

**Town of Brentwood
Budget Committee**
Minutes of December 18, 2017

Meeting: Budget committee meeting held at the Brentwood Town Office

Present: Krista Steger (Chair), Malcolm Allison, Michelle Siudut, Jeff Bryan, Jessie Hollister, Keith Levitsky and Bill Faria

Visitors: Kim Woods, Lisa Swasey, Frank Markiewicz, Ron Kew, Scott Dennehy, Allison ??, Elza Silva, Bill Furbush, Marc Wilson, Jim Clark, and Kathy Sperounis

Krista called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Proposed department budget approved by the selectmen for the Library, was passed out with the revised General Government budget and the associated selectmen's meeting minutes. The proposed Swazey School budget with warrant articles were passed out by Ron Kew and Bill Furbush.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Krista identified two revisions to the draft minutes of the Budcomm meeting of November 27, 2017. Motion to approve the revised minutes Jeff/Jessie carried 7-0.

Budgets for Consideration

Financial, Tax & Assessing Budget was tabled at the last meeting pending clarification of retirement funding for a 32hr bookkeeper position. It is up \$14,616 from last year's \$62,351 at \$76,967. The increase is to fund a new bookkeeper, to accommodate the increase in health insurance, and for increased audit expenses. Krista confirmed that this position, even though it is 32 hrs., does not include retirement benefits. Motion to untable Krista/Jessie carried 7-0. Discussion followed. Bill pointed out that the individual who would be hired as a 32hr bookkeeper, could ask for retirement benefits in the future, and the town would be required to fund that benefit. Motion to approve Mal/Jeff, carried 6-1.

Library Budget is down \$9,712 from last year at \$245,648. Krista read the selectmen's minutes and support material which explained that most of the decrease was the result of a full time employee deciding not to take health benefits. Motion to discuss Jeff/Jessie, carried 7-0. Discussion followed. Krista noted that there was no one present from the library. Jeff indicated that the library commission investigated what other towns are paying their library staff and intend to make the necessary adjustments. He further stated that the library salary levels are not in the purview of the selectmen. Numerous questions about the staffing and salary were asked. There was no one present to answer these at this time, motion to table Krista/Jessie, carried 6-1.

School Operating Budget

The Swasey School operating budget is up \$32,132(0.59%) from last year at \$5,482,954. The needed funding for the new 4 year Collective Bargaining Agreement, \$78,970, will be a warrant article. Motion to discuss Jessie/Jeff, carried 7-0. Ron Kew walked the Budcomm through the 5 page operating budget, which was arranged so the line item increases/decreases were in ascending order starting with the line item with the largest decrease. This arrangement made it simple for the Budcomm to easily identify line items with significant increases or decreases for discussion. These line items with such significance have an associated explanation shown in blue just beneath the line.

Here are the lines with \$10K or over increase or decrease:

Special ed out of district Tuition -\$146,000(Now a CO-OP Expense)

Special ed Transportation -\$30,000(Less Bus needs)

Psychologist Salaries -\$21,197(New Hire)

Trash Removal -\$10,000 (Lower Cost Contract)

Special Ed Instruction Aide +\$11,637(3% increases for paraprofessionals)

Teachers Retirement Benefits +\$12,115

General Ed Instruction Aides +\$16,348(New Hire, and Salary increase)

Technology Equipment +\$25,750(Updating pads, and STEM lab equipment)

Employee Health insurance Benefits +\$38,358

Technology Salaries +\$60,792(New hire of a STEM/Integrator position)

Bill Furbush noted that this year the Ron Kew and school board did a great job in being fiscally responsible and preparing the budget to hold it at +0.6% over last year.

Ron Kew noted that the Technology integrator/new hire and the equipment increase are part of a proposed 3 year Science Technology Engineering Mathematics(STEM) program for all k-5 students, which has long been needed. It is a teaching position not an individual to fix or repair computer equipment. The individual is to be someone who can teach problem solving and how to effectively use today's technology equipment. The equipment increase is to invest in equipment that is currently used such as pads and chromebooks rather than desktop computers. Discussion and questions followed.

Bill observed that the program will be annual since once it is started it must be maintained. He also observed that the budget is almost flat this year because of the reduction of \$146K in special ed outside tuition, and registered concern about budgets in the future which may go up significantly.

Keith asked about the possibility of putting the STEM new hire and the associated pad and lab equipment in a warrant article to make sure the town supports the program. Ron explained that if it was a warrant, and failed, then he could not spend any money on STEM at all, so it made more sense to put it in the budget. Keith also asked what other grade schools in the SAU are doing with STEM just for benchmarking. Ron said that Kensington and Stratham do have similar programs. Keith asked if Swasey was still the school in the SAU with the lowest cost per student even with this new budget. Jessie and Ron both replied yes.

Krista asked if the line for account 118 was for the tech aide to fix or repair the equipment. Ron answered yes. She also asked about OT and PT being combined. The answer was that the accounting system has changed but there is no change to the service.

Michelle asked how much equipment the school has. Ron stated 100 chromebooks and 60 I pads.

Mal asked about the school population currently and in the future. Ron indicated 305-308 is current range and that approximate number is projected for the next several years.

Motion to approve operating budget of \$5,482,954 Jeff/Jessie carried 7-0.

School Warrant Articles

Bill Furbush spoke about the Teacher contract which is 4 year contract at 2.6% increase per year. The first year the amount is \$78,970. He indicated that there are three health care options available to the teachers in the new contract which may save money if the teachers elect one of the alternate plans. He also stated that both the teachers and the school board support the new contract and the health care options 100%.

Bill Furbush stated that other schools who's teacher contracts are up have settled on 3 to 3.5% yearly increases. Discussion and questions followed. Motion to recommend the Collective Bargaining Agreement Warrant Jessie/Keith carried 7-0.

There are three warrant articles of up to \$10K each to be funded from the unreserved balance available for transfer on June 30, none from additional taxation. These amounts are to be added to the Special Ed Trust Fund(which is \$68,284 currently), Maintenance Trust Fund(which is \$84,757 currently), and the Safety and Security Trust Fund (which is \$20,000 currently) respectively.

Bill reminded the Budcomm that these amounts are not "free money" the amounts would not come back to the general fund to offset future taxes. Discussion followed.

Motion to recommend adding up to \$10K to the Special Ed Trust Fund Jessie/Mal carried 7-0

Motion to recommend adding up to \$10K to the Maintenance Trust Fund Jessie/Mal carried 7-0

Motion to recommend adding up to \$10K to the Safety and Security Trust Fund Jeff/Mal carried 6-1.

Krista thanked the school board, Ron, Bill Furbush, and all involved for their work on the budget and warrant articles.

Representatives from the Library Commission were now in present. Motion to reopen the Library Budget Krista/Jessie carried 7-0. Library Budget is down \$9,712 from last year at \$245,648.

Krista asked about the salary increases which are on the order of 10%. Marc Wilson explained that these were not meant to be merit increases but salary adjustments. Several of the library staff left to work in different towns as the Brentwood salary levels were not competitive. He further stated that the commission looked at salary levels in comparable size towns to establish the higher salary levels. The library director is leaving and must be replaced by a new qualified individual. Marc also noted that the makeup and types of the staff needed has changed as well. Discussion followed. Motion to approve \$245,648 Jeff/Jessie carried 7-0.

Motion to discuss the General Government Budget Krista/Jessie carried 7-1. Jeff stated that Robin Wrighton and Michelle Siudut have agreed to take over the Brentwood Newsletter and have requested an additional \$2500 in the budget. The selectmen have recommended \$1500. Discussion followed. Motion to approve \$37,826 Jeff/Mal carried 6-0-1, with Michelle abstaining, as she is involved.

Other Business

None

Visitor Comments

None

Next Meeting

January 8, 2018 at 7pm

Krista stated that she will see how many warrant articles are complete at that time, and decide whether or not to have the meeting. She also stated that she would send out an updated spreadsheet showing where we stand on the 2018 Town budget so far.

Motion to adjourn at 8:25 Jeff/Keith, carried 7-0.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Malcolm Allison