

**Minutes of the  
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting  
Held on April 12, 2018**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, April 12, 2018 at Campbell High School, One Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

**PRESENT:** C Couture (Chair), K Douglas (Vice Chair), J Bourque, J Martin, N Fordey, R Meyers (School Board Representative), J Brunelle (Selectmen Representative)

Absent: B Hodgkins, G Lambert

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mrs. Couture called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

● **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**2. ELECTION OF CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

Mrs. Couture welcomed new members to the committee. She introduced new members and returning members.

Mrs. Couture asked for nominations for Chair and Vice Chair.

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Bourque

*Move to nominate Cindy Couture as Chair*

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

**VOTE: 6-0-1, with Mrs. Couture abstaining**

**The motion carried.**

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Bourque

*Move to nominate Keri Douglas as Vice Chair*

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Couture

**VOTE: 6-0-1, with Mrs. Douglas abstaining**

**The motion carried.**

**3. PUBLIC INPUT**

There was no public input.

Mrs. Couture announced that the Budget Committee will be meeting at Town Hall in the future for a majority of their meetings. She commented there is updated equipment and audio at that location.

**4. REVIEW / ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

● **February 10, 2018**

Mrs. Couture indicated that she had not distributed the minutes, which were deferred to the next meeting.

## **5. CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence.

## **6. ELECTION RESULTS**

Mrs. Couture commented that she included the election results on the agenda so members would have an opportunity to review them and/or voice any concerns. She reviewed the school district voting results:

- Article 1: Operating Budget was approved
- Article 2: Full Day Kindergarten was approved
- Article 3: Special Education Coordinator failed by a small amount of votes
- Article 4: Building/Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund was approved.

Mrs. Bourque commented that placing full day kindergarten on the warrant was the right thing to do. She indicated the district and School Board did a good job lobbying and provided enough information.

Mrs. Couture reviewed the town voting results and indicated all articles were approved with the exception of the article to dispose of the fire station, which failed.

Mrs. Bourque observed that it is clear there is an appetite for some of the things we are asking for and some of the things we need. She believes warrant articles are the way the school and town should approach major changes.

Mrs. Douglas indicated that she believes in the fire station project and thanked voters for their approval.

Mr. Brunelle commented it was a good voting crowd despite the storm.

Mrs. Douglas commented it was nice to see social media used for something good. She expressed her appreciation for working with the town on the fire station plans. She indicated she still believes that the budgets are high.

Mrs. Couture commented the special education coordinator article failed for the second year. She indicated it is disappointing to see that because it is a critical need, but people may just not understand it.

Mr. Brunelle indicated because of social media and so much going on people listened to the message. He commented we try to communicate more and get the meetings out more. He remarked that it bothered him that the School Board decided not to use Facebook Live. He noted it will reach more people.

Mr. Meyers commented the School Board is seeking legal opinion regarding commentary and questions during meetings.

Mr. Brunelle commented it is not about interacting with the public. He indicated the Board of Selectmen do not pay attention to the comments and they do not have to respond to the comments. He noted it is real time and he strongly suggests the School Board allow it to occur.

Mrs. Couture indicated that she was thinking about the commentary and responses and believes it may be wise to consult legal counsel. She commented between meetings comments may generate responses, which are typically discussed at the next meeting and they become part of the official record. Mrs. Couture noted the Chair can speak for the Committee; however, she feels uncomfortable with this new venue.

Mr. Brunelle indicated he will request legal opinion regarding Facebook Live relative to commentary and questions. He was concerned with attorney involvement because he felt we could lose the medium or make the control too restrictive that it will become inoperable. He noted social media had a big impact in the voting this year.

Mrs. Fordey commented the only way she knew what was going on in town was through Facebook.

Mr. Brunelle believes that it would be better if more people get involved.

Mrs. Couture indicated there is nothing in the bylaws that addresses social media.

Mrs. Bourque commented we discussed being more transparent and agreed, at that time, that Mr. Cutter would take the lead on the What's Up page before he left the committee.

Mrs. Couture mentioned that the NHMA is offering free workshops that would be beneficial for committee members to attend. She indicated there is always valuable information and it is a good experience. She offered to forward the information to members.

## **7. REPORTS**

- **Town Business**

- **Fire Station Update**

Mr. Brunelle reported that the town is working on the bond application and part one will be submitted tomorrow; the building planning is underway with contractors; it is expected groundbreaking will occur in August.

- **Water Update**

Mr. Brunelle reported the town is legally still in negotiations with St. Gobain; the NH DES agreement includes 27 additional homes, which will result in a tax impact for additional hydrants. He noted the Board of Selectmen has not yet taken action.

Mr. Brunelle reported that the police department is looking for candidates for a new officer as the warrant article was approved. He indicated that a candidate was found that is already certified and the Board of Selectmen authorized the Chief to hire the candidate if he felt it was appropriate. He reported the highway department began paving and the truck approved on the warrant was purchased.

Mrs. Couture explained for the new members that the town budget runs per calendar year (Jan – Dec). She noted they problem is they do not know if they have an approved budget until the March vote and are being conservative until they know. She indicated the school district runs per fiscal year (Jul – Jun) and have time to prepare for their new budget.

Mr. Brunelle added that is the reason most of the spending occurs near the end of the year.

- **School Business**
  - **Financial Update**

Mr. Meyers reported that full day kindergarten is on track. He indicated that the district applied for and is waiting for approval of a grant from Homeland Security for a secure vestibule at GMS.

Mrs. Couture asked about costs and what is remaining.

Mr. Meyers indicated that the portable classrooms were ordered and will be delivered and installed over the summer.

Mrs. Douglas asked about the plans for the secure vestibule at GMS. Mr. Meyers indicated he would pass that along to the SAU.

Mr. Meyers reported that the School Board discussed questions from the Athletic Boosters regarding press box funding and gate receipts.

Mrs. Couture mentioned that she reviewed the recent enrollment report, which reflects there are 62 Kindergarten registrations and 65 Grade 1 registrations. She indicated that the registrations for kindergarten are ahead of what was anticipated and the registrations for grade 1 are on target. She commented the School Board hired a new Superintendent, Dr. Michael Jette. She noted she was not sure about the financial impact of his salary and benefits will be in comparison to what was budgeted.

Mr. Meyers asked if he should send the information requested to Mrs. Couture. Mrs. Couture indicated he can send it to Mrs. Flynn and she will send it to the Chair, who will distribute it.

## **8. MEMBER INPUT/ NEW BUSINESS**

- **Budget Calendar 2018-2019**

Mrs. Couture commented last year the Budget Committee used a new method to review the budget and streamlined the process. The Committee spent two weeks with the town presenting their budget, skipped a week to digest the information, and then met the final week to make changes. There was a meeting in December to review and vote on warrant articles. She noted

this was the same procedure used with the school district. She indicated a third meeting was scheduled in December in the event there was any new information.

Mrs. Bourque agreed the process was well done and more effective last year. She commented that she did not feel as prepared for the school district budget in the timeframe that was scheduled because the budget is so large. She requested to have budget presentations over three meetings.

Mrs. Couture reviewed the calendar with the Budget Committee and added an extra budget review meeting to the meetings in the November.

Mrs. Fordey asked if Committee members email the Chair directly if they are unable to attend a meeting. Mrs. Couture indicated that is correct.

- **Bylaws**

Mrs. Couture indicated she will research other town budget committees to see if they have any reference to the use of social media in their bylaws.

Mrs. Bourque welcomed the new members to the Committee.

Mrs. Couture indicated the Committee does not use Robert's Rules, but there is decorum.

## **9. PUBLIC INPUT**

There was no public input.

## **10. ADJOURN**

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Douglas

*Move to adjourn the meeting.*

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Bourque

**VOTE: 7-0-0**

**The motion carried.**

**Next meeting: May 24, 2018**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

**Recorded by: Michele E. Flynn, Recording Secretary**

**Approved: May 24, 2018**