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**Budget Committee Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, January 12, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.  
Meeting Held by Zoom Video Conference**

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**Committee Members Present:** *Alfred Ajami, Alex Beaudet, Sandra Brackett, Rob Davidson, Paul DiMauro, Sandra Guibord, Charles Hanson, Kelly Harvell, Paul Leeman III, Harry "Terry" Lowd, Karl McLetchie, and Patricia Porter*

**Also present:** *Chad Hanna (Selectboard Chair), Kristine Poland (Selectboard), Christopher Hall (Town Administrator), Jessica Westhaver (Treasurer)*

**Voting Capacity for the meeting – 12 voting members**

**The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.**

**New Business –**

- **Non-Profit Provider Agency Requests Consent Agenda:**

- The board was presented an agenda compiled by Lowd, Hanson, and Hall in preparation to review non-profit provider agency requests. The board previously discussed waiving the requirement (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) of presentation from the agencies who do not have an increase in their previous year request. The agenda was divided between two categories, "Consent Agenda" and "For Presentation". The Consent Agenda was developed for agencies with no increase of request from 2020, with one exception as the agency did not draw funds from taxation:

- Bristol Area Library - \$14,500 .00
- CLC Adult Education - \$10,371.18
- ElderCare Network - \$7,500.00
- Healthy Kids - \$1,200.00
- LifeFlight of Maine - \$1,500.00
- New Hope for Women - \$1,045.00
- Spectrum Generations - \$7,000.00
- Lincoln County Television - \$11,500.00 (increase from \$9,753 in 2020 which is funded through Franchise Fees received by the Town)

- **VOTE on consent agenda:** Ajami made a motion to approve the provider agencies listed on the consent agenda; Brackett seconded. Approved 12-0.

- **Presentation of Non-Profit Provider Agencies:**

- For Presentation:
  - Two agencies were requested to present their agenda to the board as one had an increase of the previous year. The other agency had lapsed a year in their request and had no submission in 2020. Town policy requires when an agency has an increase or a lapse in request, they are to meet with the board and collect petition

signatures to request funding. This year, the requirement to collect signatures was waived due to the pandemic.

- CLC Ambulance - \$79,934.46 (increase from \$76,612.50 in 2020)
- Olde Bristol Historical Society - \$9,500.00 (no request received in 2020, however, same request from 2019)

○ **CLC Ambulance:**

- Nicholas Bryant, Service Chief, was invited to speak to the board on behalf of CLC Ambulance for his 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year.
  - 2020 saw an increase to equipment cost due to the need to purchase Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and little increase in payroll due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staffing/Payroll had to be handled very differently this year due to staff needed to quarantine and extra precautions needed to stay safe.
  - Revenues were down from 2019 (\$40k short).
  - 2 new ambulances were purchased which will lower costs on maintenance and repair. The purchase of the new apparatuses was 100% funded by grants received and donations.
  - Current year budget is derived from call volume and the 2018 tax valuation (2018 was used in error). There will be discussion at their next meeting to adjust their budget to the 2019 tax valuation which may only see a \$200 increase to Bristol, but it has not been decided if they will move forward with changing their budget due to the inconsequential amount. 2020 call volume for Bristol went down, while other towns within the CLC agreement have gone up.
- Questions from the committee:
  - Ajami wanted to have on record he still believes the formula is unfair to Bristol. Damariscotta had a 44% call volume and Bristol only had a 27% call volume. Damariscotta also carries more payments in delinquency. This is a repeat request from Ajami from the 2019 budget meetings with CLC Ambulance. Bryant pointed out the adjustment column in the budget, which speaks directly to the payments received from Medicare. Medicare pays less for services than private insurance. Historically, payments from Bristol residents come from Medicare and many other Towns have a higher percentage covered by private insurance. There is a contractual obligation to accept the payment amount from Medicare, which is less than the actual billed amount. The amount of money received per call in Bristol is lower compared to other towns, which is a factor in the formula to bill out to the Towns under the CLC agreement. Prior to Bryant being a part of CLC, the formula was entirely based on tax valuation. CLC is a quasi-municipal agency that is governed by 6 towns, so valuation has always been a part of the formula, which follows suit with coverage from the Sheriff's Office, County Tax, etc. The formula has been debated by all Towns, some of which do not agree with the tax valuation formula and some that do. A formula to please all 6 towns would be extremely complicated and convoluted.
  - Hanson asked what becomes of the unpaid bills. There is no reference in the budget to compensate for this. Are they forgiven and written off? Bryant stated bills go into arrears after 180 days. Once they are unpaid for 1 year from the service they are written off. Unpaid bills are a mix of situations; unlocatable individuals who are none-residents; individuals who have gone into convalescent nursing and cannot pay their bill, and some individuals who have passed away.
  - Brackett referenced the volume of calls attended to on the Miles Hospital Campus between the different buildings, between lift assists, transport between a facility and the hospital as well as other locations on the campus. It seems the volume of calls is substantially in Damariscotta. Bryant spoke to the call volume

- being correct, however, the amount of time staff is labeled “out of service” for a call on the Miles campus is substantially less than when staff have to respond to a call in Bristol (extreme distance being the down to the point). Call volume and call service time are two factors which can be considered similar. In addition, the increase in summer population in Bristol increases call volume in the summer. Davidson built on this question asking if Damariscotta has in town First Responders similar to Bristol. Bryant stated they do not. However, it is important to keep in mind that while Bristol has First Responders, CLC Ambulance is still paged out to every call and required to respond. Often times CLC will get halfway to a call and be called off by the Bristol First Responders, but CLC still has to be put in motion and taken out of service until called off.
- Beaudet noted that the payroll line has barely increased and asked if any staff have received pay increases in the last year? Should we be paying essential workers more. Does the Town of Bristol, or its representatives object to raises? Bryant stated there were no raises in 2020. This has been a big debate during the budgeting process. Many towns did not want to give raises. Bryant agrees the CLC staff is not paid enough and a good comparison is Boothbay, where they pay their paramedics 2 to 3 times the salary that CLC currently pays. Currently paramedics are the lowest paid form of healthcare. The staff at CLC are very dedicated, however recruiting is becoming extremely difficult.
- Hanson asked Hanna and Hall if briefings are brought to the Selectboard from the Town representatives on the CLC board (Donald Means and Joseph Rose)? Both stated they could not recollect any debriefings since the 2019 financial crisis and agreed it would be proper to do so. Bryant agreed, stating information being discussed at this meeting would be good questions brought to CLC committee through their regular meetings from the Town representatives.
- Hall reminded the board of the plan to review the bylaws of all the Towns in agreement with CLC Ambulance, however due to the pandemic, it was pushed to the side.
- **VOTE on CLC Ambulance:** Ajami made a motion to approve the CLC Ambulance budget request to the Town as presented, with the request in the next year to conduct a more in-depth review on scaling the formula on each Towns shortfall, by percentage of what they owe; Porter seconded. Approved 12-0.
- **Old Bristol Historical Society:**
  - Robert Ives was invited to speak to the board on behalf of Old Bristol Historical Society. OBHS requested funding in 2019, however, did not submit a request for 2020.
    - Ives shared with the board the progression of the OBHS in the last few years. Currently all historical documents are kept in the McKinley School. Unfortunately, this building does not have the proper setup and protection in place to keep the documents safe. Some documents have become mildewed and in less than pristine condition. In 2019 OBHS acquired the Old Bristol Mill, formerly Poole Brothers and then Hammond Lumber. So far, they have been able to raise the money needed to start the project of restore the old mill as well as construction inside of the second building, which will hold their new archival vault. In 2019 OBHS requested \$9,500 towards to development of this vault and currently has this money set aside for this use. They have committed to building only what they can fund without incurring debt, which is \$27,200. The vault will be a 10x30 concrete fire and waterproof vault. Phase 1 is currently underway and is hoped to be completed with a few weeks. Phase 2 is to outfit the vault with steel fireproof door, lighting, and a heat pump for temperature control and a humidity control unit, which is estimated at \$14,400. With a total cost of the vault at \$41,600. The request to the Town in the 2021 budget is to be used for phase 2 of the vault construction. Once complete and the pandemic is behind us,

a celebration is planned to welcome the community to the new historical center, celebrating the ability to properly store Bristol's history.

- Questions from the committee:
  - Ajami asked if in the age of the pandemic with food insecurity and people in need, is it appropriate to designate money to a historical society instead of direct assistance to residents in need? If the Town has the money available to do both, then it seems appropriate. Ives agreed that human need is absolutely the most important need. If there is enough to go around, the historical vault and preservation of historical records is vital to keeping the history of our community alive and available to the future generations. Hall made note for the community the Town has received many generous donations of funding for helping those in need and is currently looking for ways to help those in tough situations. Harvell, who is both a board member and the Pastor of the New Harbor Church and Food Pantry, they have received an abundance of food and donations and are also looking for ways to branch out help in other ways. Porter, who speaks on behalf of Caring for Kids shared with the committee their request for funding from the Town for the 2021 budget has been withdrawn because of a generous donor. These points were shared to be able to display the request from OBHS would not be pulling from funds available to those in need. McLetchie, who agreed with Ajami, was concerned with this request as he had also heard through Hall's bi-weekly newsletter, that taxes would be going up this year.
  - Hanson asked what type of agreement was in place to house the documents in the attic currently store at the Town Office. Hall stated there is no current agreement, but one would be worked on with the Town Clerk for a process to house records. Certain records need to be easily accessible, and other's need to be available within a certain time frame. Hanson also asked if it would be reasonable for OBHS to request a storage fee for these records? Are these records considered historical archives or Town archives? If it is Town archives, should there be a warrant article to buy into this historical center? Ives states, from his prospective, that they would be honored to store these Town archives and they would not look to charge because this is the purpose of the vault, to store the Towns history. They are doing this because they are a part of this community.
  - Beaudet asked of the funding that has already been received, how is it allocated? Is the OBHS at a standstill without receiving the request from the Town? Ives stated to the committee the OBHS budgeting committee came up with a formula of 80/15/5. 80% of funding received will go towards restoration of the mill, 15% will go to the history center, and 5 % will go to the park surrounding the property. Since July of 2020, the campaign to restore the mill, history center, and park has received roughly \$150,000, and the OBHS board has stuck with this formula. OBHS will continue their fund raising strategies. They are not at a standstill without the Town funding; however, it slows the progression of the project's completion of the vault, and their hope is to have the records transferred to a safer location sooner than later. The hope is to see phase 2 of this project be completed by the end of 2021.
  - Beaudet reiterated McLetchie's early comment about taxes going up, and many residents cannot afford a tax increase. Hanna shared with the board the school budget is increasing a couple hundred thousand dollars. The general budget for the Town will have small increases in spending, but nothing dramatic. The school is approximately 67% of the Town budget. With the higher than normal collection on property, excises, and other payments in 2020, Hanna did not feel concerned with the current budget, and believes the \$9,500 is bargain for the Town to have use of such an archive system for its records.

- **VOTE on Old Bristol Historical Society:** Ajami made a motion to approve the Old Bristol Historical Society request to the Town as presented; Harvell seconded. Approved 11-0-1 (*Porter abstained*)
- Beaudet wished to have on record that if the Town is in such good financial shape, he believes it is extremely important for our Town or our Town's representatives to go to bat to give essential workers a pay increase in the next budget process.

**Housekeeping –**

- The board will meet again on February 1<sup>st</sup> and February 2<sup>nd</sup>. The first night will include the Budget Committee will meet on the Town, Fire & Rescue, and Transfer Station will present their budgets. The second night will have the School, and Parks & Recreation Departments to present their budget.
- Town Meeting to be held on March 15<sup>th</sup>.

Meeting adjourned at 8:11pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Jessica Westhaver  
 Staff Liaison