

# Board of Selectmen

BUDGET WORKSHOP  
Wednesday April 2, 2008

Present: Susan Bransfield-First Selectwoman, Carl Chudzik, John Anderson, Kathy Richards, Sharon Gibala, Mark Finkelstein, Brian Flood

First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

Public Library:

Jan Nocek, Library Director presented a PowerPoint presentation regarding the library's budget request for the 08-09 fiscal year. She summarized the services that the library provides and the amount that it is used by residents. When considering the budget, she asked the BOS to consider:

- The addition of one part-time, non-benefited position at 16 hours per week.
- The library must show 'maintenance of effort' to qualify for annual grants.
- The cost of deferring needed maintenance i.e. roof.
- Matching amounts are required for grants.

Staffing reductions are of major concern. The library has, since 2001, reduced its staff each year. Total weekly hours of reductions since 2001 are 81 hours weekly. Reduction of staff has resulted in the following:

- Summer hours were reduced
- Reduced hours by opening late one morning and earlier evening closing times
- Work on grants, outreach, planning and improvements was curtailed
- There were no business outreach programs and there were fewer adult programs.

The library is requesting, in its budget, to add one part-time position for a total of 16 hours per week. The operating hours of the library have been reduced as a result of reduced staffing.

Ms. Nocek also summarized for the BOS the needs of the library facility. The building is now 27 years old:

- Carpet and furnishings are beginning to show wear and tear.
- The roof is in need of replacement
- The main entrance and sidewalks are in need of repair.

Andy Bauer, Co-Chair of the Portland Library Board addressed the Board of Selectmen. He stated that the staff does a fantastic job; they are helpful, knowledgeable and competent. The library board has considered many avenues of staffing and the most cost effective means to staff the hours needed, will be to add a 16 hour per week position. He urged the BOS to consider this request for staffing. It is a top priority for the coming year. With regard to the facilities, Mr. Bauer stated that he would like to see the roof repaired sooner rather than later. He is in the process of trying to gather information on solar power roofs.

Susan Allison Young, Co-chair of the Portland Library Board addressed the Board of Selectmen with regard to staffing. She stated that there is a diverse population that is served by the library. The total number of hours cut in the 2001-2006 is 81 staff hours per week. As a result, the hours of the library have been reduced. Ms. Young feels strongly that the Town deserves a library that can support the level of education provided by the Town. Many kids who do not have access to

computers at home cannot finish homework by 8 pm. The Library Board has tried to come up with creative solutions for Ms. Nocek, but further reductions and/or not staffing the requested 16 hour per week position will cause the quality of services to suffer. She requested that the BOS not cut the budget that the library has proposed and that staffing not be further reduced.

Lorre Neville, Library Board member, addressed the Board of Selectmen regarding technology at the library. Technology is being used by both children and adults. It is an integral part of the library experience. There is a need to start upgrading the technology available at the library. There is a possibility that not upgrading the computers will result in some web sites not being able to download onto the present system.

Sharon Gibala asked why the full-time payroll is increasing and the part-time payroll is decreasing. The full-time positions have contractual increases that need to be accounted for. The 16-hour part-time position will cost approximately \$11,000.

Mark Finkelstein asked for clarification on whether the rug replacement was discussed last year. The answer is that it was and that \$100,000 over two years was requested last year. It is not in this year's budget, but there is \$50,000 in 09-10 and \$50,000 in 10-11.

There being no further discussion on the Library budget, there was a motion by Sharon Gibala, seconded by Kathy Richards to recess the budget workshop. Vote unanimous, motion carried. The meeting was recessed at 7:42 pm.

The budget workshop reconvened at 8:25 pm.

#### Fire Department

Fire Chief Robert Shea presented the Volunteer Fire Department budget to the BOS. Chief Shea summarized for the BOS the number and types of calls that the Fire Department has responded to in the last year. In 2007 there were 970 calls for assistance. 43% of these were during the day. The VFD responded to 15 building/structure fires, 18 chimney fires/malfunxions, 11 vehicle fires, 7 rubbish fires and 10 brush fires; 655 of these calls were medical calls; 35 members of the 78 member department are certified EMS personnel.

Chief Shea stated that the remaining budget balance this year will be used for gear replacement. There are 10 sets of gear that must be replaced in the coming year.

Sharon Gibala asked to have the payroll for the Fire Department explained. The regular payroll is the secretary that is shared with the Police Department. The Fire Department pays 10% of this payroll. There is also a stipend for the Fire Department secretary and a part-time secretary for the Chief's office.

Carl Chudzik asked for clarification on cost of gear replacement. Chief Shea explained the costs and methods of replacing gear.

Carl Chudzik asked how many times Portland has requested mutual aid. Chief Shea responded that he estimates 30-32 times per year.

Sharon Gibala asked if Chief Shea was aware of towns similar in size to Portland that have paid Fire Departments. Chief Shea stated that there are some departments who are partially paid, such as Cromwell which is paid during the day only.

What would it cost Portland to have a paid Fire Department? Chief Shea estimates that to run a paid department would cost the town \$3.7 million per year.

Budget deliberations will take place on April 7, April 8 and April 9, 2008 at 7:00 pm in the Public Library.

Rob Buden will provide a spreadsheet of salary accounts that are not subject to collective bargaining.

There being no further discussion, there was a motion by Mark Finkelstein, seconded by Kathy Richards, to adjourn the meeting. Vote unanimous, motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Siena, Board Clerk