

Budget Hearing
February 4, 2015, 6:00 p.m.
Fuller Town Hall

Selectmen Present: Rheaume, Ladd and Brooks.

Public Present: See Attached Sheet

Robin called the meeting to order at 6 pm.

The Meeting was started with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Robin – I think I would like to start with Article 3 since Chief Platt is here and then he won't need sit through out other business. All of the Selectmen were in agreement.

The Selectmen started with discussion about Warrant Article 3 which deals with the Police Department.

Robin read Warrant Article 3:

Article 3. To see how the Town wants to go forward regarding the Police Department. This is advisory only to determine the will of the people; is not necessarily binding upon the selectmen.

A. To see if the Town will vote to continue with part-time police department with the current proposed budget of \$39,825. (Majority ballot vote)

B. To see if the Town will vote to disband town part-time police department and contract with Northumberland for police services. Contract amount for first year \$41,600. The operating budget will increase by \$1,775 if article 3 B passes. (Majority ballot vote)

C. To see if the Town will vote to disband town part-time police department and rely on State Police services as needed for criminal calls (doesn't include civil matters or animals) the rate of \$70 per hour, costs not to exceed current proposed budget of \$39,825. (Majority ballot vote)

D. To see if the Town will vote to disband town part-time police department entirely. The operating budget will be decreased by \$30,000 if article 3 D passes. (Majority ballot vote)

Robin opened the meeting for discussion of this Article.

Vicki DeLalla – Would we lose coverage of snowmobiles and ATV's if we disband the PD in town?
The Selectmen – Yes, we would.

Suzanne Goulet – Do you have ATV coverage in Groveton?

Chief Platt – No, we don't.

Tim – If we contract with Northumberland that would be a discussion that Chief Platt would have to address with us.

Tim – Can I just interject?

Robin – Yes.

Tim – I guess tonight if Chief Platt and Officer Hall would like to present but I guess the purpose is that if you have questions we want to write them down and if we don't have the answers tonight we can find those answers in preparation for Town Meeting by asking the appropriate people.

Mike Lynch – What is the purpose of Contracting with Groveton?

Robin - With Stewarts Resignation, we are going to try to use the same operating budget, equipment upgrades, etc. We are looking at options to see what we have and if we could save. The Board will be making a decision with all options on the table.

Beverly Kettle – Will this be on a ballot?

Suzanne Goulet – There will be a Ballot Vote up until the end of Town Meeting.

Tim Brooks – Suzanne and Robin worked with the State on this.

Suzanne – When we get to Article 15 the voting on Article 3 will stop, the votes will be counted and the decision will be given to the people present.

Tim – The Board will take into consideration when they make their decision.

Suzanne – It was Article 13 but it was moved to Article 3 to give the Town's people more time to vote.

Robin – It will be up to the Moderator on how long people can speak.

Chief Marcel Platt – If Town Meeting is in the daytime I probably will be able to attend.

Mike – Why did you have the meeting at the Hollow?

Suzanne – That was to get an idea of what the people wanted in order to word the Warrant Article but nothing was cut and dry.

Tim – To get different perspectives.

Vicki – The results at the end will say Advisory Only?

Tim – This comes at the advice of Town Council. We will bring this up at Town Meeting.

Wayne Hall, Officer In Charge – Let Chief Platt go first.

Robin – Chief Platt what would you respond to? The list on the agreement looks like something normally done.

Chief Platt - Verbiage came from similar towns. Lt. Landry was instrumental in writing this agreement.

Robin – So, \$41,000.00 could go down?

Chief Platt – It could change down the road.

Robin – Nights and weekends?

Chief Platt – We are looking at 4-6 hrs. consisting of 2 active patrols.

Tim – We want Town Roads patrolled more and less patrol on Rt. 3.

Chief Platt – We would find out what issues there are and how to know where we need to be.

Mike – How many Officers usually patrol every day?

Chief Platt – We would have 1 or 2. We could send someone out and someone else would be called in to cover Groveton. The town will never be left hanging.

Tim – Mutual Aid.

Robin - So, if there was no PD in Stratford, Groveton could be called?

Chief Platt – Someone would respond per RSA (Mutual Aid).

Robin – If the Board has issues with what town needs and not getting from you and is not part of the contract, who is in charge of you?

Tim – If we contract with Groveton and we have concerns or we are dissatisfied do we take it up with you or your Selectmen?

Chief Platt – Start with me and if you are still unsatisfied then you go to my Selectmen.

Tim – According to RSA 105:1 says that a part-time PD can have a Chief if the town's people want one. It also

gives the Selectmen authority to control the PD.

Chief Platt – We would deal with issues depending on time of day. We would patrol at troubled times if that

is what you want.

Hall – Tim I think you were too quick to assume and I felt attacked by you. Chief Platt, do you have people

on from 2 am to 7 am?

Chief Platt – No coverage between those times.

Hall- Minimal call out Fee?

Chief Platt – Yes, 3 hours minimum.

Hall – Would you be using our equipment, fuel, Cruiser?

Chief Platt – Yes we would be using the Cruiser and the fuel would be at the cost of the town.

Hall – Could you clarify that, if you use Stratford's equipment.

Chief Platt – My understanding.

Robin – If the town's PD disbands and the town sells the PD equipment?

Chief Platt – You will still have service.

Lorraine Harding – What about Insurance on the Cruiser?

Chief Platt – I don't have an answer.

Robin – Proposal would need to be rewritten to add expenses.

Tim – The contract was written under the impression to keep the Cruiser. If we contract with you and sell the

cruiser this contract would change?

Chief Platt – Yes.

Tim – It would either increase the dollar amount or decrease the hours you would patrol?

Chief Platt – Yes.

Mike – How many hours can we expect with no call-outs?

Chief Platt – 20 hrs. with no call-outs.

Mike – Wayne's hours?

Hall – 35 to 40 hrs. per week.

Larry – Now the ATV what can we do with that? Is that something that Groveton will do or not?

Chief Platt - That would be above and beyond. If someone goes out now they use their own since Groveton PD

does not have one.

Tim – Wayne do you use the ATV?

Hall – Yes, in the summer. Not for a month the Trails are closed. I haven't used it much since I was under the

impression that there was no money left but I found out that there is \$800.00 left.

Vicki – Does the Grant cover expenses for patrolling?

Hall – If we get another Grant it will.

Tim – We can't rely on a Grant.

Hall – After the Grant is gone we would use Regular Pay.

Chief Platt – Wayne, how many calls did you have in 2014?

Hall – Between State and Town there were over 300 and that is going up.

Chief Platt – The Call to Service is anything that an Officer does. There were 3,000 per year for Groveton.

Service calls are going up too.

Tim – RSA, The Board of Selectmen oversees the PD in Groveton. The Selectmen tell them to do something if

not done the Board reprimands him.

Robin – The last Chief had total control.

Chief Platt – My town Board has control. For a Police Chief to be fired they would need a cause and it would

need to go to court.

Tim and Robin - We have learned.

Chief Platt – RSA doesn't say that a Police Chief is untouchable.

Lorraine – Save \$30,000.00?

Robin – From January to March we estimated \$9,000.00 would be used and there would be \$30,000.00 left over

if there is no PD.

Beverly – Let's see what Wayne has to say.

Hall – First – As far as the Budget is concerned I can't go over \$39,000.00. So, 20 hrs. a week court time from

Groveton. 35 to 40 hrs. a week by me. I didn't work a whole lot last year. I need to watch the budget and

how many hours I can work.

Robin – If you have 35 – 40 hrs. at current wage equals \$29,000.00 so that leaves \$10,000.00 left for everything

else.

Hall - I just found out that \$2,000.00 now has to go to Dispatch, which is new this year.

Robin - Your hrs. are not just patrol. They include court, 13 hundred hrs. a year.

Hall – Doing average could be less depending situation.

Mike – So, Chief Platt comes for 1 hr. and gets paid for 3 hrs.?

Vicki – 3 hrs. for a call out?

Mike – We need to make him stay out for 3 hrs.

Chief Platt – To get the numbers to work with and a dollar amount, equipment and Officers pay would be used

to offset Groveton's Budget.

Vicki – When I hear 40 hrs., how can it be part-time? I think full-time when I hear 40 hrs.

Hall – Only funding part-time PD. The people voted for a part-time PD.

Tim – 40 hrs. is 2 Officers part-time.

Hall – State troopers still doing calls.

Robin – Town wants part-time, 2 people at 40 hrs. is full-time.

Tim – Once the budget is spent there is no more PD.

Hall – Selectmen dictate contract with town on hrs.

Selectmen – Exactly what we want.

Lorraine – We have been under the assumption that 40 hrs. and that's not just sitting in the cruiser.

The Budget

is \$39,000.00 and when that is gone there is no more PD. We can't afford half that service for more money

and less hours. In the future maybe we will need to trade in the cruiser if it becomes an issue. It will be our

issue not matter which way we go.

Hall – What about the PD Capital Reserve and why was that discontinued?

Tim – The town was in a hardship and we bought the cruiser and then we didn't put any money back in.

Robin – Any questions? I need to find out about Insurance and Workmen's Comp. and if Groveton's Insurance

cost will be passed on the Stratford.

Tim – If the Town goes with Groveton, if no PD, if cruiser would just sit there for a whole year?

Hall - The Warrant Article says Advisory Only By Majority. The Selectmen can still over-ride the vote but will

likely go with what is in the best interest of the Town.

Lorraine – Mr. Ladd said a lot of domestic and no animals?

Robin – No animal complaints.

Platt – You could have an Article about selling the cruiser if there is no PD or amend the Article.

Tim – The Selectmen could dispose of the Cruiser – not financially but the Selectmen have the authorization.

We would need to weigh the Pro's and Con's.

Robin – We don't want a wishy washy agreement.

Tim – Either we do it or we don't.

Hall – Everything in the PD is paid for.

Mike – Doesn't make any sense to have similar budget for less coverage.

Lorraine - Isn't Contracting a process?

Robin – Contract will be written, take applications, etc.

Lorraine – Request to the State?

Selectmen – No.

Tim – Exercise their rights.

Chuck – Who qualifies people to decide?

Tim – Three Selectmen, consider Emergency Management, etc. Create a Hiring Committee. Our role is to hear

from them before decision.

Charles Goulet – What about the Sheriff's Department?

Chief Platt – The are mainly used to transport prisoners to and from Prison (Civil Service) I don't really know and I'm

not aware of them doing patrols.

Robin – I know in Vermont they are of no service to the towns.

Chief Platt – I know that there is no one in Coos County that will. They can stop and help but they do not go out

on calls.

Tim – I would like to entertain the thought, address each Article and Intent. We will stop at Article 15. Is

everyone okay with not reading every Article?

Everyone said yes.

Robin - To the inhabitants of the Town of Stratford in the County of Coos qualified to vote in Town affairs: You are hereby notified to meet at Fuller Town Hall on Tuesday, March 11, 2014, at 10:00 a.m. to act on Articles 1 through 15. The polls open at 10:00 am and close at 7:00 pm.

Article 1. To choose by non-partisan ballot the following Officers: 1 Selectman (3 years); 1 Library Trustee (3 years); 1 Cemetery Trustee (3 years); 1 Cemetery Trustee (2 years); 1 Cemetery Trustee (1 year); 1 Trustee of Trust Funds (3 years); and 1 Town Auditor (1 year)

Article 2. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$722,743** for the operating budget and, if not, to see what sum the Town will raise and appropriate to defray Town expenses for the ensuing year. This article does not include the cost of any other warrant article.

Article 3. To see how the Town wants to go forward regarding the Police Department. This is advisory only to determine the will of the people; is not necessarily binding upon the selectmen.

A. To see if the Town will vote to continue with part-time police department with the current proposed budget of \$39,825. (Majority ballot vote)

B. To see if the Town will vote to disband town part-time police department and contract with Northumberland for police services. Contract amount for first year \$41,600. The operating budget will increase by \$1,775 if article 3 B passes. (Majority ballot vote)

C. To see if the Town will vote to disband town part-time police department and rely on State Police services as needed for criminal calls (doesn't include civil matters or animals) the rate of \$70 per hour, costs not to exceed current proposed budget of \$39,825. (Majority ballot vote)

D. To see if the Town will vote to disband town part-time police department entirely. The operating budget will be decreased by \$30,000 if article 3 D passes. (Majority ballot vote)

Article 4. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$9,325 for ambulance services to be provided to the municipality by the Town of Northumberland and to authorize the withdrawal of \$3,000 from the Ambulance Capital Reserve Fund; \$6,325 to be raised by taxation and to further authorize the Board of Selectmen to contract with the Town of Northumberland for such services. (Board Recommends)

Article 5. To see if the town will vote to discontinue the Ambulance Capital Reserve created in 1993. Said funds, with accumulated interest to date of withdrawal, are to be transferred to the municipality's general fund. (Majority vote required)

Article 6. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$4,512** to be added to the previously established Fire Department Expendable Trust Fund, with the full amount to come from the undesignated fund balance. (Board Recommends)

Article 7. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$25,000** to be added to the previously established Highway and Bridges Capital Reserve Fund. (Board Recommends)

Article 8. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$10,000** to be added to the previously established Fire Department Capital Reserve Fund and to further see if the town will vote to name the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend. (Board Recommends)

Article 9. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$1,000** to be added to the previously established Recycling Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of a baler and compactor, to appoint the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend from said fund. This sum to come from fund balance (surplus) and no amount to be raised by taxation. (Board Recommends)

Article 10. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$500** to be added to the previously established 250th Celebration Expendable Trust Fund for the purpose of funding the 250th anniversary celebration to be held in 2023 and further to name the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend. (Board Recommends)

Article 11. To see if the town will vote to establish a Government Buildings Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund per RSA 31:19-a, for the maintenance and upkeep of town buildings, with \$30,000 to come from the unassigned fund balance. The funds represent the amount of monies collected from the sale of tax deeded and town properties sold; further name the selectmen as agents to expend from the fund. (Board Recommends)

Article 12. The annual March Town Meeting has been scheduled for 10:00 AM for several years. Some Stratford voters feel that Town Meeting should be returned to 7:00 PM, which is comparable to several other towns in the area. Many Stratford voters are unable to attend Town Meeting held during the day due to work obligations. This change in time would allow more Stratford voters the opportunity to attend Town Meeting, voice their opinions, and vote on issues that affect the community's wellbeing. In order to advance this petition as a warrant article at this year's Town Meeting, at least 10 registered voters of the Town of Stratford must sign it. Please sign

below to help Stratford voters who have been excluded have a voice at future Town Meetings.

(Insert as petition)

Article 13. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$20,000** to repair the Town Garage. \$15,000 to come from a grant if received; \$5,000 to be raised by taxation.

Article 14. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$6,200** in donations to the following groups: \$100, Northwoods Home Health & Hospice; \$100, Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital; \$100, Northern Human Services; \$1,600, Tri-County CAP (fuel assistance); \$2,900, Tri-County CAP Senior Meals (meals on wheels); \$100, Tri-County CAP North Country Transit (bus service); \$100, Child Advocacy Center of Coos County; \$100, CASA; \$100, Lancaster Community Cupboard; \$1,000, Helping Hands.

Article 15. To transact any other business that may legally come before said meeting and to hear reports from any agents or committees heretofore chosen.

Selectmen - Article 9 pertaining to the Bailer and Compactor at the Recycle Center, the Selectmen asked

Charles Goulet if that would need to be increased and Charles said next year.

Brooks/Ladd (3/0 approved) motion to adjourn at 7:50 pm.

Recorded by B. Ladd