

**Minutes of the
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting
Held on January 14, 2016**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, January 14, 2016 at Campbell High School, One Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

PRESENT: C Couture (Chair), K Douglas (Vice Chair), B Spencer, R Peeples, C Pascucci, D Vaillancourt, R Keating, B Bourque (School Board Representative), J O’Neill (Superintendent), F Markiewicz (Business Administrator)

Absent:

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Couture called the meeting to order at 7:55 p.m.

- **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

2. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

3. REVIEW/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

Mrs. Couture commented that there was much good debate and discussion at the last meeting. She indicated she would like to make sure everyone gets heard and asked Committee members to wait until the person speaking is finished before commenting.

4. REVIEW/ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

- **December 10, 2015**

MOTION: by Mrs. Douglas

Move to approve the minutes of December 10, 2015 as amended

SECOND: by Mr. Spencer

VOTE: 9-0-0

The motion carried.

5. BUDGET COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Mrs. Couture asked if there is any new information Budget Committee members have received. She indicated there are at least two town warrant articles we have not yet voted.

Mr. Spencer asked when the MS-27 and MS-7 will be available to sign as they have to be posted soon.

Mrs. Couture commented that both the MS-27 and MS-7 should be available by next Thursday for the Budget Committee to sign.

47 **6. TOWN BUDGET**

48 Mrs. Couture indicated that much information has been provided to the Budget Committee this
49 week. She noted the Library Trustees were unaware the Budget Committee was going to be
50 discussing their article on January 5 and requested reconsideration of the article. She
51 commented they mentioned at the hearing tonight that they lowered the dollar amount in the
52 article.

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54 Mr. Byron commented that he discussed the new amount with Ms. Varrick and asked if the
55 Library Trustees have voted on the new amount. He reported the Trustees have not yet voted on
56 the new amount. He indicated the Board of Selectmen would have to vote to approve the revised
57 amount, but would prefer the Trustees vote the new amount. He announced there is a meeting of
58 the Board of Selectmen posted for tonight and offered to confer with members who may have
59 remained after the hearing.

60
61 Mr. Spencer commented his issue with the article is that the increases in the wage plan would go
62 to the two highest positions when it is approved, which is what occurred with the town wage
63 plan. He indicated he cannot support that.

64
65 Mrs. Douglas commented the new chart shows where they want to be in three years and the
66 \$30,000 is spread over three years.

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68 Mr. Byron returned to the meeting.

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70 Mrs. Couture asked if the Board of Selectmen voted on the new amount.

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72 Mr. Byron commented that the number remains at \$14,189. He reported that he spoke with the
73 Chair of the Board of Selectmen and it was agree by the members for the Library Trustees to
74 vote their number and present it as an amendment at Deliberative Session.

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76 **MOTION:** by Mr. Spencer

77 *Move to reopen Article 8*

78 **SECOND:** by Mr. Byron

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80 Mrs. Couture commented all towns that fall in the population range of 5,000 to 9,000 were used
81 as comparisons. She noted Derry and Nashua were used to show what some of the jobs look
82 like. She indicated the last time there was an increase in wages the increase was 1.5%. She
83 noted some employees have not had an increase in wages in 10 years.

84
85 Mr. Pascucci commented we are going to vote to reopen the article, but the number has not
86 changed. He asked why the article would be reopened if it will be amended at Deliberative
87 Session.

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89 Mr. Spencer withdrew his motion and commented that Mr. Pascucci made a valid point. Mr.
90 Byron did not withdraw his second. Mrs. Couture indicated the motion is withdrawn.

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92 **MOTION:** by Mr. Byron

93 *Move to reopen Article 8*

94 **SECOND:** by Mr. Bourque

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96 Mr. Byron commented there is a sufficient amount of information that specifies what the library
97 staff is paid. He indicated there is supporting data to justify their request. He suggested the
98 Budget Committee should reconsider the article.

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100 Mrs. Douglas commented we are going to vote for an amount that is higher than what they will
101 revise.

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103 Mr. Pascucci believes that they will not bring forth a lower wage plan if the Budget Committee
104 votes to recommend the higher amount.

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106 Mrs. Couture agreed that can be done, but indicated the article still goes before the voters.

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108 Mr. Peeples indicated he will not change his vote and that the Board of Selectmen are not
109 comfortable with revising the number.

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111 Mr. Spencer commented he has not had the time to digest the information received from the
112 library.

113

114 Mrs. Douglas commented that the library did the work we requested and we should at least hear
115 what that number is. She indicated her vote will not change.

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117 Mr. Spencer commented since neither Mr. Byron nor Mr. Bourque voted in the negative on the
118 original motion, they cannot motion to open the article.

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120 Mr. Byron commented he is voting to reopen the article, not to recommend the article.

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122 Mrs. Couture indicated that Mr. Byron's motion is out of order.

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124 **Article 19 Firefighter Paramedic Training**

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126 Mrs. Couture indicated that Article 19 has change.

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128 Mr. Byron explained that the dollar values have not changed, but the funds will be taken out of
129 the unassigned fund balance.

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131 Mrs. Douglas asked why and commented she would prefer to appropriate the funds.

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133 Mr. Pascucci indicated that is not the Budget Committee's decision.

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135 Mrs. Douglas believes the funds should be appropriated. She indicated it is too easy not to
136 understand the full cost impact.

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138 Mr. Peebles commented the concept is wrong. He indicated we are paying for their education
139 and they are not staying in our employ.

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141 Mr. Bourque commented that is how the business world works as often times a college graduate
142 is hired, trained and a few years later they leave.

143

144 Mrs. Couture reminded the Committee that the intention of the Fire Chief is to hire someone who
145 already has the training.

146

147 Mr. Byron commented currently money is being appropriated in the fund balance. He indicated
148 if we do not hire a certified paramedic, we will use the money for training rather than
149 appropriating it and having the people take it out of their pockets. He noted if it is not used it
150 will remain in the fund balance.

151

152 Mrs. Couture indicated by using the end of year fund balance the money would not be in the
153 budget the following year.

154

155 Mr. Spencer commented if this is an important position the town wants to have and the article
156 fails, the town would not be able to fund it for a year. He indicated the wording of the article has
157 changed, but the number is the same. He noted the Budget Committee has already voted and
158 approved the article.

159

160 Mrs. Douglas believes it is a good thing to do, but commented that her job is to look out for the
161 taxpayers and this person could leave after being trained.

162

163 Mrs. Couture indicated this is a different article and there is no recommendation by the Budget
164 Committee.

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166 **MOTION:** by Mr. Pascucci

167 *Move to recommend Article 19 as revised*

168 **SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

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170 Mr. Byron indicated the Fire Chief made a statement at the last meeting that it is illegal to force
171 someone to stay after providing training, but he would be willing to include a clause in the
172 contract that states the employee must reimburse the town for the training in the event the
173 employee decides to leave.

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175 Mr. Keating commented it is an accepted practice in police service. He indicated it is common
176 to have a three year contract with a clause that the employee reimburse the remaining portion if
177 the employee decides to leave.

178

179 Mr. Peebles commented the position is a critical need.

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181 **VOTE: 8-1-0**

182 **The motion carried.**

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184 **Article 20 Human Services and Health Agencies**

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186 Mr. Byron indicated it is the opinion of the Board of Selectmen to continue to put the request
187 forward as a warrant article.

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189 **MOTION:** by Mr. Keating

190 *Move to recommend Article 20*

191 **SECOND:** by Mr. Spencer

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193 Mr. Pascucci commented he is pleased the Board of Selectmen chose to make the request a
194 warrant article. He indicated he will abstain from the vote as he believes he is doing more of a
195 service to abstain instead of not supporting the article. He believes this is charity and it is up to
196 the individual to contribute.

197

198 Mrs. Douglas indicated she will also abstain because the article is not directly tied to the
199 operation of the town and she does not feel it is appropriate to put her opinion or view on
200 someone else. She commented this is a personal decision and does not believe the Budget
201 Committee should vote on the article.

202

203 Mr. Bourque commented you do not want to give a recommendation on this article, but you will
204 provide one for everything else.

205

206 Mrs. Douglas commented that the Budget Committee provides recommendations for things that
207 directly affect the operation of the town or school district. She indicated this article does neither.

208

209 Mrs. Couture indicated that last year Home, Health and Hospice provided 104 visits to residents
210 in Litchfield. She noted St. Joseph's Community Service, Meals on Wheels, Bridges, CASA and
211 the Red Cross provided many valuable services as well. She commented these are specific
212 incidents where these organizations have provided services to Litchfield residents. Mrs. Couture
213 indicated we do not see any impact on our infrastructure with services provided by these
214 organizations as we would if the town did not have these services.

215

216 Mr. Byron called the question.

217

218 **VOTE: 4-2-3**

219 **The motion carried.**

220

221 Mr. Spencer commented for those that abstained, there is a financial responsibility here.

222

223 Mr. Byron mentioned that the article sequence will be change so that the operating budget article
224 will immediately follow the voting of officers.

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226 • School District Budget

227 Mrs. Couture asked if Committee members had any comments or changes. She mentioned that
228 we were expecting more information regarding LMS Lego League and the Superintendent's
229 salary breakdown.

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Mr. Bourque indicated that the miscellaneous line in the LMS co-curricular budget listed an amount of \$2,290, which is the amount for two stipends of \$1,145 for Lego Robotics (LMS) and Destination Imagination (GMS). He noted once approved, the stipends will be reallocated into the correct accounts.

Mrs. Couture indicated there are no stipends in the co-curricular budget for Lego Robotics or Destination Imagination. She commented Mr. Lecklider was concerned that the programs have grown substantially.

Referring to the salary breakdown for the Superintendent's contract, Mr. Bourque explained that in anticipation of hiring a new superintendent, the School Board budgeted the full contract salary and benefits.

Mrs. Douglas asked about the hourly rate. Mr. Bourque indicated the School Board has not yet discussed salary with the Superintendent.

Mr. Spencer commented that in terms of the salary, he assumed that the Superintendent would not be working 52 weeks out of the year. He indicated he is comfortable with the Budget Committee's reduction and does not believe the bottom line needs to be reopened.

Mrs. Douglas believes that the superintendent's salary line is over funded by \$30,000, but feels she can live with the budget.

Mrs. Couture indicated the school district budget stands. She noted all changes have been reflected in the MS-27. Referring to the town budget, she commented all changes will be reflected in the MS-7. She noted the only change is in the articles.

Mr. Byron reported that the town received a petition warrant article requesting that the Board of Selectmen open the television studio. He indicated there is no tax impact with that article as any funds would be provided out of the franchise fee. He noted the Board of Selectmen have not voted on the article.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, January 30, 2016 following Deliberative Session

Recorded by: Michele E. Flynn, Recording Secretary