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the 2010 Andover Town Report at AndoverNH.us.com, or page 1 of the February issue of the Beacon at AndoverBeacon.com). The committee recommends combining the two departments under a single command structure with a single chief and two fire stations, while keeping the current separate precincts. After a year, the advantages and disadvantages of the new arrangement would be reported to the Board of Selectmen. If the two precincts agreed, they might consider combining into a single precinct with two fire stations at some point in the future.

Peter Zak asked if the tax rates of the two departments would be combined. Jane explained that in the first phase of the plan, the tax rates would remain separate. If and when the two precincts were to combine, there would be a single tax rate.

Les Fenton, a commissioner of the Andover Fire District and a member of the study committee, pointed out that Town Meeting has no action to take on this issue – it's up to the Andover and East Andover Fire meetings to vote on taking action on the committee's recommendation.

Jeff Newcomb asked that the meeting move on to Article 4.

**Warrant Article 4**

**Town Budget of \$1,272,431.** This does not include any amounts voted on in other warrant articles.

Ed Hiller, chair of the Budget Committee, explained that the amount to be discussed is the amount proposed by the Budget Committee, which is almost \$19,500 less than the amount proposed by the Board of Selectmen. Much of the difference between the two is based on the Budget Committee having held Town pay rates flat, in recognition of the fact that the School District did the same. At the time the selectmen passed their budget, it wasn't known that the School District pay rates would be flat for this year's budget.

Peter Zak asked about the sharp increase in the line item for Town Administrator's benefits. Vicky Mishcon explained that in the past, the Town Administrator had waived his right to health insurance coverage as he was covered under his wife's policy. That has changed, and now he is taking the family health coverage promised in his contract.

Cynthia Lewis asked why the Medtronics line item for the EMS department went up so much. John Kinney, chief of Andover EMS, explained that the state has adopted new protocols and requires new equipment on board. The increase will pay for the new equipment.

Toby Locke: "Is this another unfunded mandate?"

John Kinney: "Yes."

Peter Zak asked about the increase in the Support Salary line item for EMS. John Kinney explained it's for the administrative hours the chief, deputy chief, and billing person put in, above

and beyond the hours they volunteer. It comes out to about minimum wage.

Jim Danforth: "How much will all the road maintenance projects that we aren't funding cost us when we get to them?"

Vicky Mishcon: "We don't have a total of what it would cost to get all of our red-listed bridges off the red list."

Don Gross: "We have 12 red-listed bridges that need serious repair or replacement. We tried to address the Morrill Hill Road bridge last year with a \$420,000 project, of which 80% was to come from the state. Then the state changed the flood zones and the engineers told us the project would now cost \$699,000. It's definitely a problem."

Andy Guptill: "The 2012 federal manual has a new standard of reflectivity for all signs. Have we included that in our budget?"

Don Gross: "We are replacing our signs as needed and as best we can. The new signs are up to the new standard."

Toby Locke: "Why is the library budget up so much this year?"

Sandra Graves, library trustee: "The Spent in 2010 figure for the library in the Town Report was accidentally switched with the figure below it, so the increase is not nearly as big as it appears. The actual \$4,400 increase covers increased hours for the librarian due to the library being open on Saturday mornings."

Ed Hiller pointed out that the Budget Committee had lowered the budget for Interest on Tax Anticipation by \$9,000. "We traditionally budget \$24,000 every year, but spend less than that. This year we lowered the budgeted amount to get it closer to what we can reasonably expect to spend."

Article 4 passed all but unanimously. A motion to consider Article 15 next was made and passed on a voice vote.

**Warrant Article 15**

**Reduce Town expenditures by 10%.** This was a petitioned warrant article.

Toby Locke moved to amend the article to reduce expenditures by 5%, not 10%. To begin discussion, he asked how the Board of Selectmen handled the 5% budget reduction voted by last year's Town Meeting.

Vicky Mishcon: "Because Highways and Bridges is such a large part of the Town budget, most of the reductions came from there. As a result, the Road Agent couldn't finish the Chase Hill Road project as planned last year. We hope to finish Chase Hill Road and do Emery Road [see Warrant Article 12, below] this year. Basically, the 5% reduction set our road improvement plans back even further."

Paul Nagy: "Was there a surplus in 2010? Did the Town spend less than budgeted?"

Vicky Mishcon: "There was about \$100,000 surplus, which was applied to the fund balance and can be used to reduce taxes."

Toby Locke: "So a 5% cut to the budget wouldn't cripple us?"

Vicky Mishcon: "It would probably

have to come out of the Highways and Bridges budget. But we need to move ahead on the road improvement plan."

Jim Danforth: "If one of the 12 bridges is determined by the state to be no longer safe, what's the plan?"

Don Gross: "It depends on the bridge. In the case of the Hoyt Road bridge this year, we just closed it because there are other ways to get there."

Paul Nagy: "If the budget had \$100,000 left over in 2010 and the Road Agent needed more, the Board of Selectmen should tighten up its budgeting techniques. I think that a 10% cut wouldn't make that much difference and that we should cut 10%."

Vicky Mishcon: "That's \$127,000 in cuts. Where and how do you want to make them?"

Tina Cotton: "Are we already over on our winter plowing budget?"

Dana Hadley, the Town Administrator, explained that the 2011 budget under discussion shows \$170,000 for winter road maintenance. As of today we've already spent \$126,000 of that since January 1, 2011, leaving \$44,000 for the rest of this winter and the beginning of next, through December 31, 2011. We usually like to have \$50,000 available for the beginning of next winter, through December 31, so we're already in bad shape. And we still have to deal with winter maintenance from tonight through about April 15. "It's been a bad year for winter road maintenance."

Todd Adams: "You asked where we should make cuts. Cut the Town Administrator's benefits. Last year we survived the 5% reduction. If you want an open forum, put it in the Beacon; you'll have a houseful."

Carroll Gautreau, a member of the Budget Committee: "Cutting an arbitrary 5% or 10% is quite significant if we did our job on the Budget Committee. Everybody on the committee worked hard to bring you a lean budget. But the committee's public hearing on the Town budget only drew four people. We have that hearing every year and it's always well publicized in the Beacon. We'd like everyone's help, and it would make this evening's job much easier."

John Kinney: "Using the formula that \$1,000 change in the amount to be raised by taxes becomes about a 75¢ change on the tax bill of a \$200,000 house, then a 5% budget reduction would be \$63,000 times 75¢ per thousand means that the reduction on the tax bill of a \$200,000 house would be just less than \$50."

Toby Locke: "Fifty dollars comes in handy if you're 90 years old and need food."

Toby continued, "We're not attacking the people who made the budget. We're just trying to help people who are struggling. We're just trying to hold the reins back. I don't think a 5% reduction is too much to ask."

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