

TOWN OF SAN ANSELMO

Minutes, Town Council Budget Hearing of August 16, 1988

Mayor Sharp convened the public hearing on the Proposed 1988-89 Budget at 7:00 p.m., with Councilmembers Chignell, Colteaux, Walsh and Zaharoff present.

Fire Protection, Budget No. 432

Town Administrator Dickens explained that San Anselmo's share of the financing for the new fire engine totalled approximately \$140,000, to be paid over a five year period. In the proposed budget, San Anselmo's contribution to the Fire Service budget was up 6% from the previous year while the revenue to San Anselmo from the Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District, which is 23% of San Anselmo's share of the fire service's labor costs, was up 10%.

Fire Chief Mollenkopf reported that changes that had occurred in the budget since he made a presentation to the Council at the May 24 meeting included a reduction in the increase from the previous year of 6.07% instead of 7.9% (due primarily to the pending retirement of a captain and the anticipated replacement at a lower salary and savings in equipment costs), and a 1987-88 surplus of \$7,000 instead of \$15,000.

In response to questions from Chignell, Dickens explained that building maintenance funds had been budgeted to fund the permits for underground storage tanks at the fire house. In the past, this has been a state mandated cost for which the Town is reimbursed and therefore it was placed in the Town's budget rather than the Fire Service's budget. Since preparing the budget, staff has learned that the State does not intend to continue the reimbursement program and therefore Dickens plans to remove it from the Town budget. Dickens said he had asked Sleepy Hollow to pay its share at different dates in the year to help the Town in its periods of low revenues; Chignell said he would like to see them pay on a quarterly basis.

Colteaux expressed concern about the increased costs of operating the fire department now compared to 10 years ago and requested information on where and why costs have increased.

In response to questions from Walsh on whether Sleepy Hollow was contributing any funds to the purchase of the fire truck, staff noted that the Joint Powers Agreement, which runs indefinitely until one party or another requests an amendment or termination, limits Sleepy Hollow's contribution to labor costs. Mollenkopf explained that Sleepy Hollow's intention in this approach was that it wanted to simply contract for services and did not want to build capital assets.

Herm Kramer, 1 Allemand Place, said the Town should be setting money aside for vehicle replacement rather than financing purchases over a period of time, and recommended that the Town re-open talks with Sleepy Hollow, adding that the money it gets from the County is for fire protection and the Town should be informed if they are getting more money than they are using. He said a reason for the increased cost of running the fire department could be attributed to the firefighters entering a 2% at 50 retirement program when the department was merged with Fairfax.

Police Department, Budget No. 430

The items requested by the department but not included in the administrator's recommendation included replacement vehicles and bullet-proof vests and computer equipment.

Police Chief Del Santo commented that while computerization would make the department more efficient, vehicles were more crucial in making the department operational. If two replacement vehicles are not budgeted until the 1989-90 budget, they will each have more than 100,000 miles, while they should be replaced at approximately 60,000 - 70,000 miles. The motorcycle is frequently being repaired and could be hazardous. The bullet-proof vests are eight years beyond their life expectancy.

In response to questions from Council, staff made the following comments:

1. A bid for vehicle repairs has been received from only one local repair business, although Del Santo has requested bids from other vehicle repair businesses in town.
2. The ability to maximize the life of a police vehicle is very limited.
3. The funding formula for the County Major Crimes Task Force is built into the Joint Powers Agreement and is based on population. As part of the JPA, San Anselmo is obliged to contribute regardless of whether it has an officer in the program. San Anselmo includes the cost of its officer who is in the Task Force in the budget, but the Town is fully reimbursed for this cost. The purpose of the Task Force, which is controlled by a civilian oversight committee, is drug enforcement.
4. The frames on the vehicles are bending due to the narrow roads and the condition of the roads in town.
5. The department supply line item has increased due to the need to purchase ammunition, which was not purchased in 1987-88 and that will have to be purchased next year at a higher cost.

Colteaux requested information on cost comparisons of operating the department now and 10 years ago.

Chignell requested information on whether the parking fine revenue line item could be increased.

Herm Kramer, 1 Allemand Place, said that when the purchase of police vehicles was being considered several months ago, Chignell said he would check on the vehicle mileage of San Francisco police vehicles. Chignell said he had checked on this information, but that it was difficult to make a comparison between San Francisco and San Anselmo.

Planning, Budget No. 418

Dickens reported that in the past, all the positions in the Public Works and Planning Department, except for the planner, were split between the Planning budget and the Engineering & Inspection budget. A reason for doing this is to show what operation of the department actually costs; however, since the formula for splitting the positions appears to be arbitrary, the figures are misleading. Therefore, in order to simplify account procedures and remove this arbitrary practice, this year's budget shows only the planner position in the Planning budget.

The department had requested a planning intern. This request was not recommended by the Administrator for budgetary reasons only. Staff intends to increase the planning fees, but the revenue figures shown in the draft budget are based on the existing fee schedule.

Kottage commented that the budget recommended by the Town Administrator was less than the budget he requested. Even the original amount requested for the department was not close to ideal staffing. Kottage stated that original budget request was the least expensive way to add some capacity to the Planning Department. His original request recommended hiring a planning intern for code enforcement at a cost of \$11,000 and increasing the secretary position, funded in the Engineering & Inspection budget, from 60% to full-time, also at a cost of \$11,000.

Concerning the operation of the Planning Department, Kottage noted that due to lack of time, staff cuts corners, defers items, sometimes for an indefinite period of time, is forced to delay processing people's applications, and does not enforce codes in a rigorous fashion. The Town has been fortunate that large mistakes have not occurred as a result of the lack of stafftime. All other towns in the county of near equal size and most of the communities of smaller size, have separate planning departments with their own directors and a larger staff than San Anselmo's. He did not feel the department could be operated with a great deal more efficiently, and he felt uncomfortable operating in such a high risk fashion.

Planning Commission Chairman Hayes was present on behalf of the Commission, noting it was the Commission's responsibility to report to the Council as accurately as possible on the status of planning. The Planning Department was extremely overworked, the Commission has been meeting weekly for quite some time, staff has to respond to increasingly complex problems, and the chance of inadvertent errors exposing the Town to liability are quite high. There have been instances where the excess staffload has resulted in errors. The overburden of work also results in projects taking a long time to get through the planning process, which is building up a reservoir of discontent among the public. The lack of time for enforcement also leads to other difficulties. He said he sympathized with the Council's position financially, but asked that they try to find a way to squeeze something into the Planning Department to help staff deal with routine problems.

Given a choice between increasing the secretary time and hiring an intern, Kottage said it was a close call but he felt the intern would relieve the planner of work slightly more.

In response to questions from Zaharoff, Kottage explained that staff was currently working on a planning fee study. An estimated \$5,500 in revenues could be raised under the existing fee schedule by hiring a code enforcement intern. The planning consultant is used for matters beyond the expertise of staff, and that the planning consultant has experience that an intern would not have. The intern would be used as leverage for the planner so that she could work on more complex planning matters which are nearer her capacity. Time constraints in planning have led to litigation, which results in Town legal expenses. Time constraints are causing the public works staff to miss opportunities, such as pursuit of grants for project funding. He felt that hiring an additional in-house planner in lieu of the mix of the consultant intern and additional secretarial time would not give as broad a spectrum of skills.

Colteaux questioned whether it would be better to build a planner position for the future with the proposed position having the planning consultant's level of expertise.

Chignell questioned whether the planning revenue figure could be increased because a fee increase is anticipated

this fiscal year. Staff advised that it was unknown when and at what level such an increase would be proposed and whether it would pass. Colteaux suggested that a fee increase be tied to a cost of living increase every year.

Engineering & Inspection, Budget No. 441

Requested by the department but not recommended by the administrator was to increase the secretary position to full-time. Construction permit revenue was expected to decrease next year because of lack of any high-fee projects.

Chignell requested information on the reason for the proposed increase in building maintenance.

Street Maintenance, Budget No. 442

Kottage reported that the proposed budget was substantially less than what is needed for the town, especially given the low capital reconstruction budget. If the Town's infrastructure is not rebuilt when needed, more day to day maintenance is needed. The maintenance crew is not staffed adequately to handle the deteriorating streets, and the vehicles and equipment are quite old and in need of replacement. The traffic signal controllers also are almost worn out and funds to replace one controller every year was requested but not recommended.

Chignell asked staff to look into whether the departmental supply budget could be decreased to a level closer to last year's expenditures.

Capital Reconstruction, Budget No. 491

Dickens explained that this should be considered a tentative budget, pending an exact figure on the balance remaining in Funds No. 105 and 106. Once the final balance of these budgets are known, the balance from these funds will be transferred to the General Fund, and ultimately to the Capital Reconstruction account. Once staff knows exactly what the balance is, it will be brought to Council for final action.

Kottage expressed his agreement with Dickens' budget message that the Town's infrastructure is in very poor condition, noting that once it deteriorates beyond a certain level, the cost to repair it increases substantially. Failure to perform replacement work also results in litigation costs and more costly emergency repairs.

A project requested by staff but not included in the budget was a state mandated inventory of earthquake inventory of unreinforced masonry buildings. Kottage said state law allows the Town to be reimbursed for this cost through new fees attached to building permits.

Staff estimated that approximately \$91,000 of Fund #1060 will have to be returned to the state.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m., following a decision to adjourn the following evening's budget session to August 30, 7:00 p.m.

Beth Pollard