Town of Chester
Budget Committee
Tuesday, September 14, 2020
Virtual Meeting
Approved Minutes

I. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

By Roll Call, Chair Weider called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II. Attendance

By Roll Call the following Board members were present: Chair Mike Weider, Vice-Chair Rhonda Lamphere, Ephraim Dobbins, Kathy Guilmette, Jack Cannon, Chester School Board Liaison Dana Theokas and Selectman Liaison Stephen Landau.

a. Member Comments

III. Welcome and Announcements by the Chair

Chair Weider welcomed Dana Theokas, the Chester School Board Liaison and thanked her for volunteering on the school side and welcomed new member, Jack Cannon. Chair Weider noted new members Peter Murphy could not be here and he has not heard from Michael D'Angelo.

IV. Public Comment

None

V. BOS Update – Selectman Landau

Selectman Landau expressed concerns with the date of Town Meeting and having the Town Meeting date be in sync with the School District's. Mr. Cannon asked if there were any restriction to having them both the same day? Vice-Chair Lamphere noted in the past Auburn would have the School Meeting in the morning and the Town Meeting in the afternoon on the same day.

Selectman Landau asked if the Town Meeting were to be moved to May or June would the School be able to meet in May or June? Ms. Theokas noted the school had teacher contracts to consider and would not be able to wait until May or June.

The Board asked Ms. Theokas to find out the last day the School budget needs to be finalized and the receptivity of meeting the same day.

VI. School Board Update – Dana Theokas

Ms. Theokas reported she has the proposed budget schedule. The School Board will meet with the Budget Committee on January 19th or 25th. There was $180,000 of expenditures the School could not recover from the CARES Act and were directed by the DOE to seek reimbursement from their municipalities. The tent and inspection were under $2,000. NH Retirement expenses are up 3%.

VII. Other Committee Updates

None

VIII. Minutes

a. February 17, 2020

Vice-Chair Lamphere motioned to accept the February 17, 2020 minutes as written. Ms. Theokas seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Weider – aye, Lamphere – aye, Guilmette – aye, Cannon – abstain, Landau – abstain, Dobbins – aye and Theokas – abstain. The motion passed 4-0-3.

b. June 15, 2020 - Tabled

IX. Old Business

X. New Business

a. Town Meeting Review

b. Town Encumbrances and End of Year Forecast

Mr. Dobbins asked if there were any late paid taxes or fewer registrations, anything showing economical impact from COVID? Mrs. Lamphere noted she didn't see any impact yet but is more concerned about December.

Selectman Landau indicated there was no welfare assistance in the spring or summer. The Selectmen voted not to collect interest on late payment of taxes which passed 3:2. Only one property owner inquired and was told no as they had three years.

c. School District End of Year Forecast

Vice-Chair Lamphere reported the School District return to offset taxes is $598,581. The School Board did a good job renegotiating with the bus companies.

Mr. Cannon asked what remote learning costs the school? Ms. Theokas indicated there is no savings other than busing and cleaning materials were the school to return to full-remote. Mr. Weider agreed, the school never shut down, it ran programs throughout the summer and had staff in the building with students that remote learning wouldn't work for. Ms. Guilmette added there are more IEP meetings.

Mr. Cannon indicated the school could end up shutting down in January or February for the rest of the school year.

d. Reconfiguration of the Budget Committee

Mr. Cannon nominated Michael Weider as Chair of the Budget Committee. Vice-Chair Lamphere seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Weider – aye, Lamphere – aye, Dobbins – aye, Guilmette – aye, Cannon – aye, Theokas – aye and Landau - aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Lamphere indicated she did not want to serve as Vice-Chair this year.

Mr. Cannon nominated Ephraim Dobbins as Vice-Chair of the Budget Committee. Selectman Landau seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Weider – aye, Lamphere – aye, Dobbins – aye, Guilmette – aye, Cannon – aye, Theokas – aye and Landau - aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

e. Budget Committee Budget

Chair Weider posted the proposed budget on the screen and indicated he raised the amount for seminars for next year. This year's budget was $1,148 with $957 spent.

Chair Weider indicated there is a virtual (dial in) seminar on Thursday, September 24, 2020 from 9 AM to 4 PM and if anyone would like to attend to email him so they can be registered. The cost is $65 per person. Chair Weider indicated some of the topics were: Fundamentals of Municipal Budgeting, Budgeting during the Pandemic and State Aid to Municipalities. Mrs. Lamphere noted the networking with other communities who have similar situations is helpful at these seminars.

XI. Member Comments

Ms. Guilmette asked for discussion on the recommendation by Mr. Dobbins at the end of last year that the Budget Committee do something different this year and start by providing an approximate range rather than delving into the minutia of the details.

Selectman Landau indicated the Board of Selectmen are asking for flat budgets from everyone this year.

Mr. Cannon requested an electronic version of the School budget. Chair Weider will contact Sheryl Rich.

Selectman Landau noted he didn't receive some information and asked Chair Weider to use his other email address.

Mrs. Lamphere noted there were two new members who didn't attend and one did not respond which is an unexcused absence. After three unexcused absences the Board would ask for a resignation.

XII. Public Comments

XIII. Next Meeting Date: October 12, 2020 at 7:00 PM

XIV. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Hoijer
Recording Secretary
via Zoom