

FREEMAN'S REPORT ON THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET HEARING - MAY 15, 2013

A 22 page handout that showed the recommended appropriations and expected revenues for the budget year 2013-14 along with the 2012-13 appropriations and projected actual expenditures was available. There are probably copies still available at the Town Office.

In my judgment, the following items were the most important things covered during the Hearing.

1. The "Tax Outlook:" Proposed appropriations for 2013-14 total \$4,178,059, down \$95,121 from the current year. The biggest reductions were for Town Roads (due to the completion of the 3 year road paving project this year) Sagadahoc County Tax, and Schools. After taking account of anticipated reductions in State Revenue Sharing and a reduced Carry Forward of Undesignated Fund Balance, the total to be raised by property taxes is projected to increase by \$21,042 resulting in a projected mil rate of 7.009 compared with the projected mil rate from 2012-13 of 6.923 per \$1,000 of assessed value. For a variety of reasons, the actual mil rate established next fall is likely to be slightly different.

2. The longest discussion concerned the contributions proposed in the category Health, Recreation, and Social Services. The five largest appropriations are for Patten Free Library, Georgetown Community Center, General Assistance, the Recreation Committee, and the Richards Library. These were all unchanged. The Greater Bath Elder Outreach Network (which serves some Town residents) was proposed to be cut from \$300 to \$0 because they had failed to submit a letter request. A volunteer from the organization told the Hearing that this was an administrative error, submitted a request for \$300, and urged the Selectmen to restore this amount. The Selectmen said that they were opposed to doing this because of the precedent it would set. I expect that they will have to reach a formal decision at their next meeting apparently on May 21.

There was also some discussion of the propriety of using taxpayer funds to make donations to charitable organizations other than the big five listed above and a suggestion that the Selectmen find a way to encourage private donations from residents as an alternative to using taxpayer funds.

3. Under General Government, the \$5,000 for a replacement copier and a new computer for the Town Clerk will be from Office Equipment Reserve Fund.

4. For the Town-Owned Property Management Board, the biggest changes are \$10,000 for an Upgrade to the Wharf Electrical System, \$2,500 for tree cutting around the Richards Library, and \$5,500 for improvements to the Recreational Floats. After taking account of decreases in other lines, the increase in appropriations is \$9,500.

5. There are no changes in Town Officers' Salaries.

For additional discussion of some of the details, see Rick Cliffe's Notes on the Selectmen's Meeting of May 7.

The budget will be voted on at the regular Town Meeting at 9 AM on Saturday, June 8

Prepared and distributed by Rick Freeman