

**Town of Brentwood
Budget Committee**
Minutes of January 30, 2017

Meeting: Budget committee meeting held at the Brentwood Town Office

Present: Krista Steger Chairperson, Keith Levitsky, Bill Faria, Malcolm Allison, Michelle Siudut, Melissa Hanlon, Jeff Bryan, Amy Mitchell

Visitors: Ken Christiansen, Kathy St.Hilaire, Karen Clement, David Toney, Kristina Veirotte, Valerie Rogers, Jessica Duffy, Rob Bergin, Keith Najjar.

Krista called the meeting to order at 6:32pm. Krista provided spreadsheets containing the town department's budget figures, and town warrant amounts with tax impacts. Amy provided a list of the school warrants. Malcolm provided newly revised minutes from Jan. 23 Budcomm meeting.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Krista called for approval of the revised draft minutes of the Budcomm meeting of December 12, 2016. Motion to approve Keith/Amy carried 8-0. Krista called for approval of the revised draft minutes of the Budcomm meeting of January 23, 2017. Several grammar and spelling errors were corrected. Motion to approve revised and corrected minutes Jeff/Keith carried 8-0.

Correspondence

Krista received two pieces of correspondence. Krista read them aloud. One from Kathy and Wayne St.Hilaire, and one from Valerie Rogers (Chair of the Recreation Commission). Both were in support of the Selectmen's and Budcomm's actions on the 2017 Rec Budget. Both were critical of Bill Faria's request for statistics identifying how many people participate in the Rec activities and his motives. Both encouraged the Budcomm not to reopen the Rec Budget.

For the visitors attending, Krista reviewed the Budcomm's annual procedure of re-visiting and possibly re-opening any town department, school budget, or warrant article, usually after all budgets and warrants have been acted upon. Budcomm decisions to re-open any of these and possible amendments to them are done by majority vote. Krista further stated that the chair relies on the Budcomm members to determine which budgets or warrants should be re-opened (if any) rather than directing the members to reopen certain ones.

Updates from the Selectman & School Board Representatives

Jeff reported that everything is going well. He requested that town warrants be handled first.

Amy presented the school warrants with final wording for Budcomm consideration.

Town Warrants for Consideration

Krista reviewed the Budcomm's actions at their last meeting on the town warrants.

She noted that the warrant for adding \$20K to the Capital Reserve for municipal software failed and asked Karen Clement to detail the software needs for the town. Karen explained that the existing software for tax assessing, billing and syncing with the state of NH is 25 years old and does not work efficiently. The new software is estimated to cost \$75K and will be purchased in 2020. She indicated that other town departments could tap into the reserve for software but each department would determine what they need.

Karen also commented on the capital reserve for hardware which includes new workstations, servers, switches, and firewalls for both the town and the police depts. She estimates that \$60K will be needed for these and if tablets for the police cruisers are included, a total of \$90K.

Krista asked if there was a comprehensive plan for software and hardware which included other department's possible needs. Ken commented that the library has their own board and will ask the town when they need something and the fire department has no current need for hardware or software.

Motion to re-open the Capital Reserve for municipal software warrant, Jeff/Amy, carried 8-0.

Motion to approve \$20K be added to the Capital Reserve for municipal software, Jeff/Amy, carried 8-0.

Motion to re-open the new Capital Reserve for municipal hardware warrant, Jeff/Amy, carried 8-0. Motion to approve starting a new Capital Reserve with \$20K for municipal hardware, Jeff/Amy, carried 8-0.

Krista suggested that in the future, the selectmen consider evaluating both software and hardware needs for all town departments and perhaps introduce a new budget item to provide funds on an annual basis for software and hardware. Discussion followed.

Motion to re-open the warrant to appropriate \$11,888 for emergency management, of which \$5944 will be raised from taxes and the other \$5944, will be provided by a grant from Seabrook Station, Jeff/Amy carried 8-0. Karen explained that this is intended to purchase two Patrol PC Rhino tablets. Keith suggested that the other warrant article for two Patrol PC Rhino tablets which Budcomm acted upon at last meeting be eliminated. Discussion followed. Motion to approve Keith/Amy, carried 8-0.

Motion to re-open the warrant for \$11,964 to purchase two Patrol PC Rhino tablets, which was acted upon at last week's Budcomm meeting, Jeff/Amy carried 8-0. Motion to change the amount from \$11964 to \$0 Jeff/Amy, carried 8-0.

Motion to discuss the warrant to create a new Capital Reserve fund for New Fire and Rescue vehicles Jeff/Amy carried 8-0. Jeff provided a list of the fire vehicles and reviewed the age of each one. He noted that we need to save money to replace the aging vehicles. Discussion followed. Motion to approve \$50K Jeff/Amy, failed 4-4. Krista asked the nays to explain. Melissa

stated that she thought the tax impact this year was significant and it should be deferred. Mal said he thought we have a couple of new vehicles, and in his opinion we don't need any more, besides there is no info regarding the number and kind of equipment we actually need. Bill said even if we had all new fire trucks, they wouldn't be able to save houses from burning and he had predicted that when we had a new fire station there would be a lot of pressure to fill it up with new equipment and more personnel. Amy reiterated that we still need to replace the old equipment. More discussion followed. Motion to approve \$50K Krista/Keith, failed 4-4. Keith proposed \$25K instead of \$50K. Discussion followed including the anticipated donation of \$85K to this fund from the fire auxiliary. Motion to approve \$25K Jeff/Keith, carried 5-3.

Krista asked for a straw poll on whether or not the Budcomm would support accepting \$84K donation from the fire auxiliary to be put into the Capital Reserve fund for New Fire and Rescue vehicles. All were in favor.

Motion to un-table the new Capital Reserve fund for a solar panel array for municipal operations Mal/Michelle carried 8-0. Malcolm explained that adding the library's energy usage increased the size of the generator to 99KW, which increased the number of solar panels in the system. The new amount that should be saved each year to buy the system after 6 years is \$17,000. Discussion followed. Motion approve \$17,000 Mal/Michelle, carried 8-0.

Karen Clement stated that there will be another warrant authorizing the selectmen to enter into a Power Purchase Agreement with Revision Energy; however, there may or may not be any financial impact. Krista noted that if there is financial impact the Budcomm will handle that warrant on Feb 13, and if there is no financial impact the Budcomm will not vote on it.

School Warrants for Consideration

Krista reviewed the 4 warrants presented by Amy.

The first warrant which is for the operating budget of \$5,450,822 has already been acted upon and approved by the Budcomm.

The second warrant is to raise and appropriate up to \$10K and place it in the Special Ed Trust Fund. The money is to be taken from the June 30, 2017 available fund balance and transferred on July 1. No amount is to be raised from taxation. Motion to approve Amy/Michelle, carried 8-0.

The third warrant is to raise and appropriate up to \$10K and place it in the Maintenance Trust Fund. The money is to be taken from the June 30, 2017 available fund balance and transferred on July 1. No amount is to be raised from taxation. Motion to approve Jeff/Michelle, carried 8-0.

The fourth warrant is to raise and appropriate up to \$10K and place it in the Safety and Security Expendable Trust Fund. The money is to be taken from the June 30, 2017 available fund balance and transferred on July 1. No amount is to be raised from taxation. Motion to approve Jeff/Amy, carried 8-0.

Krista advised Amy that in School warrant write-ups published in the Brentwood newsletter to be sure that the write-up indicates that no amounts are to be raised from taxation.

Krista reviewed the town budget totals on the spread sheet she provided showing that the selectmen approved \$3,509,933(a 6.89% increase over last year) whereas the Budcomm approved \$3,504,334 (a 6.72% increase over last year). She then estimated that tax impact for the town budget to be \$0.39 per thousand, or \$137.85 on a \$350K house. She estimated the tax impact of the Warrant articles to be \$0.21, and the school operating budget to be \$0.09. All these together result in an estimated tax impact of \$0.70 per thousand which translates to approximately a \$245-\$250 increase on a \$350K house. This does not include the tax impact due to the Co-op school budget.

Other Business

Motion to re-open the warrant to raise and appropriate \$5250 for the purchase of one E-Z rider K-9 container Bill/Amy carried 7-1. Bill stated that the police department is going to get a dog and train it so we should consider buying the container. Discussion followed. Karen Clement stated that the police department (Chief Robinson) will get the funds from their detail pay and will withdraw the warrant. Motion was withdrawn.

Motion to re-open the rec department budget Bill/Michelle failed 4-4. Krista asked Bill and the members who voted yes why they would like to reopen and what they would like to discuss. Bill stated he would like discuss what he asked for regarding the the number of participants in town who use the rec programs and what he received. Michelle, Amy, and Melissa said they would like to hear what Bill has to say, and as a Budcomm member he should be given the opportunity. In light of those comments, Krista asked for the motion to reopen again, as she might change her vote. Discussion followed. Motion to re-open Bill/Michelle, carried 5-3.

Bill stated that the information he received and passed out to the Budcomm members regarding the number of townspeople participants who are using the rec programs (bearing in mind there are 4400 citizens in Brentwood) in his opinion, does not justify a full time rec director.

Jeff said if you go to the rec fields or other the rec facilities you will see that they are being well used. Bill reviewed the numbers he received and did not agree. Discussion followed.

Keith stated that he thought that overall the rec facilities are well used and while our votes were close that on the balance in his opinion a full time director to oversee the programs is justified.

Krista stated that in her opinion the rec programs take time to organize and manage and we need someone who has the time, ability, and knowledge to do it efficiently and make sure that the budget money is spent wisely. In view of that, she supports a dedicated full time rec director.

Keith added that having local rec programs is a way for the participants to feel a sense of community rather than having to participate in rec programs in other towns.

Mal re-iterated what swayed him to vote positive for a full time rec director was that we need a qualified person to run an effective rec program and to get and keep a good one we must offer a full time position with benefits, even though it cost the town more than some of us can easily justify. We should make it a full time position and give the current part time director the opportunity.

Michelle stated that the numbers of rec participants seem low and the high cost is a burden. We are still a relatively small town as compared to Exeter or Statham where the rec cost is spread out over more people.

Ken Christiansen, a visitor who was allowed to speak, commented that in his weekly visits to the rec there are numerous participants and the parking lot is full, there are outstanding rec events going on organized by the current rec director. We don't fully realize his value.

Rob Bergin (the Rec Commissioner), a visitor who was allowed to speak, commented:

1. The rec department is not just for kids, there are many adult programs as well.
2. Programs are for entire families including children, adolescents, parents and grandparents.
3. A rec director is needed to set up events for the coaches so they can focus directly on coaching rather than having to organize the teams, set up the field, etc.
4. The rec programs are intended to get children and adolescents off their electronic devices and participate in events.
5. Brentwood is the 3rd largest town in the area next to Exeter and Stratham, large enough to have its own rec programs
6. In replacing the previous rec director, it was difficult to get a high quality person who would take a part time position; a full time position is needed.
7. A full time director will create more rec programs and draw more participants
8. Information regarding the number of participants in rec programs, asked by citizens should be directed to the town administrator or Rec Commission.

Valerie Rogers, a visitor who was allowed to speak, stated that it is difficult to get an accurate count on the number of participants; there is no system or device in place to do that. Shouldn't the number of people watching the events also be counted? The rec department has no staff available to count people. She believes the information given to Bill is not an accurate representation of how many towns' people participate; it's just not possible to collect. The majority of the rec hours are donated by volunteers; we need a director to facilitate.

Kathy St. Hilaire pointed out that the rec director attends athletic event scheduling meetings in other towns in the evening; he has coaches meetings also in the evening, and in charge of getting the rec building ready for elections.

Jeff moved to approve \$69,685 for the Rec Dept. budget. Krista indicated that this amount was what the selectman approved and included making the rec director position full time and giving him a salary increase, while the Budcomm approved \$68,739 which was full time but at the existing salary level. There was no second to the motion.

Motion to approve \$68,739 Jeff/Krista, carried 6-2.

Motion to discuss the Legal Dept. budget (\$37,002) Mal/Jeff, carried 8-0. Jeff stated that we are still in a legal battle with the Town of Exeter over the Pine road issue so there may be legal bills. Malcolm stated that \$23K in attorney fees were not used this year so this budget could be a candidate for reduction as there is no point in raising money through taxes only to return it to the general fund at year end. Discussion followed. There were no motions to reopen this budget.

Motion to discuss the Debt budget (\$340,655) Mal/Michelle, carried 6-2. Mal stated that \$25K was not used this year and possibly interest payments are going down; possibly we could reduce the budget. Jeff stated that it is the TANS which were not used this year. This is a fund set aside for the selectmen to use for emergencies. There were no motions to reopen this budget.

Motion to discuss the Insurance budget (\$103,017) Mal/Michelle carried 7-1. Mal stated that the insurance rate apparently went down as we did not use \$22K. Karen Clement explained that we are in transition changing insurance carriers and that's why the money is left, next year we will need it all. Discussion followed. There were no motions to reopen this budget.

Motion to discuss the Fire Dept. budget (\$425,945) Mal/Bill carried 6-2. Karen suggested we include the Fire Chief in any discussion. Krista stated we need to discuss to see if there is any reason to consider reopening the budget, and then the Fire Chief can be invited. Malcolm stated that \$50K was left over on the salary, benefits, fuel and repairs lines. We approved a 16% increase to \$425K based on us getting a new fire chief and keeping Kevin available to transition. Ken Christiansen explained that in this past year the chief had difficulty getting weekend staffing hence the salary and benefit lines had funds left. He reviewed the progress in the search for a new chief and medical person. Jeff indicated there was a part time secretary being added too. Discussion followed. Melissa noted that in the past 4 years there has been a 43% increase in the fire department budget, which is not sustainable. Krista stated that the Budcomm expects the new fire chief to assess the budget and make changes accordingly. More discussion followed. Krista asked if there would be enough votes to re-open the budget, and there were not. Several members of the Budcomm indicated that in view of the double digit increases over the past 4 years this budget will be closely scrutinized next year,

Review of Materials for Public Hearing

Krista will use a similar presentation for the Public hearing next week, as last year. She will send it out to the members for review before the Hearing.

Karen will provide the Town budget for the members to sign and Malcolm will get the School MS-27 budget forms for members to sign at the next meeting.

Next meeting is on February 13, 2017 at 6:30pm, and the Public Hearing at 7pm

Visitor Comments

Ken Christiansen thanked the committee for the co-operation with the rec department.

Motion to adjourn Jeff/Mal, carried 8-0 8:42pm

Minutes respectfully submitted by Malcolm Allison