

Budget Committee Meeting Minutes from 2/8/17, 6:30pm

Attendance: Antonio Avila, Alicia McCormick, Lucia Picard, Aimee Dorval, Andy Reed, Tabatha Littlefield, John McIntire, Jessica Tysen (Midcoast Maine Community Action), Gerry Saunders (Sebasticook Regional Land Trust), Charlie Schaefer (Volunteer Regional Food Pantry), Alicyn Smart, Linda (Spectrum Generations), Najean Shedyak, Blaine Parsons (Unity Fire Dept.), Emily Newell, Penny Sampson, Kari Hunt, Sue Ferreira, Roy and Patricia Estabrook (The Game Loft), Jayne Crosby Giles (Broadreach Family and Community Services), David Smith (Unity Fire Chief), Maryann Hayes (EDC), Daniel McCormick (EDC)

Andy Reed opened the meeting with a brief reminder of the intent to cut off the meeting at 9:pm and a request for those representing charitable organizations to keep their talks under 5 minutes.

Tabatha suggested that the budget committee recommend \$0 on all Special Appropriations requests, providing a chart to show taxpayers how much they would save on their tax bill by omitting these items, and recommending taxpayers re-invest that savings into the charity or organization of their choice. The committee discussed but opposed this idea because some of these organizations receive matching funds from the State and Federal governments according to what was granted from municipalities.

Jessica Tyson represented MMCA (WIC), describing the services that they provide for the community. She couldn't tell us how many families for sure they serve from Unity, but estimated it is about 44. MMCA was not funded through the town of Unity in 2016. Alicia made a motion to give MMCA the full amount of \$1,000 that they requested. The motion passed with 1 opposed.

Linda represented Spectrum Generations, describing services provided. She reported that 17 Unity seniors were served in 2016. The motion was made and passed to give \$300.

Jayne Giles represented Broadreach. She explained their services and clarified that this is the organization that was previously known as Waldo County Preschool. In 2016, Broadreach assisted 31 Unity residents. All persons served in their behavioral health program are MaineCare eligible. The motion was made and passed to give \$600.

The Game Loft was represented by its founder Roy Estabrook, owner of the shop All About Games in Belfast. He explained the services they provide for Maine youth. Alicia raised the question why their salaries and benefits are such a large portion of the money raised by contributions (over \$132,000 out of \$152,000) when they claim to be run primarily by volunteers. Roy explained that there are 1 full-time and 5 part-time employees. The question was also raised what the \$21,560 for "occupancy" was actually for. Roy explained this is the rent for the building used for the Game Loft in Belfast. Alicia asked who owns the building and he answered that he does. When asked if he is paid through the organization, he told us he gets \$19 per hour. He was asked to give a detailed explanation of what takes place in their Mt. View program. The school budget also funds them. Motion was made to give them the \$300 they requested. Vote was 4 in favor, 3 opposed. Motion passed.

Charlie Schaefer represented the food pantry, describing the services they provide, which included providing food as well as education about nutrition and classes on cooking, canning, farming, and gardening. He reported that they served 4,885 families in 2016, or about 407/month. They serve 6 towns, including Unity. All of their staff are completely volunteer, not even requesting mileage reimbursement. Charlie pointed out that their most significant expenses were for food and electricity to run the freezers/refrigerators at their facility. John made the motion to give VRFP the full \$2,000 that they requested. Motion passed unanimously.

Gerry Saunders represented the Sebec Regional Land Trust and explained their contribution to the community through the grooming of trails and land preservation. It was noted that they are moving their HQ to Vassalboro, and concern was raised that they may lose interest in Unity after that move. Gerry insisted they have no intent of reducing or limiting their programs and services in the Unity area. John made the motion to give them the \$750 they asked for. The motion passed with 2 opposed.

Penny noted to us that New Hope for Women contacted her and apologized that they did not have a representative able to come for them. The motion was made to give New Hope the \$500 they requested despite no representative present. Motion passed.

WCAP was also not represented. It was noted that they have been a very controversial topic in previous years. They requested \$8,854. Comments and concerns about the organization combining non-profit with for-profit were discussed. The Selectmen were asked how they decided on their recommendation of \$4,500. They believed this to be a "sweet spot" to keep everyone happy, as it is approximately half of what was requested. The budget committee was reluctant to recommend the same amount based on their lack of transparency. The motion was made to give only \$2,000. Motion passed.

The Dorothy Webb Quimby Library withdrew their request for \$2,266 in 2017. Motion was made not to give funds. Motion passed.

Benjamin Berry Post #50 (American Legion) requested \$500 to put up flags on the telephone poles in town. They have put up the flags every year and never asked for money to do so before. Motion was made to give them the \$500 they requested. Motion passed.

Fire Chief David Smith explained the budget request for the Unity Fire Department. He was asked to explain why the volunteer fire fighters are paid when fighting fires and explained that he does not when Unity began compensating the volunteers for time spent fighting fires, as it began before his time. No one felt that compensation should be taken away. \$20,800 was approved for salaries. Some new upcoming maintenance costs were explained and \$51,800 was approved for maintenance and operations. For the Fire Truck Fund, the motion was made to raise \$10,000 and match it with \$10,000 more in TIF for a total of \$20,000. Motion failed. The committee discussed our current situation with the multiple loans Unity is paying on with large interest rates. The rate of interest the Fire Truck Fund is earning is much lower than the interest being charged on our loans. Concerns were also discussed about the long-term damage of not investing in the Fire Truck Fund for our future and of not spending the TIF money in the appropriate time frame. A new motion was made to appropriate \$10,000 from TIF and not to raise any. Motion passed.

Motion was made and passed to raise \$40,115.50 for the Firehouse Loan payment.

The Economic Development Committee requested \$5,000 of TIF to use for grants throughout town, by application, for those who improve trails, sidewalks, do clean-ups, etc. Motion was made and passed to meet the request.

Minutes from our budget committee's previous meeting were reviewed and accepted with the change to the EDC meeting location at the Unity Center for the Performing Arts.