

Minutes of the Budget Committee
Town Hall Public Meeting Room
January 21, 2016; 6:00 pm

Budget Committee members present: Mike Waddell, Chairman; Diane Bouthot; Dan McCrum; Bob Demers; Terry Oliver, Selectmen's Representative; Pat Lefebvre; Glen Eastman; Reuben Rajala; Dennis Arguin; Todd Lamarque.

Others present: Paul Bousquet, SAU 20 Superintendent; Grace Lapierre, Selectman; Michelle Lutz; PJ Cyr, Police Chief; Chad Miller, EMS Director; Denise Vallee, Finance Director; Robin Frost, Town Manager; Rick Eichler, Fire Chief; Shawn Costine.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Chairman Waddell.

Chairman Waddell welcomed Todd Lamarque and asked for a motion to appoint him to the Committee, taking Terry Rhoderick's seat until the next election. **On a motion by Glen Eastman, seconded by Diane Bouthot, the Committee voted unanimously to appoint Todd Lamarque to the Budget Committee until the next election in March.**

Chairman Waddell stated that tonight's agenda includes the School budget overview and Arthur Perry from the Fire Department. He also stated that he had made contact with the Library and the Water and Sewer Department. They are all set to meet with the Committee next Monday, January 22nd at 5 pm at the Library. Following that meeting is a Board of Selectmen's meeting at 6 pm, which committee members could then attend if they so desire. Chairman Waddell also reiterated that the next Budget Committee meeting is extremely important in that the committee will be discussed the proposed increases and deciding how to proceed. He asked that the Department heads be encouraged to attend.

Paul Bousquet distributed summaries of the changes in the School budget. He indicated that the budget is up 5%, which equates to \$1.86 on the tax rate. He explained the process which is to prepare the budget with the appropriate personnel and then the Finance Committee reviews the entire budget. It goes back to the Board with suggestions and then back to the Finance Committee.

A few highlights of the budget changes were: the operating budget which is up \$311,316; the support staff contract, which adds \$34,181 with increases at an average of 2.25%.

An on-going school building maintenance list was distributed as well as a tax history/per pupil cost report. The final report was another iteration of the budget with comparison by year.

Questions to Mr. Bousquet were:

Mr. McCrum stated that it appears that the 5% increase on the budget equates to a 13% increase on the tax rate. Mr. Bousquet will check with the Business Administrator to confirm.

Mr. Lefebvre asked about enrollment from Milan. Mr. Bousquet stated that there are 5 currently and 4 projected. Over all there are 7 in total with IEP placements.

Mr. Demers asked about the capital reserve funds. Mr. Bousquet said there are two; one has a total of approximately \$200,000 and the other, which is the result of Randolph and Shelburne's buy-in is approximately \$300,000. Mr. Demers then wondered if they needed to add \$150,000 to the capital reserve funds, if they have that much money. Mr. Bousquet talked about the list of building needs and what is to come in the not so distant future.

Mr. Lamarque asked if a staffing study had been done recently. Mr. Bousquet answered no, but they currently have about 17 students per class in the elementary grades and the high school fluctuates between 12 – 25 students depending on the class.

Mr. Lefebvre asked whether we send students to Berlin for trades and the answer is yes. We pay tuition for each. Mr. McCrum asked what the average tuition is for sending students to Berlin. Mr. Bousquet will get that answer.

Chairman Waddell stated that though the roofs could be a costly replacement, he suggested contacting a commercial roofing company to ask if the rubber on the roofs could be overlaid with new rubber thereby eliminating the need of replacing the roof.

Mr. Bousquet departed at 6:45 PM.

At 6:55 pm, members of the Fire Department; Arthur Perry, Janet Corrigan, Dana Horne, Wally Corrigan, Joe Savage, Adam White, Stephanie Kennedy, Paul Santos, John Sheets, Paul Gleason and Frank Ramsay, came in to express concerns about the possible merge of the Fire and EMS departments. Chairman Waddell explained to those present that this committee has no authority over this matter. Mr. Perry stated that he sees no need for a merger, he said full timers will have to get more money and they will have rank over the rest of the department. Mr. White stated that he lived through one merger and does not want to do it again. He further stated that Whitefield still has problems with their merged departments. Mr. Savage said we shouldn't try to fix something that's not broke. Chairman Waddell asked if the firefighters had any objection to cross training members. They said no. Mr. Horne stated that this department is unique in that we have four full time EMS people. He was on the study committee and was the only member who voted against recommending the merger. Chief Cyr stated that as the Chair of the study committee he felt that everyone is doing a good job with actual incidents, but administratively a merger would be an improvement. He feels that we are paying call people to come in and perform some duties that could be done with full time people on their regular shifts. There is a savings there. Ms. Kennedy said that the call people like to come in for parades and other special events and they do not charge for that time. TM Frost said that wouldn't change. Mr. Lefebvre asked to hear from the current fire chief. Chief Eichler stated that he is for the merger and always has been. He thinks one person in charge of both departments would be a benefit to the Town. We would have to have the right person to lead. Mr. Eastman said that he would be disappointed if the emphasis is not placed on fire experience during the hiring process. Chief Cyr stated that he would suggest placing the emphasis on leadership qualities as well as other proficiencies. EMS Director Miller asked that the members of the Budget Committee keep an open mind since there are other people, who were not invited to this meeting who may feel differently than these firefighters. The firefighter group departed.

Chief Cyr distributed and explained information that the committee had previously asked for. He explained how schedules would work in certain scenarios. He also showed a table of gas and diesel usage for his department and the other departments as well. Ms. Bouthot asked about a particularly high gas usage amount in November. Chief Cyr will research that. He pointed out that in his research of other towns, he found that the average number of officers in like-sized towns is between 7 and 8. He also presented the current roster of officers as well as those who had left the department in the last 5 years.

As there was no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin L. Frost
Acting secretary