

**Town of Chester Budget Committee Public Hearing
January 24, 2022
Draft Minutes
7:00 PM**

Budget Committee members present:

Chairman Mike Weider
Vice-Chairman Ephraim Dobbins
Jack Cannon
Kathy Guilmette
Dana Theokas, Chester School Board Liaison

Budget Committee members absent:

Selectmen Liaison Steve Couture

Guests present:

Royal Richardson, Chairman, Chester School Board
Dr. Sharon Locke, Superintendent, Chester School District
Sheryl Rich, Business Administrator, Chester School District
Selectman Stephen D'Angelo
Michael D'Angelo
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

V. BOS Update - Steve Couture

Selectman Couture was not present.

VI. School Board Update – Dana Theokas

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

VII. Other Committee Updates

VIII. Minutes

a. January 17, 2022

Ms. Guilmette moved to accept the minutes of January 17, 2022 as written. Mr. Dobbins seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The vote passed 5-0-0.

IX. Old Business

X. New Business

a. School District Budget Review

i. Questions related to School District Budget or Teachers' Contract with School Board and Administration

The Committee had no questions related to the School District budget or the Teachers' Contract.

The Committee voted by straw poll in favor of putting aside \$20,000 from the Capital Reserve Fund for a boiler.

ii. Non-Public with School Board - RSA 91-A:3, II(c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of this board, unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to include any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine or other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the applicant.

Mr. Cannon moved to go into a non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II(c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of this board, unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to include any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine or other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the applicant. Mr. Dobbins seconded the motion.

The camera was turned off at 7:03 PM.

The camera was turned back on at 7:18 PM.

iii. Prepare for School District Public Hearing, Monday, February 7, 2020, 7:00 pm

Ms. Rich requested a straw poll be taken so she can prepare documentation before the public hearing. The Committee voted by straw poll to support the School District's budget as presented. The Committee voted by straw poll to support the Teachers' Contract as presented.

b. Town Budget – review

The Committee reviewed the Town Budget. Questions were posed on items that they would like further documentation/explanation on, including:

- Ms. Guilmette questioned the increase in the Town Clerk cost. Selectman D'Angelo explained that there are primaries and midterm elections coming up.
- The Planning Department is adding a part-time clerk to alleviate Town Planner Hadik's workload due to the increased development in the area, as well as for future planning to replace Mr. Hadik upon his retirement.

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The camera was turned off at 7:39 PM.

The camera was turned back on at 7:48 PM.

- Ms. Guilmette questioned the expiration date on a quote for the alarm system in the Maintenance line. Selectman D'Angelo said the cost remains consistent, but he will look into it.
- Ms. Guilmette questioned the Wason Pond Ranger expense being moved between lines. Selectman D'Angelo explained his salary was under the Police Department but he assists the Recreation Department during the summer. So, it was moved to the Recreation line. The supporting documentation does not reflect the change, so the Police Chief will be asked regarding this.
- Ms. Guilmette asked about the increase in Police Department vehicle repair and maintenance on line 38. Ms. Theokas pointed out that lines 31-37 were consolidated into this line.
- Chairman Weider asked why a new line has been added for Police Department holiday coverage, if it is already covered by regular salary expenses. Selectman D'Angelo explained this covers work done on specific holidays. The on-call supervisor expense was questioned and Mr. Cannon explained it is to cover the cost of calling in someone to manage an incident in town.
- The Committee discussed why new lines are being added to the Police Department budget that should already be covered by salaries.
- Ms. Guilmette asked about the highway on-call stipend item. Selectman D'Angelo explained the Road Agent is transitioning employees to cover these situations.
- Mr. Cannon asked about the need for a \$20,000 executive salary pool, since the salary matrix put into place by the Board of Selectmen appears to be working. Selectman D'Angelo explained it provides a cushion to cover positions that were not anticipated during the budget process as well as the ability to "bump" salaries when called for.
- Ms. Theokas asked about salary lines that increased over four percent. Selectman D'Angelo said this was due to reclassifications.
- Ms. Theokas asked if the 21% increase in healthcare and insurance rates was negotiated.
- Ms. Theokas asked for back-up documentation regarding the increase in government salary maintenance and maintenance part-time.
- Ms. Theokas asked how the Police Department services compare to similar-sized towns and surrounding towns.

- Chairman Weider questioned the cost of police services. Selectman D'Angelo said there has been no feedback that the Town wants to reduce these services.
- Ms. Theokas asked why the library staff is being paid at a lower rate. Selectman D'Angelo explained the library spent trust funds to finish their project, so did not have as much money from interest earned. They are requesting funds as a supplement.
- Ms. Theokas asked about the Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee line. Selectman D'Angelo explained it will cover assorted costs.
- Mr. Dobbins asked to have a unified discussion about stipends across Town departments instead of discussing each position individually.
- Mr. Dobbins asked why the general assistance budget was zero. Selectman D'Angelo explained it is a bottom-line budget and funds can be pulled in from other areas when necessary.

Selectman D'Angelo briefly reviewed the proposed warrant articles. They are not complete and have not been approved.

c. Monthly Financial Reports

d. Budget Calendar

XI. Member Comments.

Mr. Cannon will invite Mat Stover, the chairman of the committee overseeing the transition of the Road Agent position from an elected position to an appointed one, to attend a future Budget Committee meeting.

XII. Public Comments

XIII. Next Meeting Date – January 31, 2022

XIV. Adjourn

Ms. Guilmette moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 PM. Mr. Dobbins seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Hanggeli, Recording Secretary