

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes

Public Hearing

February 25, 2019

7:00 pm Meeting called to order by Jack Esposito. Also in attendance was Selectman Kim Roberge.

Esposito opened the Public Hearing on Warrant #2 – Lease/Purchase of New Fire Truck. Esposito read the Warrant Article. Howard Brown: Will the whole \$75,000 come out of the Fire Station's Capital Reserve fund? Chief Wilson: Yes, \$75,000 will be taken from the Capital Reserve Fund to use as a down payment. Tim Berry, Budget Committee: Last year your report in the Town Report stated that a fire truck would cost \$420,000. What are the reasons that you went from \$420,000 to \$580,000? Chief Wilson: It's our own fault that we did not update our figures in our last report. We were using numbers from 2014. On top of that we decided that we need to purchase an AWD truck which adds \$45,000-\$50,000 to the purchase price. Matt Harrah, Dutton Circle: Is there a long term plan to budget around keeping the equipment up to date? A couple of years ago you had to fix the pump on one of the trucks; what is the average service life of a truck? Chief Wilson: Usually the service life is around 30+ years. When we looked at the Engine that had the pump rebuilt in it – it had actually had a refurbished one a few years before that. When talking with the mechanics and pump people it was determined that truck was good for another 10 years so that will be a 40 year truck. It won't go until 2032. This truck that we're replacing, even though it's only 20 years old, it has a singular purpose as a truck goes in that it's a 2 man truck. That just doesn't cut it for what we are trying to do here for the fire protection for the Town. We need trucks that you can put 4 people into with the proper equipment on board. Harrah: Is there another market for that truck? Chief Wilson: Not in the fire service. The highest trade in value we've looked at is \$10,000. Most of these trucks when they are purchased by dealers are shipped overseas; they end up in South America, the Middle East or Asia. The cost of \$580,000 is the total based on cost estimates, not on bids. The bids we will know just prior to Town Meeting when the bids all come in to the Town. Based on the estimates the cost of the lease will be \$505,000. Karen Mitchell: I'm curious as to why you're asking for an increase to the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund now? Chief Wilson: We've actually been asking for more than 8 years; for several years. We ran into issues where the Town either didn't support it, or it got cut back at Town Meeting, or we had other issues such as a refurbishment or a major repair and we didn't feel we should ask for more. Right now we are looking at the future of the Town. We have a lot of expenses in front of us. We are doing our due diligence saying we need to figure out how we can spread these costs out so we don't have a million and a half dollar impact in one year. Spread it all out; have the fire truck stand on its own; the library stand on its own; the Town Hall stand on its own, whatever it might be. That will have less fiscal impact so the Town can actually absorb them spread over the course of the coming years vs trying to figure out how to do it in one year. Anne Dodd: I wonder how many fire fighters we have that go to a fire and how many trucks we take to a fire; plus I think that all the structure fires require mutual aid from other communities. I want to know if they have trucks with AWD. Chief Wilson: Every truck that can go out the door goes to a structure fire. Wilton has an AWD. The trucks south of us – their forestry's are AWD; they do not have an Engine with AWD. New Boston has an AWD forestry pumper. Dodd: Why do we need both? Chief Wilson: Because we've found it necessary in the past. Not too long ago we were sliding down out of driveways because we don't have full control over the trucks. It happened over on Kendall Hill Rd. AWD would have made sense. We are going out in storms and bad weather. The addition of the cost based on a truck that's going to be in service 30 years I think is a good dollar investment. Dodd: How many fire fighters respond to fires? Chief Wilson: It varies. During the day you could have 3 or 8. At night you could have 23. It all depends on who is around; we are an on-call fire department. Dodd: If you're sending all of the equipment, does every man have to go on a fire truck? Chief Wilson: They should, yes. The idea of sending people in their cars behind the fire truck to the scene during an emergency is not the best avenue. They don't have their equipment with them; they have to get out and get dressed and put their gear on – it slows everything down. We want our fire fighters on the truck so they can get their orders, they can get geared up and have their safety systems put in place. Leo Moss, Purgatory Road: What is the nature of the reservation that the Selectmen and the Budget Committee have with respect to the Article? Esposito: We are not saying that we won't need the truck at a future date; but right now with all the expenses we having coming up – we're faced with a lot of important decisions to make in the next couple of years. We have a library project that's going through. Most of the money for that will be paid for by the Daland Trust, donations and fund raising. However, the Town can probably still anticipate a decent amount of a note, probably \$500,000 to a million. The estimated cost of the library was 3.5 million. I hope it all gets raised, we just don't know. Also the big albatross behind us is these two buildings, Town Hall and the McCollom Building. The estimates are approximately a million per building to fix them up the way we have to do it. It's a big expense coming up and we just don't know where we stand, how much we can afford tax wise. Basically, to raise the premium for the fire truck, assuming it's about \$75,000 a year in loan payment, that's about .30 cents on the tax rate. We are not against the truck, we just don't know the timing of it right now. That's why we decided not to back it at this time. Roberge: as the representative of the Selectmen's Board to the Budget Committee, we listened to a very good presentation from the firemen on the reasoning for this. We are still making payments on the Fire Station in the amount of \$75,000. I believe there are seven more years of payments on that. The report that they did in 2010 stated that they'd be coming to the Town for a new truck in 2023. I asked the chief if the trucks we now have serviced the needs of the Town this year. The answer to that was yes. I understand that we are probably moving in that direction at some point, but it came to me on the Board just recently and I'm not sure putting something that may not be a necessity at this time, based on the vehicle that's there is the best in budgeting with what we're moving forward with. Esposito: Our fire department does a fantastic job maintaining our equipment. We have been against putting money into a capital reserve fund for the fire truck only because the interest rates have been zero. So if we put the money in we don't get any growth out of it. We know that we can borrow the money to get a new truck when we have to. Years ago we used to be able to get 5% or 6% return; now you get about 2%. That's why the capital reserve fund was depleted, because of the economics of it is all. We are trying to keep things in order; you know what we are paying for taxes, were doing the best we can. John Arico, Budget Committee: The committee looked at this and understood all the arguments for the truck, but those

arguments were valid from the day we built the new fire station. We don't see that there is an iron need for this; the current truck is still in good condition, it's got 10 more years of life to it. The compelling argument is the expenditures coming up in the next few years; the library, Town Hall and McCollom Building. Those really need to be decided by the Town as part of the Master Plan - how we are going to space those out. Those three expenditures need to be done in concert. Chief Wilson: Dealing with the cost of the fire truck, the lease numbers that we have now are around \$65,000 per year for 2020. If we wait until 2027 the fire truck will cost close to \$900,000 by that point; the cost of these trucks keeps going up almost \$20,000 a year. We are also going to be looking to replace a fire truck in 2031 so you are going to be replacing trucks back to back with a huge cost impact. We understand there is a huge tax impact to the taxpayers coming up real quick. The problem is how do we space them out; which ones do we delay or not delay. I'm a homeowner and tax payer in town, I understand the impact that every single one of us is facing. I would not personally be here if this was not a need. Yes, there's a truck over there that can do a job. The problem is it cannot do the job that it should for this town. It needs to be more. Bonnie Angulas: The library is being asked to raise money for the library project. Are you considering writing grants moving forward and also is your Fireman's Association an organization that can raise money towards a new fire truck? Chief Wilson: They can; they actually voted the other day to put in \$5,000 towards the new truck. A lot of their money is tied up in firemen's relief; they pay for an insurance policy that covers the firefighters every year. The cost of this is around \$7,200. That's where a lot of their fundraising goes. As far as going for grants, the truck grant process is very limited now. If you've gotten a grant the chances of getting another are very slim. The next grant we are applying for is to replace our air packs which are due to be replaced in 2022. That's going to be about \$130,000. We are pretty sure we can get that grant. Angulas: Will all the financials be at Town Meeting, when will we see these numbers? Will we see all the specs? Chief Wilson: We will have the bids to the Selectmen the Monday before Town Meeting. You can see the specs if you'd like, I can put them up on the town web site. Harrah: In terms of the lease, what is included, is there any maintenance included in the lease? Are there other costs involved? Chief Wilson: Town takes care of all basic maintenance; there is a warranty to cover the truck. Ann Dodd: Is it possible to put chains on the truck tires? Chief Wilson: We are trying to stay away from chains because they do damage if the links break. The On Spots that we have on the other trucks do not work well at lower speeds. The AWD system takes care of that.

7:28 pm Esposito closed the Public Hearing.

Respectfully submitted,
Cleary

Joan