

**Town of Chester
Budget Committee Meeting
Monday, February 10, 2020
Municipal Complex
Draft Minutes**

I. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Weider called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm and led with the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Attendance

Committee Members Present:

Mike Weider, Chairperson
Rhonda Lamphere, Vice-Chair
Kathy Guilmette
Brennan Holmes, School Board Liaison
Stephen Landau, BOS Liaison

Committee Members Absent:

Ephraim Dobbins

Staff Present:

Debra Doda, Chester Town Administrator

Others Present:

Lynn Rockwell, 44 Chester Street, Chester

III. Member Comments

There were no Member Comments.

IV. Welcome and Announcements by the Chair

Town Administrator (TA) Doda joined the Committee at the meeting table.

V. Public Comment

Ms. Rockwell, 44 Chester Street, came before the Committee at 7:06 pm.

Ms. Rockwell said that she is here to comment on Article #11 Steeple Repair at Chester Congregational Church.

VI. BOS Update – Liaison Steph Landau

Selectman Landau updated the Committee on the BOS.

Selectman Landau noted that the BOS added a warrant article for Stevens Hall.

VII. School Board Update – Liaison Brennan Holmes

Liaison Holmes updated the Committee on the School Board.

Liaison Holmes said that there have been hearings on the budgetary changes at the legislative level on the Medicaid billing that have been gaining bipartisan support. He said that the School Board wrote in support of the matching House bill to correct the kindergarten de-adjustment.

VIII. Other Committee Updates – None

IX. Minutes –

- a. December 9th, 2019
- b. January 6th, 2020
- c. January 13th, 2020
- d. January 20th, 2020
- e. January 27th, 2020
- f. February 3rd, 2020

The Committee agreed to hold the review of the draft minutes from the last six meetings until the Thursday night meeting.

X. Old Business –

None Discussed.

XI. New Business

a. Finalize Town Budget and Warrant Articles

The Committee and TA Doda began discussion on the Town Budget.

Selectman Landau asked if the Budget Committee would be using the same percentage from this year, an increase of no more than four to five percent, for the budget goal for next year; he said he would use that as the budget goal rather than spending time going line by line.

Ms. Guilmette said that she would be interested in discussing that idea further.

Chair Weider said that five percent is a “big” number and suggested setting a goal closer to three percent; he agrees with the idea of setting a percentage goal, but said that they still may need to review line by line. Chair Weider noted that if there are bonds set, those will be part of the budget.

Mr. Holmes stated that there is some value in going line by line because the Budget Committee serves as an oversight advisory board, and being educated in what is in the budget is important. He noted that having a starting point in the fall with a percentage goal would be beneficial and then the Budget Committee would review the budgets.

Chair Weider said that the three groups should meet in the fall.

Vice Chair Lamphere requested that TA Doda review the line items that were reduced in the budget.

TA Doda listed the line items that were reduced:

- Salary pool to \$20,000
- Administration Office Supplies to \$600
- Training to \$17,000
- Books and Periodicals to \$12,000
- Town Clerk Assistant to \$1.00
- Trustees of Trusts to \$10,000
- Benefits Line to \$843,030
- GB Maint-Custodian to \$1.00
- Snow Removal to \$2,000
- FD Salaries – Daytime to \$105,250
- FD Uniforms & Equipment to \$1,500
- TS Haz Waste Collection to \$5,000
- REC Portables to \$1,812
- WP Portable Toilets/Playground to \$4,770
- TF Town Fair Fireworks to \$7,000
- SHF Spring Hill Farm to \$2,250
- Agricultural Commission to \$5.00

FY 18/19	FY 19/20	BOS 20/21 Proposed	BOS %Inc/Dec	Budget Committee 20/21 Proposed	BC % Inc/Dec
4,320,198	4,815,894	4,998,655	3.79%	0	-100.00%

TA Doda noted that the reduction in total is a little over \$80,000; she said the Budget Committee had asked to have it reduced by \$80,000.

Vice Chair Lamphere made a motion that the Budget Committee accepts the adjusted Budget from the Selectman dated February 10, 2020, in the amount of \$4,998,655 which represents an increase from

last year's budget of three-point eight percent (3.8%); Mr. Holmes seconded the motion. Motion approved; five in the affirmative with one, Mr. Dobbins, absent.

Chair Weider read and reviewed the Warrant Articles with the Committee.

Warrant Articles:

Article #9 – Road Bond (\$3m at 7 years - \$299,583.33 interest over life of bond. Public hearing required and scheduled for Feb. 20th. Ballot vote of 2/3 required.)

Article #10 – Two New Fulltime Firefighters

Article #11 – Steeple Repair at Chester Congregational Church

Ms. Rockwell came before the Committee at 7:45 pm.

Ms. Rockwell said that personally she is delighted to see this warrant article. She thanked Selectman Landau for putting it forward.

Ms. Rockwell explained that the steeple is the most important part of the entire project which includes the steeple repair and then repairing the ceiling, damaged because of leaking, and exterior painting, etc. She said that the total cost of the project is \$450,000; they have raised \$322,000.

Ms. Rockwell said that this warrant article would be a huge boost. She noted that they have also applied for the LChip grant (The New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program).

Ms. Rockwell departed the meeting at 7:49 pm.

Article #12 – Optional Tax Credit for Combat Service

Article #13 – Establish PACT Revolving Fund (Dollar amount to be used will be as of date of warrant and changed on the floor at TM. This must be a ballot vote but NOT on the official Tuesday ballot. Wording per DRA.)

Article #14 – Rescind PACT Special Revenue Fund (Paper ballot required; Public Hearing required and scheduled for February 20th. If rescinded, any monies in fund will lapse to general fund.)

Article #15 – PACT (Can be tabled if previous Was pass. This will allow PACT to continue operating if previous Was fail.)

The Committee had much discussion about the PACT warrant articles. They reviewed various ideas on the best way to close (rescind) the special revenue fund, as well as, the best wording for the warrant articles #13 through #15.

Article #16 – Budget (Public Hearing scheduled for Feb. 13th)

Article #17 – CIP Funding

Article #18 – CIP Projects

Chair Weider and Vice Chair Lamphere agreed that the CIP Projects Warrant Article should include the list of the cost of the projects.

Article #19 – Highway CIP Funding

Article #20 – Highway CIP Projects

Article #21 – Petitioned Warrant Article – SB2 (Public Hearing scheduled for February 20th; ballot vote required; must pass by 3/5. Box must stay open one hour.)

Article #22 – 300th Anniversary

Article #23 – Roadside Tree Removal

Article #24 – Ortho Rectifying Maps

Chair Weider said that he thinks this should not be a warrant article, but should be put in the CIP as a one-time purchase.

Article #25 – Winter Road Maintenance Fund

Vice Chair Lamphere said that the Winter Road Maintenance Fund is over-funded.

The Committee discussed the impact that having the Town Meeting earlier than May will have on accurately funding the Winter Road Maintenance.

Article #26 – Town Master Plan Capital Reserve Fund

Article #27 – Historic Building Capital Reserve Fund

Article #28 – Transportation Improvement Capital Reserve Fund (DRA wording. Public Hearing required and scheduled for Feb. 20th. Ballot vote required. The fee is a maximum of \$5.00; that would garner \$41,100 annually; a \$0.50 fee would garner \$4,110.)

Vice Chair Lamphere noted that this is a tax and a tax never goes away.

Article #29 – Great Hill Cemetery Maintenance Fund (proposed by GHC Trustees. They had wished to seed fund with \$39k held by the Trustees of the Trust Funds but Town Counsel disallowed. They still

want the trust fund and will seed it themselves from their checkbook. They want nothing from taxation. They plan on using the 25% for mowing, etc. and the 75% for expansion, etc.)

Article #30 – Historical Document Digitization

Article #31 – Pay Matrix

Article #32 – Petitioned Warrant Article – Indigenous Peoples Day

Article #33 – Reports

The Committee and TA Doda reviewed and discussed the proposed warrant articles.

Vice Chair Lamphere said that she had read the letter that was forwarded from Chair Weider to the Committee from the PACT department head (not present). She noted that she is frustrated with PACT and doesn't understand why they are "disappointed" with the Budget Committee. Vice Chair Lamphere said that the Budget Committee is trying to "unscramble" the three PACT warrant articles and get them on the warrant so that they will work.

Chair Weider said that he had sent the letter to everyone. He explained that they can respond back as the Committee.

The Committee discussed the PACT funding, CIP PACT funding, and PACT warrant articles.

Chair Weider and Selectman Landau asked what the number of people are streaming and watching the PACT broadcasts.

TA Doda reviewed the December BOS minutes with the PACT discussion. She noted that the PACT department head had said that they would be taking \$21,000 from franchise fees.

Vice Chair asked how they can take the \$21,000 from the franchise fees.

Ms. Guilmette asked if they are still confused on PACT numbers.

TA Doda said that they are confused on how much is going to go into the new PACT fund. She noted they must ask the PACT department head.

b. CIP

The Committee reviewed the CIP.

c. Budget Calendar 2020 - 2021

XII. Member Comments -None

258 **XIII. Public Comments - None**

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260 **XIV. Next Meeting Date(s): Thursday, February 13th, 2020**

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262 **XV. Adjourn**

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264 **Ms. Guilmette made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Holmes seconded the motion. The vote**
265 **was five in the affirmative with Mr. Dobbins absent; motion carried.**

266 The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.

267 Respectfully submitted,

268 C. Molly Qualters,

269 Recording Secretary