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**Town of Grantham – Board of Selectmen
Public Budget Hearing Minutes
Wednesday, February 5, 2014**

The budget hearing was called to order at 5:00pm on February 5, 2014 by Chairman Warren Kimball. The meeting was held in the Grantham Town Building, Lower Level at 300 Route 10 South, Grantham, New Hampshire.

Present were: Chairman Warren Kimball; Selectman Constance Jones; Selectman Ken Story; Town Administrator Melissa White; Police Chief Walter Madore; Fire Chief Jay Fountain; Transfer Station Supervisor Chris Scott; Athletics Director Marsha Googins; John Parsons; Bob Lewis; Lorie McClory; Peter James; Judy King; Emergency Management Director David Beckley

Public Hearing

Attendees were given copies of the 2014-2015 proposed budget and warrant articles. Administrator White informed the business portion of Town Meeting will be at 5pm on March 11, 2014 and that votes for Executive Councilor and Warrant Article 1 will be by ballots at the polls which shall be open from 8am – 7pm that day.

Chairman Kimball commended Administrator White and all the Department Heads for working together on the budget and keeping the increases to a minimum.

Administrator White stated:

- Current budget (FY2014) is \$3,024,567
- Proposed budget (FY2015) is \$3,097,916
- Total proposed increase of \$73,349
- Tax rate impact: less than 15 cents/\$1,000 of assessed property value

ARTICLE 1 – Election of Officers

To choose by ballot and major vote for the ensuing years as enumerated:

Selectman	3years
Planning Board	3 years
Trustee of Trust Funds	2 years
Cemetery Trustee	3 years
Cemetery Trustee	1 year
Trustee of Dunbar Free Library	3 years

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Trustee of Dunbar Free Library	2 years
Treasurer	3 years
Supervisor of the Checklist	6 years
Town Moderator	2 years

No public comment on this article.

ARTICLE 2 – General Government

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one million one hundred twenty eight thousand eight hundred eighty three dollars (**\$1,128,883.00**) to defray the cost of **General Government** operations.

IS/IS NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
(Majority vote required)

Account Title	Budget 2013/2014	Proposed 2014/2015
Selectmen’s Office	\$193,910	\$200,700
Town Clerk/Tax Collector	\$110,394	\$112,706
Supervisors of the Checklist	\$2,560	\$6,200
Financial Administration	\$35,700	\$36,700
Tax Maps/Assessing	\$40,000	\$41,000
Legal	\$15,000	\$20,000
Personnel Administration	\$534,720	\$536,100
Planning Board	\$7,750	\$7,750
Zoning Board of Adjustment	\$2,050	\$2,175
General Government Buildings	\$113,150	\$114,100
Cemeteries	\$18,245	\$18,100
Insurance	\$28,000	\$29,492
Regional Associations	\$3,794	\$3,860
TOTAL	\$1,105,273	\$1,128,883

Administrator White stated the increase to the Personnel Administration line was minimized by making slight changes to the health insurance plan. Other increases: Legal by \$5,000; Supervisors of the Checklist have three elections in the upcoming budget (Primary Election, General Election and Town Meeting); Salary increases of 3%.

Peter James asked why the \$5,000 increase in the Legal line. White stated the Fairpoint tax appeal is still ongoing as well as other pending legal matters. James asked if Grantham was collaborating with other towns or fighting the appeal alone. White stated our Counsel is representing 43 towns in this matter.

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ARTICLE 3 – Public Safety

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of five hundred eighty-one thousand one hundred nine dollars (**\$581,109.00**) to defray the cost of **Public Safety** operations.

IS/IS NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

(Majority vote required)

Account Title	Budget 2013/2014	Proposed 2014/2015
Police Department	\$366,101	\$370,680
EMS (FAST) Squad	\$65,600	\$69,450
Fire Department	\$123,084	\$119,504
Forest Fire	\$375	\$375
Building Inspection	\$6,000	\$8,000
Emergency Management	\$13,850	\$13,100
TOTAL	\$575,010	\$581,109

Administrator White stated the major increases in Article 3 were: Police – Vehicle fuel by \$3,000; FAST Squad – Dispatch fees by \$1,000; FAST Squad – Medical supplies by \$1,800.

Peter James asked if the Police Department was fully staffed. Administrator White said yes.

ARTICLE 4 – Public Works

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of seven hundred twenty thousand three hundred twelve dollars (**\$720,312.00**) to defray the cost of **Public Works** operation.

IS/IS NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

(Majority vote required)

Account Title	Budget 2013/2014	Proposed 2014/2015
Highway Administration	\$194,272	\$216,700
Highway Maintenance	\$151,200	\$156,200
Street Lights	\$5,000	\$5,000
Transfer Station	\$125,958	\$130,412
Waste Disposal	\$195,000	\$204,000
Landfill Monitoring	\$8,000	\$8,000
TOTAL	\$679,430	\$720,312

Administrator White stated the major increases in Article 4 were: Highway – conduct an inventory of culverts: \$9,500; Highway – vehicle fuel and repairs increased by \$3,000; Highway – winter sand increased by \$5,000; Transfer Station – Household Hazardous Waste Day - \$9,000 (scheduled for the summer of 2014).

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Peter James asked how miles of road the Town maintains. Selectman Jones said approximately 28.

James said the recently purchased loader at the Transfer Station had some rust around the wheels and asked if it was going to be taken care of before it becomes a bigger problem. Chairman Kimball said the loader just arrived a few weeks ago and that the rust issue will be mitigated soon.

ARTICLE 5 – Highway Department Plow Truck

To see if the town will vote to authorize the Selectmen to enter into a five-year, \$162,000 lease/purchase agreement for the purpose of leasing to purchase a new Highway Plow Truck, and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$44,031 for the first year’s payment for that purpose, with an estimated \$12,000 to come from trade-in; the remainder to come from taxation. This agreement contains an escape clause.

IS/IS NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
(Majority vote required)

Administrator White stated the Plow Truck to be replaced is a 2003. Peter James asked if the plow trucks are the same age. White said no; that the other plow truck is a 2010.

Rita Friedman asked if money from the Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) would be used for this article. White said that state law does not allow the use of Capital Reserve Fund monies for items that are in a lease agreement. Chairman Kimball explained that the money in the CRF has to be used to purchase the equipment and that the final lease payment could come from the CRF because at that time the town would own it.

Peter James asked what the interest rate was going to be. White said the interest rate is estimated to be 2.86%.

ARTICLE 6 – Health and Welfare

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of thirty-six thousand six hundred seventy dollars (**\$36,670.00**) to defray the cost of **Health and Welfare** operations.

IS/IS NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
(Majority vote required)

Account Title	Budget 2013/2014	Proposed 2014/2015
Boarding Animals	\$600	\$700
Community Services	\$15,970	\$15,970
Town General Assistance	\$20,000	\$20,000
TOTAL	\$36,570	\$36,670

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Community Agencies:	Budget 2013/2014	Proposed 2014/2015
Lake Sunapee VNA	\$8,000	\$8,000
Sullivan County Nutrition Services	\$200	\$200
Kearsarge Area COA	\$3,000	\$3,000
Southwestern Community Services	\$850	\$850
West Central Services	\$2,420	\$2,420
Mascoma Valley Health Initiative	\$1,500	\$1,000
Community Alliance of Human Services	0	\$500
Total	\$15,970	\$15,970

No public comment on Article 6.

ARTICLE 7 – Culture and Recreation

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of two hundred fifty-eight thousand five hundred twenty six dollars (**\$258,526.00**) for **Culture and Recreation**.

IS/IS NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

(Majority vote required)

Account Title	Budget 2013/2014	Proposed 2014/2015
Recreation	\$49,755	\$43,757
Dunbar Free Library	\$182,746	\$186,769
Activities	\$29,983	\$27,000
Archives	\$2,500	\$1,000
TOTAL	\$264,984	\$258,526

No public comment on Article 7.

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ARTICLE 8 – Conservation, Bond Notes, Interest and Tax Anticipation Note Interest

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of ninety-six thousand four hundred dollars (**\$96,400.00**) for **Conservation, Bond Notes, Interest and Tax Anticipation Note Interest**.

IS/IS NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

(Majority vote required)

Account Title	Budget 2013/2014	Proposed 2014/2015
Conservation Commission	\$2,000	\$2,100
Bond Payment	\$60,000	\$60,000
Bond Interest	\$34,200	\$34,200
Tax Anticipation Notes Interest	\$100	\$100
TOTAL	\$96,300	\$96,400

Peter James asked if the bond payment was on Town Hall. White said yes. Selectman Story asked how many years the bond was for. White answered 20 years.

ARTICLE 9 – Capital Reserve Funds

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred ninety-six thousand dollars (**\$196,000.00**) to be placed in previously established **Capital Reserve Funds**.

IS/IS NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

(Majority vote required)

Account Title	Budget 2013/2014	Proposed 2014/2015
Fire Department Capital Reserve	\$25,000	\$25,000
Highway Equip Capital Reserve	\$40,000	\$50,000
Town Office Equip Capital Reserve	\$1,000	\$1,000
Transfer Station Capital Reserve	\$5,000	\$10,000
Police Vehicle Capital Reserve	\$10,000	\$0
Revaluation	\$30,000	\$45,000
Town Buildings	\$5,000	\$5,000
Bridge Replacement Capital Reserve	\$50,000	\$50,000
Library Building Repair Capital Reserve	\$10,000	\$10,000
TOTAL	\$176,000.00	\$196,000.00

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Peter James asked if Article 9 could be amended at Town Meeting. White said yes. James asked if monies could be withdrawn from the Capital Reserve Fund at Town Meeting. White asked James if he was talking about Article 9 – Capital Reserve Funds or the Article 5 – Highway Plow Truck. James said Highway Plow Truck. White reiterated that state law does not allow Capital Reserve Fund monies to be used for vehicles or equipment being leased; only when the final payment is made and the Town owns the vehicle or piece of equipment.

Referring to Article 5 – Highway Plow Truck, James asked if an amendment could be brought to Town Meeting to purchase the Highway Plow Truck out right. Selectman Jones said she was unsure because that would change the amount of the appropriation to be over \$100,000. Jones reviewed the future equipment needs and estimated costs of the Highway Department as recommended by the CIP Committee in 2012:

- 2014: Plow Truck - \$180,000
- 2016: 1-Ton Truck - \$70,000
- 2017: Bucket Loader - \$80,000

Jones said that equipment needing to be replaced in the near future needs to be considered.

Jones stated that the CIP Committee and others have urged the Board to look into the leasing/purchase option instead of buying out-right as a way to minimize the impact on the tax rate. Jones went onto say that this year they have explored interest rates and feel favorable interest rates have been found.

ARTICLE 10 – Library Expansion Capital Reserve Fund

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars **(\$25,000.00)** to be placed in previously established **Library Expansion Capital Reserve Fund**.

IS/IS NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

(Majority vote required)

Administrator White stated the current balance in the Library Expansion CRF as of December 31, 2013 is \$146,271.11.

Peter James asked if the total cost of the project is estimated at \$700,000. Chairman Kimball said yes. James asked when construction would start. Kimball said he thought the Library wanted to have most of the money before starting construction.

There was general discussion regarding the fund raising efforts for this project. The Selectmen advised Mr. James to contact a Library Trustee. Rita Friedman suggested attending a Library Trustee meeting before Town Meeting.

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ARTICLE 11 – Town Clerk /Tax Collector Equipment Capital Reserve Fund

To see if the Town will vote to establish a Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 for the purpose of equipment needs related to the Department of Town Clerk/Tax Collector, and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$2,000 dollars to be placed in this fund, and to make the Selectmen agents to expend from this fund.

IS/IS NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
(Majority vote required)

Administrator White explained that the Secretary of State's has informed that a new ballot machine will be needed soon. Town Clerk/Tax Collector Rita Friedman estimated we would need about \$10,000 for this purchase.

ARTICLE 12 – Police Department Cruiser

To see if the town will vote to authorize the Selectmen to enter into a four-year, \$30,000 lease/purchase agreement for the purpose of leasing to purchase a new 2014 AWD Dodge Charger Police Cruiser, and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$7,985 for the first year's payment for that purpose. This agreement contains an escape clause.

IS/IS NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
(Majority vote required)

Administrator White stated the current balance of the Police Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund as of December 31, 2013 is \$17,787.66.

Peter James asked about the recently damaged cruiser. Chief Madore explained that his Officer was covering an accident scene on I-89 when it got slammed into at highway speed. Chief Madore stated the damaged vehicle was the one to be replaced.

John Parsons asked if the money received from the damaged cruiser could be used toward the first annual payment of the new cruiser. There was discussion; White will look into this question further.

Chief Madore said that since his Department has been fully staffed he has been averaging about 6,000 miles per month on all four cruisers; that previously when the Department was fully staffed the vehicle mileage per month was substantially higher.

Madore said that in the last ten days since the other cruiser was damaged the mileage was 2,500 on the other two line cruisers.

Madore said that having only three cruisers is a bind on his department and stated that mileage and fuel usage won't change; that the wear and tear on the vehicle is what will be affected.

Peter James asked Chief Madore if he had considered assigning Officers to a specific cruiser and hold them responsible for it. James felt that vehicle life and condition are greatly improved

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when people are assigned and responsible for a vehicle. Madore agreed and stated he also has part-timer Officers that use the cruisers as well. Madore went on to say that his Officers do not abuse the vehicles.

Rita Friedman felt the Police Department does a good job but pointed out that they do not provide coverage 24/7 so cruisers are parked some of the time. Friedman felt that State Police has troopers in the area that can provide added coverage. Friedman felt the mindset of Grantham voters is that residents are not “left in the lurch” because State Police is available. Chief Madore said that coverage from State Police depends on whether they are available to respond to calls. Selectman Jones asked if Troop C is fully staffed. Madore said no. Jones said Troop C covers from Cheshire to Grantham. Madore said sometimes there is only one Trooper covering both Cheshire and Sullivan Counties.

Chief Madore asked what that tax rate impact on this article would be. Administrator White said it takes about \$51,000 to affect the tax rate by 10 cents.

ARTICLE 13 – Taxpayer Coalition

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one-thousand dollars (\$1,000) and to expend said funds by making a contribution to the Coalition Communities group headed by the City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The Coalition Communities group consists of 35 towns and represents the Town of Grantham in attempting to find a solution to the educational funding issue that does not reinstate donor towns but allows Grantham to continue to keep the statewide education property tax for local use to fund local schools. The Coalition already has saved the Town of Grantham hundreds of thousands of dollars per year for several years. The Coalition is continuing to fight to reverse any new “donor town” formula.

IS/IS NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
(Majority vote required)

Peter James asked if we are still a donor town. Selectman Jones said Grantham is still on the donor town list.

ARTICLE 14 – Disposal of Town Owned Property

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to dispose of any acquired properties through sealed bids or auctions, with the Selectmen reserving the right to accept or refuse any or all bids. If adopted, this article will remain in effect until rescinded by majority vote.

IS/IS NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
(Majority vote required)

No public comment on this article.

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ARTICLE 15 – End of Meeting

To hear the reports of agents, officers, and committees heretofore chosen, to pass any vote relating thereto, and to transact any other business that may legally come before said meeting.

IS/IS NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

(Majority vote required)

No public comment on this article.

Bob Lewis asked if there were any petitioned articles. Selectman Jones said no.

John Parsons asked if the proposed budget increase of \$73,349 was if everything passes. Administrator White said yes. Parsons asked if that represented a 2.4% increase over the current budget. White said yes.

Parsons then asked what the increase was over the prior year. White said that the budget for FY2014 is \$3,024,567 and the budget for FY2013 was 2,823,943; an increase of \$200,624 or about a 7% increase.

Parsons commended the Selectmen for keeping the proposed budget (FY2015) at a 2.4% increase.

Peter James requested that the minutes to meetings be posted on the webpage promptly since there isn't any newspaper coverage of the meetings so that residents can stay up-to-date on what's happening in town.

Peter James commented that Groundskeeper Glenn Carey is an asset to the Town; that he does a nice job and should be commended for it. The Selectmen agreed that Groundskeeper Carey is a big asset to the Town and that he does work in various departments.

THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN RECOMMENDED THE FOLLOWING:

ARTICLE 2: *Unanimously approved to recommend this article.*

ARTICLE 3: *Unanimously approved to recommend this article.*

ARTICLE 4: *Unanimously approved to recommend this article.*

ARTICLE 5: *Unanimously approved to recommend this article.*

ARTICLE 6: *Unanimously approved to recommend this article.*

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ARTICLE 7: *Unanimously approved to recommend this article.*

ARTICLE 8: *Unanimously approved to recommend this article.*

ARTICLE 9: *Unanimously approved to recommend this article.*

ARTICLE 10: *Unanimously approved to recommend this article.*

ARTICLE 11: *Unanimously approved to recommend this article.*

ARTICLE 12: *Unanimously approved to recommend this article.*

ARTICLE 13: *Unanimously approved to recommend this article.*

ARTICLE 14: *Unanimously approved to recommend this article.*

ARTICLE 15: *Unanimously approved to recommend this article.*

ADJOURNMENT

By unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa M. White

Melissa White
Town Administrator