

#5 – BUDGET REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009

I have reviewed the proposed budget of \$148,706 for the Town Clerk and Registrar of Vital Statistics. This budget represents a decline, since FY 2005, of 31% in operating expenses, 56% in capital expense and 41% in total budget excluding salaries and wages.

TOWN SEXTON: The Town Clerk has assumed the role of Town Sexton for the last three budgets. The cost of this operation has been \$17,500 and \$2,500 in the last two years. This amount was included in the First Selectman's budget, and, in FY2006, was primarily covered by a special appropriation. Because the First Selectmen usually does not want to use up a special appropriation for this purpose this causes difficulties. Consideration should be given to setting up a separate Town Sexton department with its' own budget in order to avoid this problem. It has not been included in this budget.

All of the environmental threats to the Center Street and Gilberttown cemetery will have been removed this fiscal year. The next step is to raise the fallen stones and stabilize them. This is the lowest cost, most cost effective next step for making a significant impact. The cost for the Center Street Cemetery is \$30,000 for this work next fiscal year. This amount has not been included in the Town Clerk's budget on the assumption that it will be included in the First Selectman's budget as usual.

OFFICE HOURS: The Town Clerk's office hours should be expanded to improve service to the public. I have spent some time trying to determine how to expand hours with the current staff and have been unsuccessful because of a number of considerations. Office hours could be increased to 9.00am to 4.00pm daily, if the part time Assistant Town Clerk position was increased to full time. The Comptroller's office estimates that the increased salary cost would be \$14,790. I have reviewed this proposal with the Human Resources Committee and they have agreed to recommend the extra staff and office hours. The increased salary cost has not been included in the proposed budget and must be added if the increase is approved

W. Derek Buckley 2/26/08 [Signature] 2/26/08
Town Clerk Signature Date First Selectman Signature Date

To: First Selectman

Date: 2/25/2008

Re: FY2009 Proposed Budget – Town Clerk and Registrar of Vital Statistics

Introduction

Attached is a summary of the proposed combined budget for 2008/2009 for the office of the Town Clerk and Registrar of Vital Statistics. A maintenance budget for 2008/9 would be \$148,706 compared to \$144,272 for 2007/8 an increase of 3.1% largely due to salary increases. In addition, it is recommended that office hours be extended to 9.00am to 4.00pm in order to provide better public service. This will require an increase of one of the Assistant Town Clerk's from part time to full time at a salary cost of \$14,790. This amount must be added to the proposed budget if it is approved.

The Town Clerk's office has seen a number of major changes in operations and operating technology over the last few years. This has resulted in major cost reductions in those areas controlled by the office. As an example, compare the 2007/8 budget with the 2004/5 actual expenditure. Over this period, operating expenses have been reduced by 31%, Capital and other investments by 56% and the Total Budget, excluding salaries and wages, by 41%. Overall, the proposed budget is up by 2% because of salary increases.

These improvements have been achieved while eliminating the backlog of processed documents and bringing the Land Record and Map record books and Index books up to date each day. The Land Records are available to the public by computer, as are the maps. An initial name search capability is available.

A major problem, which needs attention, is the treatment of Minutes and Agendas. We do not comply with minimum state statutory mandates and cannot correct this problem with the resources currently available. This is likely to be an expensive omission if we are subjected to one of the random audit visits that are conducted by the Public Records Administrator. The proposed budget begins to address this issue beginning with prospective Minutes and Agendas and then working retroactively. This cannot be undertaken unless the additional resources requested are available.

Background

In the past, records management has been dismissed as a convenience to out of town professionals, and an annoying legal requirement of little, or no, value to Easton residents. However, this viewpoint ignores the reality of resident's interests. The people using the Town Clerk's office to review records include Attorneys, Title Searchers, Public Works, Planning and Zoning and other town departments and the public. Whatever their profession they all are working for the

benefit of current and future Easton residents. Any improvements benefit all Easton residents directly. People who buy animal licenses, sports licenses, marry, die, get buried; give birth, divorce; transfer property; seek Senior Tax Relief; register to vote, vote; seek FOI information; require JP services; require notary services; or require a myriad of other services are all residents seeking assistance. It is difficult to identify anything done in the Town Clerk's office that does not directly, or indirectly, affect Easton residents.

The major factors affecting the proposed budget are as follows:

1. Historically the Town has ignored a large part of the statutory obligations of the Town Clerk's office. Steps to clean up the office have reduced the budget, but the cost of assuming the neglected responsibilities has consumed part of the savings.
2. Our continuing efforts to conform to minimum statutory requirements
3. Our continuing efforts to correct the deficiencies of the past
4. The Union contract increase in staff compensation [3.25%]
5. The effort to upgrade operations and absorb the increased workload without a commensurate increase in staff level has reached a limit. An increase in Staff hours is needed so that the neglected areas of Minutes, Agendas and other documents can be addressed as required by State statute. We cannot meet the statutory requirements with the present people and other resources.
6. Maximizing vault space utilization to avoid the cost of a new vault
7. Assisting the operation and administration of the Elderly Tax Relief Program
8. Assumption of the responsibilities of Town Sexton
9. Upgrade to Vista based computer software in order to conform to Public Act 07-252

