

**Town of Chester
Budget Committee Meeting
Monday, October 17th, 2016
Municipal Complex
Approved Minutes**

I Meeting to Order

Chairman Weider called this meeting of the Town of Chester Budget Committee to order at 7:00pm.

II Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Weider led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III Attendance

Budget Committee members present:

Mike Weider, Chairman

Rhonda Lamphere, Vice-Chair

Steve D'Angelo

Chuck Heuer

Royal Richardson on behalf of Mike Romick, School Board Liaison

Brian Shankey

Dick Trask, BOS Liaison

Budget Committee members absent:

Cass Buckley

Mike Romick, School Board Liaison

Members of the Public Present:

Becky Owens

IV Announcements by the Chair - Welcome

Chairman Weider introduced member of the public Becky Owens, who is interested in joining the Budget Committee.

V Public Comment

There was no Public Comment.

VI Appointments

There were no appointments tonight.

VII Board of Selectmen Update - Richard Trask

Mr. Trask provided the following information on activities of the Board of Selectmen over the summer:

[A new employee raise program, linked to CPI, was developed. A copy can be requested from the Finance Department.

[A 457 Plan has been added, which costs the Town nothing.

A new Group Life Insurance program has been added, which costs the town ~\$2,500.
The Town cancelled its existing Health Insurance policy and switched to a new one, which is less expensive and includes an HSA. No employees have signed up for the HSA as of yet. Contribution rates have not changed.
Coverage for Domestic Partners has been added to the Health Insurance plan.
Police Department arrests are up. Last year there were ~200; this year ~300 are expected.
Police Department hourly pay was increased \$2 for Full Time Officers and \$4 for Part Time Officers.
Firefighter participation rate is up appreciably, so stipends are up as well.
The Fire Department overtime line will be up, as when the budget was drawn up there was only one full time firefighter; now there are two.
The new Recreation Director is working out well.
New LED lights have been ordered for the Police Department and Town Clerk's office so far. The Board is using \$10k in encumbered funds to pay for them; this will be offset by a grant. Additional grants will be applied for in 2017, and this project should show significant savings going forward.
The Exmark was out of service three times this summer, once for over a week. It is 10 years old and parts are hard to find. There is no plan to replace it at this point.
Spring Hill Farm rent is now going to the Town, with 55% being gifted back to the Trust. The Trustees have been instructed to provide a business plan. The Budget Committee does not approve in general of this fund transfer, stating that the Town maintains the buildings and that should be sufficient. Mr. Heuer stated that the Trustees should develop and submit a budget for any spending they might need to do.
The IT Committee will be looking into a VOIP phone system, a new website with an intranet, an electronic document storage system, and a new computer contract (as the current one expires early in 2018).
The large television in the corner can be utilized to project documents during meetings with a cable or with Chromecast.

VIII School Board Update - Mike Romick

Mr. Richardson appeared in place of Mr. Romick, who was unavailable. He provided the following information on activities of the School Board over the summer:

The audit was completed on time and went well; a report should be available for the next meeting.
A transfer to the unreserved fund balance was done.
Some confusion with the Pinkerton tuition was resolved; it appeared that there were eight extra students, but this has been resolved.
The Food Service has made a minor increase to the price of meals. Increases will continue to happen in order to keep in line with Federal guidelines and remain eligible for funding.
The Food Service Restricted Fund now contains \$34k. The auditors would like this fund watched; a kitchen-specific CIP is being developed, as some equipment needs repair or replacement.
The Snowplow contract went out to bid and only received one response.
The Propane contract went out to bid, and the bid was awarded to Santa Buckley Energy.
The Bus contract expires in June 2017, so an RFP is being drafted. School Finance Director Sheryl Rich is working with the bus company on transporting nurses/aids on the Special Needs bus.
Chromebooks were procured on a three-year lease, set up, and dispersed to students in grades

5 through 8. They are taken from class to class, and docked in the homerooms at the end of the day. In the future, allowing older students to take theirs home will be considered. In that case, they will be configured to prevent inappropriate usage. Teachers are receptive; moving to a paperless classroom is a future goal.

There was some discussion about the opportunity of utilizing resources from other teachers, both internal and external, to provide programs to students, much like TED Talks.

IX Other Committee Updates

There were no Other Committee Updates tonight.

X Minutes

a. May 16th, 2016

A motion was made to accept these minutes as drafted; Mr. Trask seconded the motion. The vote was six in favor with Mr. Richardson abstaining due to absence from the meeting in question; motion carried.

XI Old Business

A motion had been made at the May 16th, 2016 meeting to delay reconfiguration of the Budget Committee until the October meeting. The current members are Chairman Weider, Vice-Chairman Lamphere, Mr. Heuer, Mr. D'Angelo, and Mr. Shankey. Mr. Dobbins has resigned; liaisons Mr. Trask and Mr. Romick are ex-officio.

Vice-Chairman Lamphere noted that Mr. Trask and Mr. Romick are full voting members of the Budget Committee, and as such should commit to participate during the entire year.

Mr. D'Angelo moved to leave the Budget Committee as is; Mr. Trask seconded the motion. The vote was six in favor with Mr. Richardson abstaining; motion carried.

XII New Business

a. Financials

New School and Town financials were sent out. The Fire Department seems to be high; Mr. Trask reminded the Budget Committee of the increase in attendance and the increase from one full time firefighter to two, as he had mentioned during the Board of Selectmen's Update.

Mr. Trask stated that he would like to see both the Town and School budgets be either level funded, or decreased; Chairman Weider pointed out that the School Board has less control over its budget due to the union contracts in place.

Mr. D'Angelo noted parenthetically that he had found the new Fire and Police Chiefs to be extremely approachable and open to discussion. Chairman Weider agreed, stating that they were both willing to work with the Budget Committee and the Board of Selectmen.

b. CIP

Meetings

Chairman Weider would like to have CIP Review meetings scheduled back to back; the Planning

Board on a Wednesday night, and the Board of Selectmen on the Thursday. The Budget Committee would be represented at these meetings as well, so all three boards would be working together. These meetings are expected to take place in early November.

Mr. Heuer stated that last year a substantial amount of money was raised and appropriated for the CIP; he wants it to continue, but warns against letting the amount creep up – one should be sure to spend within one's means.

Mr. D'Angelo would like to meet with the Police and Fire Chiefs to determine what they are expecting to place into the CIP.

c. NHMA Budget & Finance Workshop

Mr. Heuer, Vice-Chairman Lamphere, Mr. Shankey, Mr. Trask, and Chairman Weider had all attended this workshop. Mr. Heuer reported on the need to focus on the "shrinking dollar from the State", and the fact that the cost of retirement is up 10%, which is substantial. Mr. Trask noted that in 2008, due to the Governor and Legislature taking Retirement funds and allocating them to other areas, Retirement was funded at 45% of what was necessary to fulfil the government's obligations. In 2016, it is funded at 70%. There is still a shortfall, and funding needs to be increased.

d. School District Budget Calendar

Chairman Weider went over the important dates for the School Board insofar as the Budget Committee is concerned. These include:

January 6, 2017: Budget due from SB to Budget Committee
January 9, 2017: Budget Committee reviews budget

Mr. Richardson believes that the School budget should be presented at the first meeting after its delivery; Chairman Weider agreed.

January 16th, 2017: Holiday
January 23rd, 2017: Budget Committee reviews budget
January 30th, 2017: SB meets with Budget Committee.

February 1st/2nd, 2017: Available dates if further meetings are necessary
February 6th, 2017: First date to hold a public hearing
February 13th, 2017: School District meeting

Mr. Richardson asked Chairman Weider if he'd consulted with the SAU about the February 13th, 2017 school district meeting date; he had not, but instead used last year's calendar to estimate the date.

February 17th, 2017: Last date to hold a public hearing
March 1st, 2017: School Vacation

Mr. Richardson was queried about the para and bus contracts. Apparently the para contract is under negotiation right now and progress is being made.

Mr. D'Angelo asked if the School had any major capital improvements planned. Mr. Richardson stated that the roof work was being delayed, that the kitchen work was being funded through the Food Service Retention Program, that the sprinklers were mostly complete, especially in the

210 'problem areas', and that is still being worked on. The HVAC work is complete; some small air
211 handlers need repair or replacement. (The large roof air handlers were replaced three years
212 ago; these have an expected lifespan of 20 years.)

213 There was some discussion about enrollment projections. Chester Academy currently houses
214 625 students, with room for 912 per State guidelines; however, the School is unwilling to judge
215 its student capacity strictly based on their square footage. Be that as it may, there is still plenty
216 of room for expansion. Enrollment is difficult to project, and it is important not to cut staffing
217 too soon, as new teachers often take 2-3 years to reach their desired potential. Mr. Richardson
218 noted that although Chester Academy is graduating 80 students this year, only 50 are going into
219 Kindergarten.

220 Mr. D'Angelo noted that school quality drives property values.

221 e. **B u d g e t** **C o m m i t t e e** **C a l e n d a r**

222 f. **O p e n P o s i t i o n s**

223 Dr. Becky Owens was in attendance tonight; she is interested in joining the Budget Committee.
224 She holds a Masters and a PhD in Education, and is a former Financial Aid Director from a
225 college in Colorado. She will be added to the Budget Committee distribution list.

226 **XIII Other Business**

227 There was a brief discussion about Impact Fees, which are estimated now at \$4,300 - \$4,400 for a
228 single family home. These have gone down, as items were pulled out of the CIP. Tables are due to be
229 updated in November; GGB has yet to be built in. Planning Coordinator Hadik is working with
230 Maintenance Supervisor Amato on GGB items.

231 **XIV Member Comments**

232 There were no Member Comments tonight.

233 **XV Public Comments**

234 There was no Public Comment.

235 **XVI Next Meeting Date**

236 The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Budget Committee will be on Monday, November 21st, 2016
237 at 7:00pm.

238 **XVII Adjourn**

239 **A motion was made to adjourn the Budget Committee meeting; this motion was seconded.**
240 **The vote was unanimous in the affirmative; motion carried.**

241 The meeting was adjourned at 8:34pm.

242 Respectfully Submitted,

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Debra H. Doda

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Recording Secretary