

Amesbury Municipal Council Meeting
Tuesday, June 18, 2008
Town Hall Auditorium

Call To Order 7:00PM

Roll Call: Allen Neale, Mary Chatigny, Stephen Dunford, Anne Ferguson, Robert Gilday, Robert Lavoie, Roger Benson

Jonathan Sherwood and Joseph McMilleon absent.

Pledge of Allegiance – Stephen Dunford

Public Comment

James Thivierge, 106 Friend Street – Mr. Thivierge read from the Palmer & Dodge report from the refunding bond prospectus. He believes that interaction between elected officials and the public has to be maintained. He attended a Finance Committee meeting and was not allowed to speak on the budget.

Marsha Gilmore, 126 Whitehall Rd., member of the Council On Aging – Ms. Gilmore asked the council to support the proposed Council On Aging budget. The COA provides many social services that are vital to the seniors in town. Even though it is staffed largely with volunteers it requires money to make it run.

Council Response to Public Comment

Councilor Neale responded to Mr. Thivierge's comment regarding public comment at the Finance Committee meeting on the budget, and explained that the public would have an opportunity to make known their issues regarding the budget at the public hearing during the municipal council meeting. The public was welcome to attend the Finance Committee meetings to gather their information and inform the council about what issues they had.

Councilor Dunford states attendance at the Finance Committee budget hearings was low. He hopes that in 2009 and beyond more people will attend so they will understand how the process works.

Second Readings

2008-043 Accept \$50.00 donation for the S.A.F.E. program at the Amesbury Fire Department – Mayor Kezer sponsor cont.

President Benson read 2008-043 into the record.

Councilor Neale motioned to accept 2008-043 as submitted, Councilor Ferguson second.

Roll Call Vote – Unanimous

2008-001 FY09 Operating Budget – Mayor Kezer sponsor cont.

President Benson states they will be using the Kaufman Bylaw. The recommendation of the Finance Committee will be read and if a councilor has an objection to any recommendations it can be noted at that time. It will then be reopened for discussion.

Councilor Neale read a statement describing the process the Finance Committee followed to make the budget recommendations (attached).

Councilor Neal read the Finance Committee recommendation for 2008-001 into the record:

An Order to vote to adopt an Operating Budget for the Fiscal Year 2009.

Be it Ordered by the Municipal Council of the Town of Amesbury assembled, and by the authority of the same as follows: that the Operating Budget for the Fiscal Year 2009 be approved as follows:

Municipal Council	\$	73,241
Mayor	\$	185,404

Councilor Chatigny objects to the Mayor's budget.

Reserve Funds	\$	50,000
Administration & Finance	\$	284,112
Assessor	\$	233,159
Collector/Treasurer	\$	203,966
Legal Services	\$	100,500
Mgmt Information Systems	\$	251,143
Central Supply	\$	72,000
Town Clerk	\$	160,530
Elections	\$	31,521
Liquor Commission	\$	1,000
Conservation Commission	\$	31,294
Community & Economic Development	\$	328,382
Planning Board	\$	15,000
Board of Appeals	\$	8,404
Municipal Buildings	\$	127,740
Animal Control	\$	40,640
Police Department	\$	3,263,950
Fire Department	\$	2,623,579
Communications	\$	486,054
Inspections	\$	277,213
Weights & Measures	\$	4,500
Emergency Management	\$	21,871
Harbormaster	\$	7,500
Department of Public Works	\$	1,382,690
Snow & Ice	\$	128,000
Outdoor Lighting	\$	170,004
Refuse/Recycling	\$	1,204,220
Health Department	\$	64,720
Council on Aging	\$	132,892
Veterans Services	\$	144,560
Library	\$	634,158
Youth	\$	206,860
Debt Services	\$	2,304,384
Other Assessments	\$	916,266
Employee Benefits	\$	4,447,924
Insurance Expense	\$	303,300
School	\$	24,933,496

For a total appropriation of: \$ 45,856,177

Landry Stadium \$ 6,500

Sewer Department \$ 2,678,576

Water Department \$ 2,761,881

Sources of Income:

Sale of Cemetery Lots \$ 11,800

Ambulance Receipts 450,000

Youth Revolving 169,000

Cemetery Interest 12,500

TOTAL APPROPRIATION \$ 51,303,134

Voted - 6 Yes (Neale, Sherwood, Dunford, Ferguson, Gilday, Lavoie) Unanimous

President Benson opens the public hearing.

Public Hearing

Pamela Brown, Director Council on Aging – Ms. Brown states the Council on Aging provides social services, activities, transportation, educational programs and a social lunch program for Amesbury residents age 60 and older. Ms. Brown continued on by describing some of the available programs and the number of participants. All have had an increase in participation and utilization over last year. She asked the council to support the proposed 2009 Council on Aging budget.

Alison Lindstrom, 10 Wells Ave. – Ms. Lindstrom feels the budget represents a \$400 increase in taxes for the average family. She feels costs across the board are going up for everyone and they can not afford it. She told the council they have the power to fix it and make it come out right for everyone.

Jane Snow, Fern Ave. – Ms. Snow states taxes are way too high and spending is a real concern. She would like to see the compensation study done before any salaries are increased. She urges the council to think about the tax rate and seniors.

Councilor Lavoie read into the record some comments from Councilor Sherwood who is unable to attend the meeting (attached).

Councilor Lavoie read into the record a letter from Carol Casey, Chairperson for the Council on Aging (attached).

Councilor Gilday asks the Department Heads to try and reduce their overtime in the coming year.

Councilor Lavoie states the town department heads came very well prepared to the budget meetings. In most cases what the departments asked for was more than what the Mayor could allocate to them. They all had to take a lesser amount. He feels the administration did a very good job on the budget it is very tight. He is comfortable with his support of the budget.

Councilor Neale does not believe some of the line items are blotted as former Councilor Lindstrom stated and urges her to point them out to the council. He stated the council went through every line

item and he is concerned there are some line items in the budget that don't contain enough money to get the job done such as gasoline. He believes the department heads had impassioned discussions with the Mayor but cuts had to be made and they were.

Councilor Dunford points out that the council didn't save any money on the budget it was all the administration and their creative thinking in various areas such as leasing handicapped vans, chaser vehicles in the fire department and janitorial services. Amesbury does not have the short falls Haverhill and Newburyport have but we are near the cap. With gas at \$4 a gallon, a new energy budget to negotiation and a new waste/recycling contract people need to be diligent and come to meetings and run for office.

President Benson thanked the Mayor and department heads for a very tight budget especially the School Department. He states he would like to be able to cut a half million but its just not there. The reality is that the Mayor, the department heads and the School Department did a great job.

President Benson closes the public hearing.

Councilor Lavoie motioned as follows:

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Insurance Expense	\$ 303,300
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Councilor Lavoie motioned to move the unquestioned recommendations of the Finance Committee, Councilor Chatigny second.

Roll Call Vote 7 Yes (Neale, Chatigny, Dunford, Ferguson, Gilday, Lavoie, Benson)

President Benson asks Councilor Chatigny to explain why she objected to the Mayor's budget.

Councilor Chatigny read from the Charter that it does allow the mayor to hire "one or more qualified assistants to aid in the performance of official duties, fix their salaries and define their duties." She understands that people are uncomfortable with the Chief of Staff earning more than the Mayor however; she now feels it should be funded at \$63,300 per the Mayor's request. She feels the position has become a political football and does not like the way it always happens at budget time. As part of her own job she assesses people's duties and puts a dollar value to them and looking at the duties and responsibilities assigned to the Chief of Staff the salary is not out of line. She proposes to accept what the Mayor suggested and amend the recommendation back to \$189,104 for the Mayor's budget.

President Benson agrees with Councilor Chatigny. It is the Mayor's choice by the charter to do with that position as he sees fit and if you hire someone to do a job you need to pay them an acceptable amount that commensurate with their responsibilities. While he disagrees somewhat how the Mayor is using this position he does not disagree with the level of pay the Mayor is recommending.

Councilor Dunford motions to increase the Finance Committees recommendation of the Mayor's budget by \$3,700 to \$189,104, Councilor Chatigny second.

Councilor Lavoie believes the salary for the Chief of Staff should be \$59,500 until the compensation study and if at that time it merits more money the Mayor can propose a supplemental budget to fund it. He will support the Finance Committee recommendation for the Mayor's budget at \$185,404.

Councilor Neale agrees with Councilor Lavoie and supports the Finance Committee recommendation. He supports the \$59,500 because it is a 14.4% raise. He appreciates that there may be a huge dislocation between what the position should be paid and what it is but in business you don't

eradicate the difference over night. He feels it is reasonable compared to what the other employees are getting.

Councilor Chatigny suggests the Chief of Staff's responsibilities be changed if it is not funded at \$63,300.

*Councilor Dunford motions to increase the Finance Committees recommendation of the Mayor's budget by \$3,700 to \$189,104, Councilor Chatigny second.
Roll Call Vote 4 Yes, 3 No (Neale, Gilday, Lavoie)*

Recess 8:17 - 8:23PM

Councilor Lavoie moved for a total appropriation of \$45,859,877 that to fund said appropriation the Municipal Council approve \$45,216,577 to be raised by taxation and other revenue sources and further that \$643,300 be applied from the sources detailed below:

:

<i>Sale of Cemetery Lots</i>	\$	11,800
<i>Ambulance Receipts</i>		450,000
<i>Youth Revolving</i>		169,000
<i>Cemetery Interest</i>		12,500

And that the Municipal Council further votes to approve the following enterprise fund budgets:

<i>Landry Stadium</i>	\$	6,500
<i>Sewer Department</i>		2,678,576
<i>Water Department</i>		2,761,881

*Therefore, the Municipal Council hereby appropriates the following:
Total Appropriation \$51,306,834 as proposed by the Mayor*

*Seconded by Councilor Neale
Roll Call Vote: 7 Yes (Neale, Chatigny, Dunford, Ferguson, Gilday, Lavoie, Benson)*

Correspondence

2008-048 Amend Amesbury Zoning Map – Mayor Kezer sponsor
Councilor Lavoie moved the Council to set the Public Hearing on July 8, 2008, Councilor Dunford second Voted – Unanimous

2008-050 Adopt Wetlands Protection Ordinance – Mayor Kezer sponsor
Councilor Lavoie moved the Council to set the Public Hearing on July 8, 2008, Councilor Neale second. Voted – Unanimous

Councilor Dunford moved to adjourn, Councilor Lavoie second – Voted Unanimous
Respectfully Submitted,
Assistant Town Clerk