

TOWN OF WISCASSET
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
February 26, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM at the Wiscasset Municipal Building.

Budget Committee members in attendance: Judith Colby , Sherri Dunbar, Pamela Dunning, Judy Flanagan, George Greene, Richard Hanson, and Steve Mehrl. Member absent was Greg Shea. There is currently one vacant seat on the Committee.

The Budget Committee met with Jack Swanton, Wiscasset representative and Charlotte Davenport, station manager from Lincoln County Television to present their proposed 2009/2010 budget. LCTV asks that the Town of Wiscasset give them 50% of the franchise fees that are collected.

Mr. Swanton began by giving a history of local television. The law first passed in 1934, was amended in 1984 and 1992. This law outlined the national policy, the franchise procedures, and sets up the process for determining the local needs for local television.

The franchise fees are negotiated every 10 years. When Wiscasset last negotiated these fees the Selectmen managed to get a good contract from Adelphia in 2004. Adelphia is to pay the town 5% of gross profits each year, in quarterly payments. This amounts to approximately \$40,000 a year.

LCTV would like to enlarge its budget in order to afford a full-time person to manage the station. LCTV would also like to see the Wiscasset High School use the LCTV facilities and equipment to teach students the basics of programming. Further LCTV would like to expand programming to include videos of local church services, community meetings and better broadcast Selectmen meetings. Not in the current budget, but hoped for in the future is streaming programming over the internet in the future and expanding to 3 local PEG channels (public, education, and government.)

LCTV had a bequest of \$50,000 left to them a few years ago. That money has been spent to set up a mobile studio. The next time fees are negotiated, all towns involved will be receiving 5%. Some towns give all they receive and other towns give none of the franchise fees to LCTV.

Mr. Swanton went on to state that he was cautiously optimistic about receiving 50% from each of the towns covered by LCTV. The station's equipment is available to anyone to use who would like to produce a program. The only condition is that there must be no obscene content.

There was a brief discussion about the poor quality of the Selectmen meetings. The entire board can not be seen on the screen. Public speakers can not always be seen. The audio will pick up some people whispering, while others talking in full voice can not be heard.

It was discussed that using a second camera would expand the video with a split screen and that possibly students could be trained to run the equipment and ensure a better production for community service hours.

The Budget Committee took a 2 minute break at 7:40 pm.

When the meeting continued, Judy Flanagan moved to approve the minutes of the February 5, 2009 meeting as amended. Motion was seconded by Sherri Dunbar. Motion passed 7-0.

There was a brief discussion about looking over the requests from the community organizations. The committee will study the requests in order to discuss them at a future meeting.

Selectman Phil DiVece was present at the meeting and updated the Budget Committee to some current events.

The \$92,000 that was thought to be taken from the Wiscasset School Department by the state budget cuts may be coming back to the schools.

The Wiscasset Yacht Club did not qualify for tax exempt status.

The town's Edward Jones accounts have suffered from the poor economic conditions. The balance has dropped from \$12 million to \$9 million.

Excise tax revenues look good this year. Anticipated revenue was \$400,000 and actual revenue was \$550,000.

There was a brief discussion about the possible budget process for the school budget this year. There is some confusion about Wiscasset having an open town meeting or just a regional meeting in Chelsea.

Sherri Dunbar moved to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Judith Colby. Having no further business, meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM

Respectfully submitted by Pamela Dunning, Clerk