

**Approved Minutes of the
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting
Held on September 27, 2018**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, September 27, 2018 at Litchfield Town Hall, 2 Liberty Way, Litchfield, NH 03052.

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

Absent:

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

● **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

2. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

3. REVIEW / ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

● **August 23, 2018**

MOTION: by Mrs. Douglas

Move to approve the minutes of August 23, 2018

SECOND: by Mrs. Bourque

VOTE: 6-0-1, with Mr. Hodgkins abstaining

The motion carried.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

Mrs. Couture reported she received no correspondence except town and school district reports.

5. NEW BUSINESS

● **New Member Interviews/Discussion**

Mrs. Couture indicated she reached out to the community for interest in serving on the Budget Committee until March 2019.

○ **John Son**

Mr. Son indicated he is a new resident to Litchfield with two small children. He is originally from Kentucky with a background in education, serving as a high school teacher, soccer coach and chief information officer for a school in Kentucky. Mr. Son also spent six years in Naperville, Illinois where he worked with digital content and had the opportunity to work with school budgets, volunteer organizations and budgets ranging from \$100,000 to multimillions. He indicated his goal is to give back to the community and get involved.

Mrs. Couture asked Mr. Son if he would be interested in running for a position on the Budget Committee in March 2019. Mr. Son answered in the affirmative.

o **Jim Spotts**

Mr. Spotts is a former Budget Committee member. He indicated that he moved to Litchfield in 2005. He has experience with the budget process, has worked for the State of NH and is familiar with the legislative process and laws.

Mrs. Couture asked Mr. Spotts if he would be interested in running for a position on the Budget Committee in March 2019. Mr. Spotts indicated he is not interested in running for a permanent position.

o **Jack Whitnell**

Mr. Whitnell has been a resident of Litchfield since 2002. He indicated he would like to give back to the community. He commented he was unable to do so with his previous job, but now has time available. He does not have budget experience and has worked in the trades.

Mrs. Couture asked Mr. Whitnell if he would be interested in running for a position on the Budget Committee in March 2019. Mr. Whitnell answered in the affirmative.

Mrs. Bourque commented that she was excited to see three people apply for the vacancy on the committee. She thanked the candidates for giving up their time to attend the meeting. She expressed that she is hopeful that whomever is not selected is encouraged to run for an open position in March.

Mrs. Fordey felt it would make the most sense to have someone who had more experience and encourage the newcomers to run for a position in March. She commented that the budget season is upon us and we will be jumping in right away.

Mrs. Couture commented this was a unique year where we had four open positions. She indicated there is something to be said for having someone with experience, but by election it would have been a new face, whether with or without experience.

Mrs. Bourque commented all three candidates bring amazing qualities.

Mrs. Douglas commented that she did not feel comfortable making a motion since she had limited information and interaction with the candidates.

Mrs. Couture commented she was grateful to have three people interested and encouraged candidates to consider running for an open position in March.

MOTION: by Mrs. Couture

Move to appoint Jim Spotts to the Budget Committee until March 2019

SECOND: by Mrs. Bourque

Mrs. Couture commented that Mr. Spotts has previous experience on the Committee and would be able to jump in quickly.

Mr. Hodgkins commented that because someone does not have the experience does not mean they would not be just as qualified as a person with experience.

Mrs. Couture agreed, indicated that a new person would have been voted into the position through the election. She commented that bringing someone new into the committee will allow that person to gain experience.

Mrs. Douglas commented it would be a good experience for both the new person and the Committee. She would prefer to consider someone who would want to continue serving on the Committee.

**VOTE: 3-3-2, with Mr. Meyers and Mr. Brunelle abstaining
The motion failed.**

MOTION: by Mr. Hodgkins

Move to appoint Jack Whitnell to the Budget Committee until March 2019

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

Mrs. Couture explained that Mr. Whitnell's lack of budget experience is her only objection.

Mr. Hodgkins commented that does not mean a person without experience cannot learn.

Mrs. Couture commented having been through this process for a number of years she has learned having some knowledge is very helpful.

Mr. Hodgkins asked how experience is helpful. He noted that a person does not have to have accounting experience to be on the committee. He commented if he looks at what the town is spending and does not agree he would like to be able to vote no, or if he agrees he would like to be able to vote yes.

Mrs. Fordey commented she did not have experience prior to serving on the Committee. She attended training and found there is much to be aware of when going through the budget process.

Mr. Whitnell commented that he does have experience with budgets, they are just different budgets. He felt he is able to learn what he needs to learn. He indicated that a person cannot sit and complain about something if that person is not willing to do something about it.

Mrs. Douglas commented she likes the fact that he has historical background being a resident since 2002.

**VOTE: 4-1-3, Mrs. Martin, Mr. Brunelle and Mr. Meyers abstaining
The motion carried.**

Jack Whitnell is appointed to the Budget Committee.

Mrs. Couture indicated that Mr. Whitnell needs to be sworn in by the Town Clerk. She noted that she will send Mr. Whitnell information on the bylaws, last year's budgets and other relevant information.

6. REPORTS

- **Town Business**

- **General Update**

Mr. Brunelle provided updates regarding town business. He indicated the 2018 budget is still tracking on target, there is some concern about the cost of gas, and the tax rate is not yet set.

- **Fire Station Update**

Mr. Brunelle provided an update regarding the new fire station project. He reported the roof will continue to be installed; the siding should be installed over the next four weeks and the envelope will be buttoned up over the fall. He commented there is a possibility the department can move into the building in January.

Mrs. Couture indicated there was a question about the heating and electricity for the building and which account would be impacted.

Mr. Brunelle indicated the costs will be applied to either the Government Buildings or Fire Department budget accounts. He commented that it is unsure when the building will be heated as the mechanicals are not targeted until the end of October.

- **Financial Update**

Mr. Brunelle provided a financial update for the Budget Committee. He indicated that a link has been provided for the 2019 budget and warrant articles. He reported the 2019 proposed budget stands at approximately \$6.7M, which is a \$500,000 increase over 2018. The budget includes the new full time police officer approved last year, fully loaded costs for what was approved last year, fuel increases and two police cruisers (according to the approved, alternating cycle). He noted the budget was prepared with insurance estimates; however, the final costs will not be received until the end of October. Mr. Brunelle mentioned the estimate is a 10% increase. He commented that health agencies is not included in the budget as it has been on the warrant for several years.

Mrs. Douglas asked about the impact of the 2019 budget increase to the tax cap.

Mr. Brunelle indicated that there is an offset of revenues and believes that the town is close to the cap.

Mrs. Couture indicated it appears to be over the cap by approximately \$26,000.

Mrs. Douglas asked about the matching highway block grant.

Mr. Brunelle indicated this is the year we have committed not to include it and it should not impact the road maintenance budget. He commented the matching grant has allowed the town to get caught up with the road work. He noted the Board of Selectmen does not want the impact to be any more than it needs to be.

Mrs. Couture indicated that review of the town budget will begin at the next meeting. She asked Committee members to review the budgets and bring questions to the meeting.

Mr. Brunelle mentioned if members have questions ahead of time to send them through the Chair.

- **School Business**
 - **General Update**

Mr. Meyers provided updates regarding School Board business. He reported that the funding for the Kindergarten portables will be installed after the site review. He reported that the asbestos inspection at GMS reflected full compliance. He noted any asbestos that is remaining is encapsulated. Kindergarten is on target and the inspection has occurred, which resulted in a small punch list for the contractor. The district is looking into changing the entry for LMS. Mr. Meyers reported the CHS wood shop ventilator was installed, ALICE (active shooter) training occurred on September 19 and the district will be discussing designing a drill for the schools.

- **Financial Update**

Mr. Meyers reported the district has been preparing the FY20 budgets. He indicated that some donations were made to the schools that included a shed at LMS and supplies for GMS.

Mr. Meyers reported that approximately \$626,000 will be returned to the town; there is still \$196,000 in encumbrances and approximately \$252,000 awaiting final payments.

Mrs. Douglas commented that she has said each year there is too much money budgeted and that we are not conservative enough.

Mr. Hodgkins asked what happens with the remaining funds.

Mrs. Douglas indicated that the remaining funds are returned to the town to offset taxes. She encouraged people to look at the numbers as that is a lot of money to tax and not spend.

Mrs. Couture commented that the histories are done for a reason.

Mr. Meyers reported negotiations have begun with the LEA and The LSSA.

o **Enrollment**

Mr. Meyers reviewed first and second Friday enrollment numbers.

There was discussion regarding kindergarten and enrollment projections. Mrs. Couture asked who be providing the projections this year.

Mrs. Flynn indicated that Dean Michener is retired and not providing the projections; the NHSAA provided a quote that was very costly; the NHSBA is not providing projections; NESDEC will provide projections if the district purchases a membership. She reported that she has met with Dr. Jette and they have been discussing a plan for enrollment projections for some time. She noted that enrollment projections will not be delayed.

Mrs. Couture mentioned that the district did add another first grade teacher in response to the increased enrollment.

7. MEMBER INPUT/ NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Fordey reported that she attended the NHMA municipal budget training. She mentioned that there are changes for the default budget for 2018.

Mr. Brunelle indicated they clarified the grey areas.

Mrs. Couture commented it got a bit more complicated from what she has read.

Mr. Brunelle commented that the default budget can now be discussed, but cannot be changed by the voters.

Mrs. Fordey commented that the training was interesting. She mentioned that she asked about educating the public, but the NHMA indicated they provide the training to the officials in order to pass on to the public. She indicated that the main thing she learned is how much the voters have control over and that they have more power than they realize. She felt if they knew that there may be more participating at town meeting. She commented she is more appreciative how New Hampshire does things.

Mrs. Couture commented there is power in Deliberative Session.

Mrs. Flynn commented she attended a workshop on Government Meeting Disruptions and share the main points of the workshop with the Committee.

8. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

9. ADJOURN

MOTION: by Mrs. Douglas

Move to adjourn the meeting.

SECOND: by Mrs. Bourque

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion carried.

Next meeting: October 4, 2018

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Recorded by: Michele E. Flynn, Recording Secretary

Approved: October 4, 2018