

Budget Task Force
Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
February 2, 2015 - 8:16am
Truro Town Hall

Finance Committee Present: Bob Panessiti and Lori Meads
Selectmen Present: Jay Coburn, Bob Weinstein and Paul Wisotzky.
Staff/Others: Town Administrator Rae Ann Palmer, and Town Accountant Trudi Brazil

The meeting was called to order by Selectmen Coburn for the Board of Selectmen at 8:16am.

Fire Department –

Town Administrator Rae Ann Palmer noted that the Fire Department budget includes \$51K for a part-time Fire Chief. She explained that Bob Loomer of MRI is currently conducting a survey of similar towns and what a starting Fire Chief receives for a salary. There was a brief discussion as to what Wellfleet Fire Chief receives for a salary and Wellfleet's command structure. It was also added that the budget contains funds for per diem Fire Fighters year round. Robert Panessiti, Chair of the Finance Committee, spoke of the per diem solution as only being a temporary solution for the Fire Department. He suggested that Mr. Loomer provide alternative staffing models. He warned against throwing money at models that are not effective for the department.

Selectmen Wisotzky stated that a bigger question needs to be asked and that is what kind of Fire Department does Truro want. He added that it is very difficult to have a Call department made up of volunteers but the strategy is being implemented. Selectmen Wisotzky also stated concern over liability.

Mr. Panessiti stated that it is the Finance Committee's responsibility to look at the budget, while the Board of Selectmen has leadership over the Fire Department. He added that they need to work towards a new Chief and command structure and what service the town wants delivered. Mr. Panessiti cautioned that their decision as Board of Selectmen will have to be defended at Town Meeting. He cautioned about waiting until fall to find a new Fire Chief. He questioned regionalization of the Fire Departments with neighboring towns. He spoke of the current conditions of the Fire Department.

Selectmen Jay Coburn stated that there was currently nothing more to report on regionalization.

Selectmen Wisotzky added that the Fire Department has come to the Board of Selectmen quarterly to report on the department. He spoke of the increase of Call members and the excellent guidance of Bob Loomer on providing services to the degree that is necessary for a volunteer basis.

Ms. Palmer spoke of the risk of losing people if there is a lack of benefits. She added that Mr. Loomer will assist with the scheduling and help with the Fire Department budget. She added that they could incorporate a regional model for comparison. It was discussed whether the town wants a paid unionized department. Truro needs to find the right hybrid department that works for the town.

She added that they can consider an interim Chief to assist with the transition with Bob Loomer working on a transition plan. Mr. Panessiti cautioned that this will be challenged by the town. Mr. Panessiti questioned what service can be provided in this budget. Selectmen Wisotzky stated that they went to Annual Town Meeting with the question as to what kind of Fire Department the town would want. Selectmen Wisotzky reiterated that they need to be prepared to discuss this at Town Meeting, and how they are going to manage this budget. Mr. Panessiti warned that people have a reasonable expectation of safety and what that is going to cost. Ms. Brazil spoke to the importance of medical coverage versus fire coverage. She stated that people wanted fulltime station coverage. Mr. Panessiti suggested that the coverage should be in concert with the two neighboring towns.

Ms. Palmer stated that they will provide services that tax payers expect; fire & rescue or medical. There is possibly a model out there that they could build with the neighboring towns. Ms. Palmer spoke of filling the shifts on the department. Mr. Panessiti spoke of the town's people deciding last year which direction they would like the department to go in.

Selectmen Weinstein added that the town's people need to understand what a Call Department is and having people filling shifts, and that medical transport is a service that is the most demanded in this community. He added that moving anything forward people clearly need to understand what this budget covers and what the implications are and to tweak the model accordingly adding that leadership is obligated to explain the service in this transitional period. The Finance Committee is willing to craft a message for Annual Town Meeting as it is imperative to get the message across.

Selectmen Wisotzky stated that they need to broaden the conversation. He spoke of the traditional "romantic" view of Truro that many have. He added if the town is going to require a professional government it is going to cost money. He also noted that there will be a lot of push back from people but there needs to be community support. Mr. Panessiti added that it is a matter of educating people.

Selectmen Wisotzky noted that this is a challenging conversation for many and must not be taken personally. It was stated that there are checks and balances in place.

Ms. Brazil spoke to not making things personal. She cited the increase in regulations and training required for the Fire Department which is true for many departments. She also warned against losing the Chief through attrition as that possibly would turn people off.

Mr. Panessiti added that there is an institutional problem hence the need for a different skill set from the Town Administrator. Selectmen Coburn stated that the entire Board of Selectmen is struggling with this and he spoke of the past practice with previous Selectmen. Selectmen Weinstein spoke of the departments being interconnected and the nature of the community. He added that he felt that the Board of Selectmen is capable in providing clarity to the town's people.

Selectmen Wisotzky spoke of regionalization in which other towns may be in different places and are not ready perhaps to work with other communities; adding, however, that partnership discussions should be taking place now.

Ms. Brazil reflected on regionalization adding that they need to get past opinions and philosophies that people have of all the communities. Selectmen Wisotzky stated that they need to fundamentally

look at who we are as a town and whether Truro wants to have robust services. It was noted to also keep the non-resident tax payers happy with the community and find a common interest between the communities but warned that this level of growth cannot be maintained.

Selectmen Weinstein noted the request for the 5% reduction in budgets and suggested that Truro perhaps becomes the leader of these communities.

Ms. Brazil explained that the budget represents a \$990K increase from last year which is not sustainable. There was a brief discussion as to whether Fire Department breathing apparatuses were in the budget. Ms. Palmer added that a DPW dump truck needs to be replaced.

Mr. Panessiti noted that there are structural deficiencies that we need to address. Ms. Palmer noted that the changes need to be made incrementally.

The last joint Budget Task Force meeting was scheduled for Thursday, February 12th at 8am. Ms. Brazil confirmed that the Board of Health re-inspection fees had not been adjusted.

Ms. Palmer spoke of potential savings related to the Transfer Station, noting that commercial haulers use the Transfer Station but don't have businesses in Truro. She added that they could purchase a temporary scale and start to weigh vehicles at the Transfer Station. Mr. Weinstein added that the SMART/PAYT Committee figures were amazing with reduced fees.

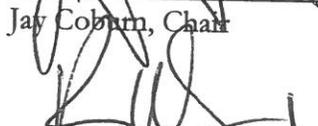
Selectmen Coburn asked for a motion to adjourn at 9:27am. Selectmen Wisotzky so moved. Selectmen Weinstein seconded the motion. So voted unanimously 3-0.

Respectfully submitted, Nicole Tudor, Executive Assistant

Board of Selectmen



Jay Coburn, Chair



Paul Wisotzky, Vice-Chair

Absent

Jan Worthington



Robert Weinstein

Absent

Maureen Burgess