



**BUDGET COMMITTEE - 2019  
MINUTES**

**December 11, 2019, 7 pm – Town Office**

**Present:**

**Committee Members:** Alfred Ajami, Alex Beaudet, Mike Cheney, Rob Davidson, Richard Francis, Chuck Hanson, Terry Lowd, Karl McLetchie, Patricia Porter. Arrived after voting of Chair: Paul DiMauro, Sandee Brackett. Apologies: Paul Leeman III

**Selectmen:** Kristine Poland & Paul Yates. Apologies: Chad Hanna

**Town Administrator:** Christopher Hall

**Deputy Treasurer:** Lindsay Currier

**Members of the Public:** Candy Congdon (Lincoln County News), Phil Congdon

Selectman P. Yates opened the meeting at 7pm with the Pledge of Allegiance and Introductions.

Election of Chair

R. Davidson nominated T Lowd

A. Ajami seconded

In favor - 4

K. McLetchie nominated R Francis

A. Beaudet seconded

In favor - 3

P. Porter nominated C Hanson

R. Davidson seconded

In favor - 2

In view of the lack of a majority for one candidate, the Chair put the question whether the Committee should hold a runoff ballot between the two leading candidates. He polled the Committee, and there being 7 votes in favor of such a second ballot and two abstentions, asked for votes for Lowd and for Francis.

In favor of T Lowd – 6

In favor of R Francis – 3

Paul Yates declared Terry Lowd elected, and asked him to take the Chair.

Election of Vice Chair

C Hanson was nominated by P.Porter

C Hanson seconded.

R Francis was nominated by A. Beaudet

K McLetchie seconded

In favor of C Hanson – 3

In favor of R Francis – 4

Richard Francis was declared elected Vice Chair

T Lowd then asked the Committee for comments or concerns on the general Charge to the Budget Committee:

R Francis asked for definition of how the Budget Committee makes recommendations to voters. C Hall explained that historically the Committee makes recommendations on the budgets by committee vote and the Selectmen take a separate vote at their Board meeting. The Town has the final vote at Town Meeting which has the authority of state law as the Town's Legislature. Expenditure by the Town can only be made under the authority of a Warrant article. K Poland added that it is appropriate for a member of Budget Committee to explain the Committee's perspective at Town Meeting before the final vote.

A discussion of the general budget process followed. C Hall explained that the town does not know what the surplus for 2020 is until after the 2019 audit is completed, sometime in late January. A second factor compressing the Budget Committee's duties into a short window of time is the need to get the Warrant to the printers in late February, to be ready for Town Meeting in March.

R Francis questioned if there was any way for the committee to receive the budgets ahead of the meetings at which they vote. C Hall urged members to attend Selectboard, School, and other town public meetings to be aware of intended budgets. P Dimauro further advised the Committee that the meeting in February is not the right time to argue the school budget, and to have an impact members need to attend School Board meetings.

C Hall noted that the school budget increased \$700,000 last year and that the school budget accounts for the largest portion of the Town's overall budget, which caused the mill rate to rise from 6.25 to 6.75 per thousand. Hall continued that the school is on a fiscal year matching the academic year, from July through June, so that the 2019 Town tax assessment only covered 6 months of the increased school budget. 2020 will have 12 months at the new budgeted amount,

leaving a need for a similar mill rate increase even if no other changes are made from the 2019 budget numbers.

C Hanson expanded on discussion of the school budget, explaining that fluctuations in Lincoln Academy enrollment and Special Education requirements are responsible for large budget changes. Hanson believed that over 80% of the school budget is nondiscretionary, comprising such things as students' tuition to Lincoln Academy, state-required provision for special education needs, and minimum staffing levels for each grade of students. R Davidson recalled that there have been years when the school budget was voted down at Town Meeting and the school had to adjust their budget for re-submission. S Brackett added that one year the Budget Committee targeted the Superintendent's office costs, and it had a significant impact.

The Committee went on to discuss the timing of the School Boards and what opportunities it would have to get insight into the several departments' budgets. R Francis asked the Town Administrator to request a meeting between the Committee and the School Superintendent's office, once the draft school budget has been presented to the School Board, to discuss it and allow for questions before the formal hearing and vote in February. This met with general support and Hall agreed to do so.

In further discussion, Francis insisted that he wished to have additional meetings with the appropriate budget authorities on the School, Parks and Town budgets. Poland pointed out that there is limited opportunity to ask questions in a budget presentation to an elected Board, while a meeting with the Budget Committee – especially if questions can be submitted in advance – would offer more time for members of the committee to engage. It was then moved by A. Ajami, seconded by R. Davidson, that the Chair and Vice Chair should put together a proposed list of currently-scheduled meetings of other bodies that Members of the Committee could attend to familiarize themselves with the budget, and secondly, to meet in the coming week with the Town Administrator to schedule dates for additional meetings of the Budget Committee with the School Superintendent, Selectmen and Parks Commissioners. Motion passed, 9 – 0.

Important dates include the following:

Tuesday December 17<sup>th</sup> – AOS 93 public hearing and vote, 5.30 pm at Great Salt Bay School

Wednesday December 18<sup>th</sup> – Bristol Selectmen continue review of Town budget and capital spending forecast

Thursday January 2<sup>nd</sup> – School Board budget presentation, 5.30 pm at Bristol School library

Wednesday January 8<sup>th</sup> – Bristol Selectmen, presentation of Parks budget

Tuesday, January 14<sup>th</sup> – Budget Committee hearing of non-profit agency requests

Wednesday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> – Town & Fire Budgets with Selectboard

During the discussion, M. Cheney asked why the Town Meeting could not be deferred until later in the year, to give the budget committee more time and also allow seasonal residents the opportunity to discuss the budget. Hall offered his understanding that the timing is driven by the

schedule for determining the mill rate, committing the taxes on the basis of valuation at April 1<sup>st</sup>, and printing and mailing the tax bills in May.

Hall outlined the need for members of the Committee to declare potential conflicts of interest, usually meaning situations where the member or one of their immediate family is in a position where they benefit financially from an item in the budget, either by being an employee or a contractor or supplier, or by having a family member who is an elected official who will vote on some portion of the budget. In addition, if a member is a Board Member of a non-profit petitioning for funds, they should not vote on that agency's request. As an example, Hall noted that P. Leeman III has in the past abstained from voting on the Fire budget article, as a member of the Fire Department (and now is a contractor for the Beach Pavilion).

A number of members of the Committee declared conflicts as follows:

- P Dimauro Beach Pavilion sub-contractor
- P Porter (Parks Budget, and any requests from the Byways Committee);
- P DiMauro (Parks Budget);
- M Cheney asked if his daughter-in-law being an employee of the school was grounds for recusal. Hall said he would check the MMA guidelines and get back to him.

There being no further business, it was moved by R Davidson to Adjourn. The Committee adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Lindsay Currier  
Deputy Treasurer  
12/12/2019