

**Town of Chester
Budget Committee
Approved Minutes
March 27, 2017**

I. Meeting to Order

Chair Michael Weider called the meeting to order at 7:11 PM on Monday, March 27, 2017.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Weider led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Attendance

Vice Chair Rhonda Lamphere
Brian Shankey
Chuck Heuer
Becky Owens
Stephen D'Angelo
Selectman Richard Trask

Absent:

Mike Romick, Vice Chair Chester School Board

IV. Announcements by the Chair – Welcome

V. Public Comment –

There were no members of the public or media/news present at the meeting.

VI. BOS Update – Selectman Richard Trask

Selectman Trask had no updates to provide.

VII. School Board Update –

A representative was not present.

VIII. Other Committee Updates –

None

IX. Minutes -

In regard to the minutes of March 20, 2017:

Lines 179 and 180 separate the comments made by Mr. D'Angelo, Chair Weider, and Selectman Trask.

172 – takt should be take

167 & 170 – Fix spelling of Tsiento Rd

223- Label the reply as that of Selectman Trask's

Mr. Heuer moves to accept the minutes of March 20, 2017 with amendments. Mr. D'Angelo seconds. 5 in favor, 2 abstentions, the motion carries.

The minutes of January 3, 2011 had previously been sealed and it was requested that they become public. All BC members had a chance to read through the minutes, and no questions were raised. Chair Weider moves to unseal the minutes of January 3, 2011. Mr. Heuer seconds the motion. 4 in favor, 3 abstentions, the motion carries.

X. Old Business

Budget and warrant articles review

The public meeting will be taking place on April 10, 2017

Chair Weider stated that no warrant articles had been received, so there was not a clear understanding of how the BOS planned to proceed.

Selectman Trask was not aware as to why the warrant articles weren't sent. The BOS minutes don't reflect the exact wording of the articles so they cannot be used.

PD Budget

Mr. D'Angelo – There's a lot of activity, not just pulling over, but domestic and assistance calls. If there could be a breakdown of what is happening, and the costs associated it could be helpful to the BC, BOS, as well as the town. After speaking with a representative from another police department, it's not just hiring patrol, and he now understands why a full time person is needed.

Vice Chair Lamphere – Concerned about needing a new police car every year. Crown Vics were \$28,000, now the Explorers are \$53,000.

Selectman Trask stated that the cost is the equipment inside. As much equipment as possible is traded from one vehicle into the next but it doesn't always work because different vehicles use different equipment.

Mr. D'Angelo – Is there a different brand that could be explored for new vehicles?

Selectman Trask – Some brands go after police departments specifically with their packages and other options may not be available.

Vice Chair Lamphere - There are currently 3 or 4 police vehicles in town, why do they need a new one every year?

Mr. Heuer – in response to Mr. D'Angelo, if PD is being called for an elderly response, that can't be denied. However, what kind of service are we trying to provide here? Maybe we need to put brackets on what services are needed because they're responding to too many things. Does the town have to decide what service level we want provided?

Mr. D'Angelo – They don't prevent crimes and fires, they're a reactionary force. We've heard there's a steady increase of need.

Mr. Heuer would like the data of how services are being used with the justification of what the nature is, so the town can decide what causes should be addressed as operating expenses.

Mr. Shankey – more houses have been built, what is the data from past years?

Chair Weider – '13-'14 budget - \$478,000 that's almost \$200,000 more in 3 years in one department, with adding another officer.

Mr. D'Angelo – last year alone, 4 people died due to drug overdose so there has been an increase in need for coverage.

A discussion ensued about timing, location, and severity of crimes with different examples speaking for and against more coverage. Mutual aid is still something that is offered, and when needed, other towns, the sheriff, and/or the state police can be contacted. However, where they come from cannot be guaranteed which can change the time in which they arrive.

Mr. Heuer would like a comparison of similar town data to compare, whereas Mr. D'Angelo would like one just of Chester's needs.

Chair Weider redirected the conversation to focus back on if the BC agreed on this budget or not.

Mr. Heuer – as for hiring increase, money was found in the current budget to cover the cost of hiring new staff, apparently there is some room in the budget that was slated for things that weren't needed.

Building Inspector went from part time to full time.

Building Administrator was in the last budget as part time, full time started in January.

Town Clerk's office budgeted part time assistant deputy to full time. The former clerk left in December 2015.

Several changes in FD but they are pretty much a wash.

BOS administrator – there was a significant overlap, the minute takers have been combined, and there's a floater to cover other responsibilities in other departments.

Mr. Heuer – were any full time employees hired last year that weren't appropriated?

Vice Chair Lamphere – No. The list is still here and it hasn't changed.

Selectman Trask – The benefits have been changed now there is only 1 full time person

Mr. Heuer – Are you hurting from all of the personnel changes to be able to make the budget?

Selectman Trask – We'll see in May, but I don't think we'll be hurting, we'll be close.

Chair Weider – For the bottom-line budget, what do you want to move forward? We don't need to say where to take it from, because that's not our job. We have no warrants to look at, Thursday we're meeting with the BOS and either have to come with our own number or agree with theirs.

Selectman Trask – BOS would like to have a number to agree with, but they were not able to reach that point at the last meeting due to other issues that arose. The PD chief wanted to talk about dropping some money out of part time line to get a full time person hired.

Chair Weider – That's a warrant article, to drop \$20,000 out of the part time line. When the new person takes vacation, how is that going to be covered? Every time we've hired a new full-time, we've either added more part-time hours or more full-time over-time hours to back fill. If we reduce by \$20,000, how is that time off being covered?

Selectman Trask – It's up to the chief. I thought it was a good idea because the warrant article would pass and putting it in now would help to lower the overall budget for next year. I don't understand of how you can run a town and only do the hiring on a three hour block on a Saturday in May.

Chair Weider – This has happened before, by the BOS in the PD without town approval, the following year the BOS budget didn't pass, the PD were asking for another person and it failed. If the town is continuing to always bring it forward for them to make the decision, it probably would have passed, if that's what the legislation wants to do that's fine, I'm not sure the BC would have voted in favor or not because we haven't seen the warrant article. It seems to be maneuvering by putting it in the budget; it's not fair to the legislative body. If it's a warrant article, then you should have reduced the budget by \$20,000. You could have it written in the warrant article, "If this position passes, the budget will be reduced by \$20,000."

Mr. Heuer – traditionally, the hiring happens that one day because all new hires have gone to the floor, it's a big hit to everyone's pocketbook.

Chair Weider – The warrant article would have said \$71, 233 for a police officer. What's being said to the legislative body? \$24,000 has been moved in the budget, and \$20,000 has been cut so it looks like a wash even though it's not.

Vice Chair Lamphere – it's our job to have the voters understand this; it's not our job to decide if someone is hired.

Chair Weider - The way that it reads in the BOS minutes, is that there's a guarantee that so long as the budget passes, there's funding for that position right now.

Discussion about hiring July 1st, but then they may need to attend the academy, or receive further training before they can be ready. It would be possible to hire someone that has already been to the academy and now that the pay is higher, there's a better opportunity to hire from the surrounding area. The PD budget has been increased for the past two years. Last year the PD budget was increased through the BOS making the decision and raised the money out of a race pool. The year prior, it had been put in the budget and the BC approved it.

Mr. D'Angelo – What's the difference if it passes through a warrant article or through the budget?

Vice Chair Lamphere- There's a chance it will fail, and if it does, no means no.

Chair Weider – If the legislative body says no to hiring a police officer, you cannot hire a police officer that year.

Vice Chair Lamphere – They've already put it into the budget, BC can't make a warrant article, so if a new officer is not wanted, take that money out of the budget request. Can't create a warrant article, we'd have to remove funding.

Mr. Heuer would like to see the budget closer to the 3.89% and can't agree to the 7% increase. He also would like to keep the CIP program.

Chair Weider – The BC asked for roughly \$80,000 to be reduced and added approximately \$13,000 in for some FD line changes. So basically we were looking to remove \$60,000 and the BOS didn't remove the \$60,000 and instead added another \$79,000. There is at least a \$130,000 difference between the two meetings, so if we're looking for 3 or 4%, that's what we're looking to reach.

Mr. Heuer is concerned about the impact fees use. Applying them to one-time costs like the CIP might be okay, but applying them to operating budget costs is scary.

Selectman Trask – Every time they build a house, there's more revenue.

Chair Weider – We're losing \$800,000 worth of impact fees by taking it out of the CIP this year. Every time you build a house, there may not be big impacts to uses other than recreation, but there is certainly an impact to the school. The school budget was 2 or 3%, they dropped one position, and reallocated the hours of another.

Selectman Trask – We're adding people to deal with the growth. FT building inspector went to PT because it seemed that it could be handled and that year there was a 33% increase in building permits from the previous three years. 30, 29, and 39 the three previous years and 46 the following for new construction building.

Vice Chair Lamphere – 76 homes, approximately \$8,000 each, is \$608,000 more coming in annual taxes.

Selectman Trask – With reevaluation we're at 93%, we're using data from two years ago, but the house values are going up faster than that.

Mr. Shankey – We have to come to some sort of consensus as a committee, what if we split the difference instead of the 7% increase and went with a 4.5% increase?

Chair Weider – Reduce highway back to original budget since there's no justification. The block grant money is used to offset his budget going into the CIP so it would reduce the tax burden to the town by \$140,000 if the block grant

money was not being put into the CIP. That money had always been used to reduce taxation, except for one year it was decided for it to be used for a building. He believes that the BOS has done well with some departments, and that some other departments were looked at as hard, but I could support 4.5% and if BOS asked for recommendations, I could find lines. Since we don't have the warrant articles, we still don't know where the money is coming from, taxation, CIP, detail funds, PPE.

Last year the BC attended the BOS department meeting presentations. It helped to make things smoother. A professional report should be sent to the BC and the BOS that way everyone is on the same page.

Vice Chair Lamphere – What if the DPW warrant doesn't pass?

Selectman Trask – We continue the way we're currently going.

A discussion arose about the expectations of DPW including attending meetings for the state, Southern NH Planning Commission, Exit 4A, it is crucial someone ensures that the town receives necessary funding. It included thoughts about the wording of the warrant article to include a change in budget if this position passes.

This moved into looking at the CIP, the impact fees, and the amount replacing what's being spent. No decisions were made through the talk.

If \$106,242 is taken from the bottom line of the latest budget offering, that gets us to 4.5%

Mr. Heuer wants to see what's in writing and will go to the floor for the warrant articles.

April 14th is the last date to hold the public hearing. April 19th is the last day the BC can submit their copy of their budget to the BOS for them to discuss.

\$4,287,700 is a 4.5% budget increase. \$96,000 could be taken out of highway for no justification, every other department gave justification.

The BC is invited to attend the BOS meeting this Thursday March 30th. At this time, not being on solid ground with no warrant articles, makes coming to an agreement more challenging. The BC does not take a vote, but seems to be in agreement that the 4.5% is better than what the BOS is currently offering. They will then see what the BOS meeting on Thursday will bring.

- XI. New Business -**
- XII. Other Business**
- XIII. Member Comments -**
- XIV. Public Comments – none.**
- XV. Next Meeting Date – April 3, 2017 @ 7:00 PM**
- XVI. Adjourn -**

Mr. Shankey moves to adjourn. Vice Chair Lamphere seconds the motion. All in favor, so moved. The Budget Committee meeting of March 27, 2017 adjourned at 9:31pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sarah DeLisle, Recording Secretary