

Budget/Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 25, 2003

Attendance: Rolf Olsen, Chairman Budget/Finance Committee; Coleen Laprise; Wayne Holmquist; Suzanne Brockelbank; David Rowe; Charles Leavitt, Selectman; Christine McClellan, Selectman; Elizabeth Cummings, Finance Director; Nathan White, Road Commissioner; and Don Willard, Town Manager.

1. Call to order. Rolf Olsen called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm at the Town Office.
2. Discussion and approval of proposed Fiscal Year 2004-2005 Budget Development Schedule.

DISCUSSION: It was thought that the Town Reports would not have to be mailed but postcards sent notifying the voters that the Reports could be picked up at certain locations. This would save on postage.

The members present agreed on the schedule. Mr. Olsen asked that the provider letters for the Unclassified articles be asked to include the number of residents partaking of their services in 2003, and the amounts that other towns are giving them. It was decided that the Financial Department go ahead with the letters and that no further review was needed by this body.

3. Discussion of goals, strategies, and financial objectives related to Fiscal Year 2004-2005 Municipal Budget.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Willard said that the last town meeting indicated that the voters want a CPI increase or less, but since there was almost no debate it was hard to know exactly what and where the voters want their services enhanced. Mr. Holmquist felt that the Budget/Finance Committee's charge was to present a budget which will maintain and possibly further the town. If the voters don't want that prospect then they can vote it down. He felt that it was important to have a plan for the future and present a budget which will allow that plan to be fulfilled if the town wants it. He also said that promoting the plan was very important so that the voter understands that they are voting to keep the town to a certain standard. He added that long range planning was imperative. Mrs. Brockelbank concurred that the public had to be informed and felt that the demise of the Roadrunner was a great loss in that it was the largest circulator of town information. Mr. Willard noted that the Roadrunner and to some extent the Suburban News tried to disseminate information last year but it seems the original budget was not what the voter wanted. Mr. Olsen said that the school budget being considered first last year really killed both budgets. He felt that not having discussion kept the voters from deciding what was needed and what they felt could be cut. It also didn't give the boards a chance to hear what the people wanted or didn't want. The Selectmen and School Committee didn't have an opportunity to tell

the voters what was necessary and what the consequences would be not going ahead with those programs. He acknowledged that if the town flat funds the people will not know what they've lost. Mrs. Brockelbank said that the website should be used more. Mr. Leavitt noted that in the budget deliberations last year the School Committee wasn't asked to cut anything prior to town meeting. The municipal budget was adjusted to some degree. The Selectmen, School Committee, and the Budget Committee needs to know what the town wants. He thought the usual budget might have a 3% to 4% increase and then the extraordinary expenditures i.e. road construction and Egypt Road dump testing. Mr. Rowe didn't think that anyone expected the whole budgets would be cut. Without discussion on each subject there was no opportunity to discuss and cut individual items. Mr. Willard explained that after the school had "it's year" in 2002-2003 he had expected that 2003-2004 would be the "town's turn". Instead the school put in a large budget as did the town which showed a sizeable increase from previous years. He felt a source of cooperation and communication was lost. He also noted that at the same time the town meeting passed the use of a large piece of undesignated surplus to lower the mil rate which won't be available this year. Mrs. Cummings added that presently the revenues are at the same level as last year but that level won't be able to do more than bring the total amount of surplus to what is considered prudent to be held by the town. Mr. Willard continued that the revaluation was also sidelined which will make the increase in Raymond's value unavailable for taxation and won't lower the mil rate in the near future. Mr. Holmquist felt they had prepared the budget correctly but that the only mistake had been in "selling" the budget. He thought it was necessary to deliver the budget to the voters saying that it is what is best for the town and its future. Mr. Willard agreed that having debate on items of concern to the voters was imperative. Mrs. McClellan suggested that the Board members all get involved in telling the voters what is necessary to deliver the services wanted and needed.

Mr. Willard noted that the town's major cuts came at the expense of the Public Works budget. He worried that Raymond's roads have been suffering and will continue to until Raymond decides to invest in their improvement. Mr. Olsen asked if the road inventory had been done. Mr. White replied that it was delayed because of the budget cuts. He did say that he has a priority list which he would like to act upon before the roads get any worse. Mr. Holmquist asked if there will be an increase in revenues. Mr. Willard replied there will probably be a decrease from the State. Mrs. Cummings added that presently Raymond is \$87,000 under what it should have in undesignated surplus. There was discussion about who has ownership and responsibility of the roads, State or town. Mr. White said that the three state roads 302, 121, and 85 are supposed to be maintained by the State and the work being done on Route 85 is a partnership between the town and the State as was the Route 302 project. He added that the State would like to have the town take over the responsibility for these roads which it is not willing to do. Mr. Rowe said he would try to find out who was improving a State road in Auburn because he understood that Auburn refused to improve it waiting for the State. He wondered what would force the State to repair their roads.

Mr. Rowe asked if Raymond could prioritize the budget. Mr. Olsen thought they could itemize special cost items i.e. revaluation. He said the State would require Raymond to do it if the State's opinion of the town's value dropped below 70%. At that time Raymond would lose funding as well. It was noted that our State valuation was now 71%. Mr. Leavitt informed them that the town has started the process by hiring a firm to do the revaluation. Mr. Willard said that the balance from the waterline project could help pay for it. Mr. Olsen added that the CIP holds \$68,000 from previous years' funding.

There was discussion about the recent Comprehensive Plan's Public Hearing where the consensus was that the best way to preserve open land in Raymond was to purchase development

rights or the outright purchase of the land rather than have the Rural Zone house lots at a minimum 10 acres.

Mr. Willard thought that a meeting of the Selectmen, School Committee, and Budget Committee to discuss these issues would be advantageous. Mr. Olsen wanted to include the Cumberland County Commissioners as well. Mr. Rowe questioned how long Raymond would stay a town meeting form of government. Mr. Willard thought that already Raymond has signs of needing a charter and councilors but that it is probably doing better than some other towns that still have a town meeting in that a representative number of the residents come to the annual meeting.

Mr. Leavitt introduced the thought that Raymond should not be paying student tuition to private schools. He felt that this was tax money which was going to private schools that don't have to be affected by State/Federal mandates like the "No Child Left Behind" mandate. Mr. Holmquist rebutted saying that there are some residents who own the higher valued homes who came to Raymond because of that "perk".

The meeting was adjourned with the thought that more information and discussion needs to be provided the taxpayers so that they understand what is happening in Raymond.

4. Adjourn. Rolf Olsen adjourned the meeting at 8:47 pm.

NEXT MEETING: January 12, 2004 at 7:00 pm at the Town Office.

Louise H. Lester
Town Clerk