are they getting old? Andy: R2 is six years old, R1 is a 1998.

Margaret: Why is patient transport up from FY16? Andy: it depends on how many calls we get and when (day or night); daytime is cheaper. There was a spike in 2013.

Margaret: So this is generous, budgeting for 225 runs. Pat: Three years ago we had 274 runs. To budget for less is dangerous.

Lucy noted the budget as a whole is down from previous years.

Andy explained that both ambulances are very different vehicles and that one is 4wd, one is not. Delwyn asked if underneath the ambulances get washed on a regular basis and mentioned that rust can be a big problem for these vehicles. It was stated that washing under the vehicle is very difficult, so it doesn't get done regularly. Bill asked if there could be a wand attached to a hose to do this. It was agreed it could potentially be looked into.

Gabe asked Pat if she was comfortable with the manager's recommendation. Pat stated that she is.

Gabe: Going forward we need to be more realistic about what hours are required of these positions. We are fortunate that our employees donate so much of their time but we need to be fairly compensating people. Margaret mentioned that this goes for the ferry runs too; it is a lot harder to get a crew together.

There was agreement that the amount of time public employees put in without being paid needs to be recognized by the board. In the future the town may not be so fortunate and these basic services will suffer.

**Motion** by Gabe to accept the Manager recommended amount of \$171,600

Second: Delwyn. Vote: 8-0-0. Motion passed.

## **2. Fire Department**

Discussion- Marc puts in at least fifty hours a week; we are very fortunate to have him. He wears a lot of different hats.

Fire dept. wages are based on responding hours. Marc: This formula is broken down so staff can be compensated for training & responses.

Andy: New in service fees is the hose testing. Hoses should be tested every year. This is a company out of Pennsylvania that does this. Marc: lots of departments do it this way, the hose testing by an outside company- it can be done in less than a day. They do all the testing here, unpack the truck, test everything and pack the truck back up. Andy:

this testing is required to be done. Marc: Also the Shape Program reviews all the department's policies, and by doing so you get a two year exemption from enforcement OSHA inspections, for which the minimum fine is \$1,000.

Marc: regarding equipment/pagers; the county is at a three to five year transition period from analog to digital. This is not going to be a choice. It is a big expense. The only way it will work smoothly is if county gets grants for this. It will be a huge burden to put on the towns if they don't. We have budgeted for two Motorola portable radios at \$700 each. Andy mentioned there had been a question about whether this technology would be phased out in three or four years and we would have to get new radios again. These will generally last for ten to fifteen years. Bill: Does every firefighter have to have one of these radios? Marc: All officers do; there will have to be around 15 total radios for the department. Also all ambulance personnel need them. Delwyn: are the batteries rechargeable? Marc: Yes. They get cycled out and recharged.

Andy is proposing a cell phone reimbursement for Marc as he is on call 24/7.

Marc: training is an expense but the benefit from it will be well worth it.

**Motion** by Janann to accept the department recommended amount of \$123,140.  
Second: Delwyn. Vote: 8-0-0. Motion passed.

### **3. General Assistance**

Discussion- Andy: General Assistance is on the governor's list to be removed. We currently get reimbursed by the state for this. Bill: What does this cover? Andy: Food, shelter, heating, necessities, emergency situations. It's based on income; what you expect to receive for income in the next 30 days. You have to expect to receive less than around \$700 for a single person to qualify. Delwyn: can you ask what they have in the bank? Andy: yes.

**Motion** by Eric to accept the recommended \$6,000. Second: Janann. Vote: 8-0-0  
Motion passed.

#### **4. Next Week's Agenda**

\* Law enforcement

\*Harbor Master

\*Insurance

\*Donations

### **Adjourn**

**Motion** by Eric to adjourn the meeting at 6pm. Second: Holly. Vote: 8-0-0.  
Motion passed.

Next meeting will be Monday, March 13<sup>th</sup> at 4:30pm

*Additional Notes:*