

COLA/ NE Region CPI: The major cause of the zero COLA and NE CPI increases was a 31.5% drop in gasoline prices. If you take out Energy, food rose 1.4%, Apparel rose 2.5% and Shelter rose 2.8%. Over the last year the increase for all durable goods less food and energy was 1.8%. The Board discussed this at length and decided that those employees not given raises to bring under the wage survey would receive 1.5%.

Town Web Page: The board has been discussing updating the Town Web Page for four years now. It has come to a head this past year for several reasons. The software is old and cumbersome/not user friendly. It is server based, can be loaded on only one computer and the town only has one logon. Additional logons are only available for a fee. Updating the page is cumbersome and requires an inordinate amount of time. Multiple files and links are necessary to link forms and data to more than one place resulting in multiple versions being available if each link is not corrected. Additionally the Town will soon be accepting credit cards. Using E-GOV links can be put on the web page to allow people greater access to do things such as register their vehicles on-line. The new software is web based, will allow logon from multiple computers, allow some Department heads to place items on the web to decrease the time lag in getting important information out and overall make the process more efficient and more accurate.

Support Staff increase: Two years ago this position was changed from 40 Hours a week to 25 Hours. In most of 2013-14 this position was only used 15 hours. This proved insufficient and things were not getting done in a timely fashion since it greatly increased the workload of the Administrative Assistant. It was then increased to the original 25 Hours which while better was difficult to fill the position. After another person left for personal reasons it was decided to increase to 30 Hours. This resulted in a much wider diversity of qualified applicants and will hopefully be sufficient to spread the workload in the Office, get caught up and stay on track.

Town Clerks Office – Elections, Registration and Vital Statistics: Most of the software is State Required. When the State updates for whatever reason we must do the same to stay compatible or we could not do registrations and other things which require us to logon to the State Computers. We also will need some software to begin accepting credit cards and on line payments. We have four elections this year. We have also included the costs for new voting booths. Our current booths are old, worn out and an accident waiting to happen.

Planning and Zoning: We reviewed NHMA Wage and Benefits survey and noted that several positions were well below what comparable Towns with comparable benefits were paying. This was one of those positions. Additionally changes were made last year to the duties and responsibilities to better reflect what the job entailed since additional duties have been added over the last two – three years. The same was done with the Highway Department wages although the increases were offset due to a long time employee who was at a higher wage resigning. When we advertised the open position we got few applicants after they heard the wage rate and one person we hired left when he was offered more money elsewhere and another turned down the position due to the wage rate.

Insurance: It is what it is. We are currently waiting for proposals from other companies and hope we can get a better deal. Our current insurance is on a Fiscal Year and runs to June.

Highway Department: Materials are going up and we need more. Many of our roads are in need of being built back up with crushed gravel. Many paved roads need cold patch in places and/or shimming. This will probably not be enough but at least will get it started. We have been replacing culverts at an increased pace since we have many in need of replacement and correcting them cuts down on road maintenance due to damage caused by improper drainage. Also the prices for culverts is increasing. As far as equipment rental we have been hiring out 100 hours of grading. Our current grader operators are slowly gaining experience but deep grading, cutting down to improve the road surface and adding material and rolling takes time and personnel. Contracting some of the grading allows us to do more. Vehicle maintenance and repair reflects increased costs and for parts and some changes in the way we do things. Changing tires for instance. Over the years when a new tire needs to be put on it took three people several hours to remove the tire from the rim and get a new tire on. It is cheaper and more productive to have one person take several tires out to have them done in less than an hour. It frees up other people to get work done that would otherwise have to wait. Increased productivity is a good thing. We have contracted most of the roadside mowing. We also plan to rent one arm mower to use for some places we will need to do ourselves. We have also contracted plowing for the school, Library, LCAB, Park & Ride and Town Office. Since the GMC was no longer roadworthy (broken frame) and with two new operators this winter it was too big a chance to take on getting all the plowing done, especially if the other 1 ton breaks down.

Transfer Station: We have been in discussion with NRRA and are looking at different options. The big problem is recyclables. There is such a glut on the market right now and China is no longer taking the quantities they were that prices have plummeted. What we used to get paid for we now are paying to get rid of. We have taken some steps such as limiting the dump to Lyme Residents only, no longer accepting recyclables from non-residents. We are also putting together a committee to sort through what we have and what else is out there that we can take advantage of to reduce costs.

The Board has simply forwarded the Library budget as submitted by the Trustees and took no position on it.