

**Town of Chester Budget Committee Public Hearing
January 17, 2022
Approved Minutes
7:00 PM**

Budget Committee members present:

Chairman Mike Weider
Vice-Chairman Ephraim Dobbins
Jack Cannon (attended remotely)
Kathy Guilmette
Michael D'Angelo
Dana Theokas, Chester School Board Liaison (attended remotely)

Budget Committee members absent:

Selectmen Liaison Steve Couture
Paul Murphy

Guests present:

Royal Richardson, Chairman, Chester School Board (attended remotely)
Sheryl Rich
Chester PACT

I. Meeting to Order

Chairman Weider called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II. Attendance

III. Announcements by the Chair – Welcome

IV. Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

V. BOS Update - Steve Couture

Selectman Couture was not present.

VI. School Board Update – Dana Theokas

Ms. Theokas reported there are no updates from the School Board.

VII. Other Committee Updates

VIII. Minutes

a. December 6, 2021

Mr. Dobbins moved to accept the minutes of December 6, 2021 as written. Ms. Guilmette seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor except Mr. D'Angelo, who abstained. The vote passed 5-0-1.

b. January 10, 2022

Mr. Dobbins moved to accept the minutes of January 10, 2022 as written. Ms. Guilmette seconded the motion. Couture seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The vote passed 6-0-0.

IX. Old Business

X. New Business

a. School District Budget Review

i. Questions related to School District Budget or Teachers' Contract

Mr. Dobbins asked why the performance incentive is 2.25% in the first two years and 3% in the last year of the teachers' contract. Mr. Richardson explained this is the compromise between the teachers' request and the School Board's request. They wanted to pass the current salary schedule as it stands now with the 2.25%. The teachers wanted protection at the end to take into account inflation and the increased cost of living. It is at 2.25% in the fourth year of the current contract, which expires on June 30, 2022.

Chairman Weider questioned the behavioral specialist position changing from contract to full-time. Mr. Richardson explained it was a full-time position two years ago but they were unable to fill it, so a contract employee was brought in. The full-time position was filled in September, so the figure is being carried forward.

Chairman Weider asked if cost of professional developed has changed. Mr. Richardson said they have new teachers at the beginning of their career who are interested in taking professional development courses to further their education and increase their salary opportunities.

Chairman Weider asked regarding the increase in contracted services. Ms. Rich said it is due in part to the increase in copier leases and the cost of software support.

Chairman asked regarding the increase in general plant maintenance and inspections. Ms. Rich said it covers the cost of repointing the exterior brick as well as remodeling the bathrooms.

Mr. Cannon asked what happens if the Town does not approve the warrant article for the teachers' contract. Mr. Richardson replied that the School could return to the Union and ask to reopen negotiations, so they could bring something back to the legislative body before the end of the current school year, so a contract could be in place at the start of the next school year.

Chairman Weider suggested a non-public session be held at the next meeting to discuss enrollment and classroom sizes. Mr. Richardson agreed and said Superintendent Locke will be present to participate in the discussion.

Chairman Weider clarified that the Budget Committee has no questions for the School Board regarding the budget.

Ms. Rich submitted a warrant to move the budget forward. This will be published to post the public hearing after the public hearing on February 7, 2022.

Mr. Cannon moved to accept the warrant as written, as long as there are no changes at the public hearing. Mr. Dobbins seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Town Budget Books

All Budget Committee members have their budget books. The only items not finalized in the Town Budget are the warrant articles.

c. Budget Calendar

Chairman Weider reviewed the budget calendar through February 10, 2022.

XI. Member Comments.

XII. Public Comments

XIII. Next Meeting Date – January 24, 2022

XIV. Adjourn

Ms. Guilmette moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 PM. Mr. D'Angelo seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Hanggeli, Recording Secretary