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**Town of Henniker
Board of Selectmen Budget Review Meeting
Saturday, November 19, 2016
Henniker Town Hall**

Members Present: Kris Blomback, Chairman; Tia Maria Hooper, Vice Chairman; Scott Osgood, Selectman; Robert French, Selectman; Ben Fortner, Selectman;

Budget Advisory Committee: David Woolpert, Christopher Robert, Peter Flynn, Cheryl Morse, Bruce Trivellini, Michael Cyr

Town Administrator: Christine Trovato

Finance Administrator: Russ Roy

Guests: Ken Levesque, Deb Aucoin, Mark Mitch, Kim Johnson, Bill McGirr, Holly Green, Richard Conde, Tim McComish, Milli Knudsen, Ruth Zax, Marc McMurphy, Jim O'Rourke, Erin Reed, Blithe Reed, Ray Grande

Recording Secretary: Cherry Palmisano

Chairman Blomback opened the meeting at 8:30 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Wastewater – Ken Levesque

The budget has 46 active lines, 5 lines are out of his control relating to wages, 10 lines have increases over \$100, 9 lines are decreased by \$100 or more, and the other lines reflect a change of under \$100. The total increase in the budget is \$12,188 reflecting an increase of 2.1%. The Wastewater unrestricted reserve balance is approximately \$300,000. They are still billing off units, not water meters. The actual increase to the user is \$11.84 per year, or \$5.92 per billing cycle. The first water meter bills will come out in July, then Wastewater will follow. The capital reserve has been funded with \$25,000 per year for many years. In April, Chairman Blomback asked that the capital reserve fund be increased to \$50,000. Ken said that he budgets for what he thinks he is going to need and anything that remains at the end of the year goes into the reserve fund. The more money in the reserve fund the better off they will be. They are still waiting for a discharge permit and they could get new limitations when the permit is renewed, which could mean that significant improvements to the plant may be needed. Ken would like the capital reserve increased to \$35,000. Debt service for next year is \$47,000 and the question was asked if it would make sense to pay down the debt. Ken said that they need to keep money in the capital reserve for unexpected maintenance.

Solid Waste – Bill McGirr

Unlike past years, this budget has an increase. The increase of \$2,000 in full time wages is to cover the maxed out sick time of Mr. McGirr and Mark Boisvert. Bill would like to request a significant increase in part time wages, because the current staffing is not adequate to keep up with the workload demand. He could use more hours than he is asking for, but would like to start out there. Vehicle repair has an increase request of \$1,000 because the older trash trailer is in

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need of brakes. There is an equipment repair in the budget this year, but these funds will not be needed next year. He is looking to add approximately 11 hours of part-time hours per week. Disposal costs of items such as tvs, freon, and computers have increased. They currently charge \$7 to residents to dispose, but the towns cost to dispose has approximately doubled. Bill will put together a list of increased fees. Their revenue comes from Northeast Resource Recovery and the town gets a check quarterly. Some recycling does not bring in much revenue, but helps reduce the cost of disposing through the regular cycle. They crush their own glass and use it as construction aggregate. All of the commercial trash in town is no longer the responsibility of the Town of Henniker.

Town Clerk / Tax Collector – Kim Johnson

Ms. Johnson noted the various operations conducted in the Town Clerk/Tax Collectors office. She is asking that the Deputy Clerk's position become full-time. The office continues to get busier and busier and there is a need to have some undistracted time because there are duties that get pushed aside because of the interruptions at the window with assisting residents, who are their first priority.

Currently the Assessing Technician splits her time equally between Assessing and the Town Clerk's office. When this change occurred it took 5 hours of office assistance away from the Town Clerk's Office.

Vice Chairwoman Hooper mentioned the current Deputy Tax Collector not receiving a raise in several years. Town Administrator Trovato explained that was fixed last year to increase her to the same labor grade as the office assistant. Vice Chairwoman Hooper asked about increasing her rate and making her full-time.

Town Administrator Trovato stated that there are employees that have been topped out for several years and she would like to request a job comparison and compensation analysis be done. All administrative staff is on grade 13.

Conservation Commission – Holly Green and Mark Mitch

The Conservation Commission is presenting the same budget as last year. Public awareness may include putting up conservation area signs and could cover bringing in a speaker on a conservation topic. Mark noted that annually they collect water samples and what does not get spent for lake monitoring is spent on taking water samples of streams to stay ahead of issues. Holly still has some training receipts to be submitted and will use up the training budget. The budget requested has covered their expenses. The Current Use Fund receives 50% of the annual land use change tax collected. The fund currently has a balance of \$40,803 and the 2016 year to date revenue to this fund is \$3,850. The fund is utilized to pay for a conservation easement or purchasing conservation land. The fund is restricted to conservation and continues to roll over. Chairman Blomback mentioned the possibility of the Conservation Commission developing trail heads, since the trail maps were done by the Trails Committee, which the Conservation Commission will discuss at their next meeting.

Emergency Management – Tia Hooper

Tia reported that there is no increase. The wages line is a stipend. The Emergency Operations Plan is currently being worked. There are statutory requirements to keep the plans updated every 5 years. If granted FEMA all hours, except those of full time employees, are reimbursed.

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Cemeteries – Tim McComish

There is a private association for the Old Concord Road cemeteries, which hires a contractor to maintain these cemeteries. The five town cemeteries are funded by the town. Tim McComish explained that they operate on the sale of lots and income from investments. He has solicited estimates from three professional tree removal companies and is requesting \$12,000 for tree removal. This work will require going on NEC property, which he has requested before and been allowed to do. There is a three year contract for grounds maintenance. Mr. McComish has donated his time and equipment to the town cemeteries and the town will produce a letter for him to be reimbursed on his taxes for his donation.

Community Concerts – Ruth Zax

The Concert Committee is requesting a \$460 increase. The budget for this committee was cut 8 years ago and they are still not back to their original budget request. Concert attendance has steadily increased and high quality performers have been brought to town. The concerts instill good community and business revenues increase as well. Would like to access the funds they have collected through donations to bring in a traditional band. The possibility of food vendors at the 4th of July concert was discussed. The committee would like to discontinue the use of the heavy, cumbersome donation box and are proposing that people just donate in their basket on their table. The only increase they are requesting is to be able to pay their bands a little more. Vice Chairman Hooper mentioned go fund me pages and Ruth noted that would be the Town's responsibility, not the committees.

Community Services – Chris Trovato

White Birch, Marc McMurphy, Executive Director, noted that their request has been \$50,000 for the last 10 years, but their expenses have increased and they are increasing their requested amount to \$75,000. They know they will spend at least \$73,000 on senior programming in 2017 and they are catering to a group of people who are on a strict income. Mr. McMurphy is expecting to fall \$70,000 short in fundraising. Chairman Blomback advocated for this request. They try to do as much business in town as they can. Their budget is \$1.238million. White Birch has loaned their bus out to other community needs and are open to sharing. This request is for the senior program, not for the child care program. White Birch does not own the building, Jon and Lucia Evans own that building and White Birch pays them \$60,000 a year for rent.

Community Action Program (CAP), Erin Reed, Area Center Director of CAP told the Board that CAP has not asked for an increase in 10 years from any of the towns. Their operating budget is \$130,000 with the federal share only being \$37,000. Last they year asked for an increase from \$8,000 to \$12,000. Henniker and Warner receive the most amount of services in the year. Last year the fuel need was down due to unseasonably warm temperatures. They are requesting \$12,000. If there is a family in need they work closely with welfare personnel in Henniker and do outreach programs as well. The electric assistance program is state funded and those who qualify are income based. Fuel assistance is CAPs largest expenditure. Most other towns are paying more than their share, while Henniker is not up to their fair share. Fuel assistance is a one-time deal for applicants.

Henniker Athletic Committee – Chris Woodbury

This budget has been flat funded for the past 5 years. There is \$59,000 in the Athletic Fund, which comes from registration fees and fundraising.

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Town Offices / Executive – Chris Trovato

The Assessing Technician is reflected 50% in Assessing and 50% in the Town Clerk's Office and reflects a difference in moving benefits for that position. Russ will revisit the breakdown. Blomback would like breakdown on wages and benefits for each position. Town Administrator Trovato told the Board that they have tried to keep everything in the building static with the resources that they have, but are struggling to keep up. Vice Chairwoman Hooper mentioned that the Assessing Technician has a lot of work transactions that are increasing. Town Administrator Trovato explained that we do a lot in town with very few people and the teamwork is phenomenal in this office, as well as cross training, and willingness to help each other and residents.

The health insurance is a 4.87% gross increase and is a known rate for the next 18 months. The employee contribution is 8% with deductibles. The gross cost for a family plan is \$26,700, net is \$24,500. The gross cost for a 2-person plan is \$19,776, net is \$18,194. The gross cost for a single plan is \$9,888, net is \$9,097.

Selectman Osgood asked about the funds to buy a new server. Russ explained that they will hire a service to maintain the server and assist with server related problems. The Town Hall's current server is on borrowed time. Selectman Fortner asked about the cost impact of Russ taking time away from Finance and how much relief it would be for the Finance Director position to not be burdened with the server. Russ said it would be enormous and noted that currently he backs up nightly and explained his process. Mr. Trivellini mentioned Russ backing up data and taking data off premise. Selectman Fortner noted that discussion would be off topic and should be an agenda item. Russ noted that no personal information is retained.

Code – Chris Trovato

Additional funds were added to the wage line, which is currently over budget. The town currently does not have a building inspector. There are some large projects in the pipe line that will utilize this position. It was noted that the budget being presented reflected current staffing and this budget can't be determined until staffing is in place.

The Budget Advisory Committee will present their recommendations to the Board of Selectmen for them to review a week before their January 3rd meeting.

Kris Blomback moved, Christopher Robert seconded to adjourn at 11:45 a.m.