

Approved 05/10/07

Exeter Fire District

(Budget Hearing - February 22, 2007)

Call to Order

Chairman Peter Lacouture called the February 22, 2007 budget hearing to order at 7:04pm. Present were commissioners Vergano, Walker, Lacouture, Wilbur, Gallagher and Nievera. District treasurer, Ms. Caito was also present. There were 16 members of the public in attendance.

Budget Hearing

Mr. Lacouture gave a short overview of the budget along with an explanation of the three charter amendments that will be introduced at the annual meeting in April. He noted that two of the amendments were requested from members at previous meetings and the third through several conversations at the tax office.

Mr. Wilbur gave a brief explanation of the need for, and likely use of, a reserve fund for the district. Mr. Wilbur noted that a fund of this type is necessary because while the collection rate may approach 100%, it will never reach that amount.

Ms. Vergano explained the administrative budget as developed by Ms. Caito and herself. She noted the decrease in several categories

and explained the rationale for the decrease in the appropriate line items. The most prevalent of these decreases were the ISO consultant fee, which is yet to be expended from last year, and the completion of our licensee payment for the s/w used to track tax payments in the tax office.

Joe Conroy (Treasurer, Station #1) was available to answer any questions from the body. He explained his rationale for not disclosing the interest which is earned and retained within the accounts rather than showing it on an income line as Ms. Vergano has requested. Mr. Conroy believes that accounting for his interest income on a specific line will distort the final budget figure and cause more confusion.

Jackie Henderson (Treasurer, Station #2) was on hand to explain the request made by Station #2. She gave a brief overview of her budget stating that the increase over last year's request was simply the cost of doing business. There were no inquiries as to her request.

Tom Caito represented the Exeter Rescue Corps. There were no questions for the Rescue Chief.

Dennis Colacone (Treasurer, Dispatch Corp.) cited that his major increase was due to the addition of an employee, who had been previously covered under his spouse's plan, to the health care program.

Ms. Vergano asked why the newly drafted uniform budget form was not being utilized by all companies in the same manner. She noted Station #1's objection to including interest income and Station #2's opposition to listing their truck loan as such rather than as an expense account used to purchase trucks. She also stated her

frustration that although all of the board members supported and approved the use of new budget form, she received no support from other members to ensure full disclosure and uniformity by all of the organizations. Mr. Conroy reiterated his feelings of budgetary distortion and the appearance of excess. Ms. Vergano stated that any rationale to withhold or manipulate numbers in order to not negatively impact taxpayer perception was not, in her opinion, good reasoning to justify preventing full disclosure to the taxpayers. Carla Benoist commented that everything should be accounted for and explained to the taxpayer. She also noted that the public safety departments have, for many years, been considered a “good ole boy” network by many. And that the companies should not look at the budget process as a public relations campaign. Ms. Vergano asked the board if the budgets would be left as is with all companies making their own decision on how to use it, as previously discussed. Mr. Lacouture suggested that perhaps the companies might revisit the issue.

Public Comment and Questions

There were no additional questions or comments from the public.

This closed the budget hearing.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Nievera, Clerk

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