

Town of South Thomaston, ME  
Budget Committee Meeting  
Monday, February 9, 2009

The final session of the 2009 Budget Committee was held February 9, called to order at 6:35 PM by Chairman John Duncan. Present were Selectmen: John Spear, Penelope Alley and Jeffrey Northgraves; Committee Members Chuck Hartman, John Duncan, Becky Geesey, Moira Paddock, Patrick Florance, and Gayle Gallant; Fire Department Representatives Bryan Calderwood and Todd Butler; and guest Dorothy Meriwether.

Minutes from the February 2 meeting were read and approved with one correction.

The fire department (570) was the first topic of the evening. John Spear, Bryan Calderwood, and Todd Butler had prepared charts projecting costs for equipment replacement over the next 40 years, based on a current reserve contribution of \$30,000 yearly for the next 20 years. The two representatives explained in detail the functions of each of the four trucks owned, including a “show and tell” trip to look at the trucks, which the committee members found useful. There was more conversation, centering on the fact that Engine 5 is the first to be replaced, and that the replacement will be built to order and will have greater storage capability and mobility. They recommend replacing this in 2009, since the next replacement scheduled is 2017. The reason for the need for four vehicles is that South Thomaston is a no-hydrant town. There were brief questions about whether town insurance covered private vehicles used by firemen on duty. Discussion on who establishes the lifespan of fire fighting equipment (manufacturers); and which town has responsibility for calls to airport incidents (all three: Rockland, Owls Head, & South Thomaston). Discussion then moved on to “Silvers” – the turn-out gear needed for airport fires. Finally the topic turned to the trailer item in the budget. The firemen vigorously defended the need for a utility trailer, with or without an ATV. When reminded that an ATV acquisition must be approved by the Selectmen, they stated that the grant had already been applied for, without such approval. Furthermore, they said, the trailer was needed regardless.

A short general discussion about whether the budget was being micro-managed by the committee ended with the regretful conclusion on the part of everyone that there is just insufficient income to fund everything needed and wanted. There was unanimous agreement that the fire department had done an admirable job on the budget, staying within the guidelines, and they were commended for that.

The next item on the Agenda was Reserves (690). A total of \$51,000 was cut from this category.

Finally the question of the LD-1 override was discussed, as the budget was running over the tax levy limit, even after the cuts.

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John Spear, outgoing Selectman, pointed out that as we budget better (i.e., closer to reality), we will no longer have the surplus which has been relied upon in past years to reduce the budget, and it is necessary to impart the message that the town can no longer provide services without requiring more taxes to pay for them.

A final vote of the Budget Committee gave approval to all tentative approvals voted in this season's sessions. The Budget Committee recommended not going over the LD-1 limit. The Select Board agreed to utilize \$40,000 from surplus to bring the proposed budget under the LD 1 Tax Levy Limit.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Geesey