

**Town of Chester
Budget Committee
Monday, October 12, 2020
Virtual Meeting
Approved Minutes**

I. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

By Roll Call, Chair Weider called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM.

II. Attendance

By Roll Call the following Board members were present: Chair Mike Weider, Vice-Chair, Ephraim Dobbins, Rhonda Lamphere, Kathy Guilmette, Jack Cannon, Chester School Board Liaison Dana Theokas (@ 8:03 pm) and Selectman Liaison Stephen Landau (@7:20PM).

a. Member Comments

Chair Weider instructed the two new members, Paul Murphy and Michael D'Angelo to contact the Town Clerk to be sworn in. Mr. Murphy noted his first name was incorrect on the webpage.

III. Welcome and Announcements by the Chair

IV. Public Comment

None

V. BOS Update – Selectman Landau

Selectman Landau reported the Selectman have been going through the budgets and have another two to three weeks to go. Some things have been moved around.

VI. School Board Update – Dana Theokas

Ms. Theokas reported March 9th is the latest the School District can have its meeting. Ms. Lamphere will research the specifics of that. Chair Weider noted that conflicted with the Town's election day. Chair Weider noted the 2nd half taxes in December will reveal the projected revenues and how they have been affected by COVID. The Committee would like to see flat budgets based on the economy and what's going to happen and shortfalls on the State side. Chair Weider indicated the Committee would want to know

if any staff were added through the CARES Act that could obligate the Town in the future.

VII. Other Committee Updates

None

VIII. Minutes

a. June 15, 2020

Ms. Lamphere motioned to accept the June 15, 2020 minutes as written. Vice-Chair Dobbins seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Weider – aye, Dobbins – aye, Lamphere – aye, Guilmette – aye, Cannon – abstain, Landau – absent, and Theokas – absent. The motion passed 5-0-0.

b. September 14, 2020

Ms. Lamphere motioned to accept the September 14, 2020 minutes as written. Mr. Cannon seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Weider – aye, Dobbins – aye, Lamphere – aye, Guilmette – aye, Cannon – abstain, Landau – absent, and Theokas – absent. The motion passed 5-0-0.

IX. Old Business

X. New Business

a. Budget Process 2021/2022

Chair Weider polled the members as to whether or not the Committee should given any direction to the Board of Selectmen as to their recommendation to keep the budget flat.

Vice-Chair Dobbins questioned whether the Town picked up on its valuation.

Ms. Lamphere noted NH Retirement costs are up approximately 3% so the budget would need to have reductions to keep it flat.

Mr. Cannon noted on the School side there are contractual obligations and wondered if there were any stipulations to withhold planned adjustments? The BOS and Town Administrator have a pretty good handle on what the Town needs.

Ms. Guilmette indicated a letter or statement could be sent asking to hold the budget as flat as possible until December revenues come in and adjust at that point. The budget started with a 9% increase last year.

Chair Weider agreed with making adjustments once the December property tax revenues were known. Businesses have closed and no stimulus plan has passed.

Selectman Landau noted the BOS has the Town's operating budget at 2.9% with two-three more weeks of departmental reviews scheduled. Some lines have been moved to other departments. Some CIP items are large, the Highway Shed \$750,000, the PD enlargement \$5-10 million according to the architect and that would be a hard sell, and the Fire Truck \$750,000.

Mr. D'Angelo noted with business, having money can help further down the road and he would have no objection to spending a little over flat.

Chair Weider shared the School District calendar noting they want to meet with the Budget Committee on January 19th (to be verified).

Mr. Cannon questioned whether it made sense to have each of us take a section of the budget to review. Chair Weider indicated if there is something one member is passionate about, however if meeting dates don't work for some members or some can't make meetings.

Selectman Landau questioned the March 2 or March 9th School District Meeting date with March 9th being election day. Ms. Lamphere recommended asking them to change their date. Chair Weider indicated he believed the continuance must be within seven days so if they met on March 2nd, the continuance would need to be on or before March 9th. Selectman Landau questioned whether the following Saturday would work for the Town. Chair Weider would prefer to have the School District meeting in the morning and the Town in the afternoon so the public would get the full picture of both budget impacts. Selectman Landau noted the Town can't do theirs before the election on 3/9.

Ms. Lamphere noted someone from the BOS needs to go before the School Board and try to coordinate both meetings. No one has approached them. That has to happen. Ms. Lamphere noted the School were having their elections on Town Meeting day. The Town opens their Town Meeting technically when elections begin and it is continued to meeting with the legislative body. The School doesn't have to have their elections first.

Ms. Lamphere recommended having Town Administrator Doda send an email and set up a time to meet. Mr. Cannon agreed. 75% of the tax burden comes from the School. SB2 will likely be brought up again. Chair Weider noted the public needs to understand with SB2 the default budget can be higher than the proposed operating budget.

Selectman Landau noted he will set up the meeting this Thursday. Chair Weider noted he will work on the calendar and talk to the Town Administrator to develop a budget schedule for the Town.

Chair Weider indicated the financials were sent showing two months into the fiscal year as well as the School financials from their October 7th meeting. The School Trust Fund

Balances as of 6/20 were \$222,738 for Maintenance, \$147,097 for disabilities and \$20,000 for the boiler.

Ms. Lamphere noted this is the last payment for the Fire Department Quint of \$52,000. Chair Weider noted it shouldn't be included in the budget now that it's gone.

b. CIP

Chair Weider indicated the Planning Board has begun meeting with Departments concerning the CIP and reviewing the criteria. Chair Weider will send the worksheets and especially Table 10 to Mr. Murphy and Mr. D'Angelo.

c. Budget Workshop – Kathy

Ms. Guilmette indicated the Budget Workshop was very informative and will share links when the recording is available. Some topics included warrant articles, financials and grants.

XI. Member Comments

Chair Weider indicated he will build the calendar and send it out before the next meeting.

Mr. Murphy introduced himself as a new member having moved to Chester two years ago. He has a master's in public administration, worked in budget analysis in Fairfax, VA, currently is with BU doing research contracts, is a licensed attorney in MA and NH and retired military. Mr. Murphy indicated he was interested in serving his community.

XII. Public Comments

Chair Weider opened the meeting to public comment at 8:14 PM.

XIII. Next Meeting Date: November 9, 2020 at 7:00 PM

Mr. Cannon asked if the meetings would continue to be in Zoom format. Chair Weider indicated he was leaving it up to the Board to continue on Zoom or do a modified hybrid with some members in person and some on Zoom.

Chair Weider reminded that if any member could not make the meeting to let him know as soon as possible.

XIV. Adjourn

Ms. Lamphere motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Cannon seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Weider – aye, Dobbins – aye, Lamphere – aye, Guilmette – aye,

Cannon – aye, Landau – aye, Theokas – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Hoijer
Recording Secretary
via Zoom