

**Approved Draft Minutes of the
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting
Held on October 11, 2018**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, October 11, 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), T Brown (Town Administrator)

Absent: J Whitnell

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

● **October 4, 2018**

The draft minutes were not available.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

Mrs. Couture reported that responses to questions about the town budget and information from inquiries last week were received. She indicated that Mrs. Bourque had an inquiry about the radios for the fire department, but the response was not clear.

Mrs. Bourque commented that \$40,000 was spent last year for mobile and portable radios and \$36,000 was spent in 2017. She indicated that she was under the understanding that the \$40,000 budgeted in 2018 for replacement was a one-time expenditure. She asked if \$40,000 will be spent per year on equipment.

Mr. Brown explained that nothing has been spent this year because the radios are purchased at the end of the year. He commented a possible explanation for the examples Mrs. Bourque mentioned is that the funds could have been encumbered at the beginning of the year and then expended at the end of the year, which makes it appear as a double expenditure.

Mr. Brunelle commented that he believes the radios are on a four year rotation plan. He indicated the base radio cost was \$12,000; the mobile radios (car) are approximately \$4,000-\$5,000 each; the portable radios are approximately \$3,200 each.

Mrs. Couture asked for a list of what is purchased each year.

Mrs. Bourque asked what prompted the review of the Fire Chief's salary.

Mr. Brown indicated that the new contract was in negotiations and the town researched the market salary for the Fire Chief.

Mrs. Couture asked if periodic survey updates are completed for market salaries.

Mr. Brown indicated the town is in the third year of the pay plan and due to update those wages. He noted the problem is when the town revamped the pay scale system the municipal association group was active in updating salaries.

Mr. Brunelle indicated that we are two years behind in wages and still have to reset the highs and lows. He noted that many towns are doing their own surveys and the data is not as accessible as it once was.

5. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

6. TOWN BUDGET PRESENTATION

Parks & Recreation

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Parks and Recreation budget to the Budget Committee with a bottom line of \$96,248, which is a \$146 increase over 2018. He noted that there is an \$800 reduction in electricity, no anticipated increase in propane and pointed out that there are different service periods for chemical toilet rentals, which is the reason some locations are higher or lower than others.

Mrs. Couture asked about field improvements and program expenses. She indicated there has been no spending in field improvements in current years.

John Bryant, Recreation Commission, indicated that funds will be spent this year and next year on playground equipment.

Mrs. Couture asked about equipment purchases and what is needed.

Mr. Bryant indicated that is dependent on the year and activities.

Mrs. Couture asked about program expenses in relation to spending for 2018.

Mr. Bryant indicated that there were not enough volunteers for Winterfest. The Recreation Commission is planning to run it again this year.

Library

Vicki Varrick, Library Director, presented the 2019 Proposed Library budget to the Budget Committee with a bottom line of \$272,713, which is a \$14,395 increase over 2018. She noted this is the last year of the wage plan and the health insurance buy out will be based on the single plan (\$4,000).

Cecile Bonvouloir, Trustee Chair, commented the Library Trustees are discussing the importance of having health insurance or an insurance buy out. She indicated that there are four employees that work 32 hours and 3 of the 4 have been employed at the Library between 13 and 20 years without any benefits. She noted the Trustees feel these full time employees deserve health insurance or an insurance buy out.

Mrs. Douglas asked how this would align with the town plan if the town does not consider 32 hours to be full time.

Mr. Brown noted the Library is under the control of the Trustees and not the town. He indicated he spoke with the Board of Selectmen about it and now part time employees are looking for benefits.

Mrs. Douglas expressed concern about unintended consequences and suggested letting the voters decide.

Mrs. Couture asked for the definition of full time at the Library.

Mrs. Bonvouloir indicated that the Trustees voted that 32 hours is considered full time. She commented some of them may need to access health insurance and we want to retain these people. She noted that the Trustees decided to offer a single plan.

Mrs. Couture asked about the definition of full time at the Town level.

Mr. Brown indicated full time is 40 hours.

Mrs. Douglas commented that she understands the Trustees' intentions, but is concerned about setting a precedent.

Mrs. Varrick commented when we went on the wage plan it was based on the Library employees' salary market. She indicated the 32 hours is based on how many days the library is open and most smaller libraries use 32 hours as full time.

Mrs. Bourque asked if the decision was based on the fear of people leaving.

Mrs. Bonvouloir replied in the negative. She explained that the Trustees are looking at the dedication of the employees and the fact they have no retirement or other benefits.

Mrs. Couture mentioned that under the Affordable Care Act, 30 hours is full time.

Mrs. Douglas commented the best thing to do is to let the voters authorize that 32 hours is full time for the library.

Mrs. Couture did not believe the Budget Committee can ask that of the voters, but suggested it may be appropriate to ask the voters to authorize the library to offer a buy out.

Mrs. Varrick indicated it is the Trustees' responsibility to set a policy of hours. She reminded the Committee that the Trustees decided to keep the insurance offered at a lower rate to avoid unintended consequences.

Mrs. Bonvouloir commented it is important to consider the library has not had 40 hour people. She indicated the library is managed to keep people at 32 hours. She noted we are not giving the staff options for insurance that is why we want to offer the single plan or a buy out. Mrs. Bonvouloir commented the fear of setting precedent is not there because it is two different groups.

Mrs. Bourque commented there are four people at full time. She theorized if those folks are full time and eligible the library budget is substantially larger.

Mrs. Varrick reported that increases include: heating oil, building maintenance, and equipment purchases; decreases include: electricity and the first year on town water.

Mrs. Douglas added there is an increase in wages from the third year of the wage plan.

Mrs. Couture asked if the library is planning to have any new programs in 2019. Mrs. Varrick indicated the library currently has Ancestry.com.

Road Agent

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Road Agent budget with a bottom line of \$36,225, which is an increase of \$375 over the 2018 budget. He reported that the highway department will be doing a drainage project on Robyn Avenue; surveying of the drainage network will continue into 2019. He mentioned the NRPC coordinated efforts to create a Stormwater Management Coalition and we worked all summer to complete a permit application. In 2019, we will use the coalition and most likely will be required to pay a fee. He noted engineering consultants can be engaged to complete some of the reporting and technical plans and we have start testing out falls.

Mrs. Couture commented that the town seems to be spending only half of what was budgeted.

Mr. Brown commented there was much talk about whether the EPA was going to establish the permit, which had been delayed. He explained because no one knew what the permit requirements would be and we were carrying the costs for the last two years. He noted that by this time next year we should have more of a plan for contracted services, but we have not spent any of that line this year.

Mr. Brown reported that the town requested for Continental to be the sole source bid since no other contractors (except Continental) have responded to the request for proposals in the past and the cost of a bid document is \$4,000. He indicated that the town is doing a feasibility study for the creation of a public works department at a cost of \$6,000, which will be charged to this line.

Road Maintenance

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Road Maintenance budget with a bottom line of \$676,862, which is an increase of \$12,473 over the 2018 budget.

Mr. Brown reported that a position for light equipment operator is funded in this budget; health and dental insurance is increasing; the highway position has been clarified as a full time position and eligible for benefits; contractor services reflects a decrease due to the new plow truck; salt purchases reflect a decrease due to a price drop and the salt shed is now full. He indicated the current budget should be sufficient to get us through to the first of the year as the salt we are budgeting seems to be working. He noted the highway block grant road improvements reflects an increase of \$4,700 and the first payment of the new plow truck has been included in the budget.

Police Administration

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Police Administration budget with a bottom line of \$1,728,901, which is an increase of \$80,760 over the 2018 budget.

Chief O'Brion highlighted increases and decreases in the budget, which include:

- additional officer approved by the voters
- administrative assistant wages increase
- software support driven by an increase in support costs
- decrease in overtime and court overtime
- training overtime remained level
- reduction in equipment purchases
- requesting a new police shield in event of active shooter (to be done in phases)
- cruiser purchase increase (2019 is a 2-car purchase cycle).

Chief O'Brion explained that the Town has decided to purchase Chevy Tahoe's instead of the Ford Explorers due to the problems with the Explorers. He indicated Tahoe's have more room as compared with Explorers.

Mrs. Bourque commented we have ten cars in total, of which five are front line vehicles. She asked if the cars replaced those with the highest mileage. Chief O'Brion explained they will trade in the high mileage detail cars and the two high mileage front line cars will become detail cars.

Mrs. Bourque asked if the 8 cylinder Tahoe's will increase fuel consumption. Chief O'Brion commented the Tahoe's get 14 mpg, whereas the Explorers get 12 mpg.

Mrs. Couture commented that, in terms of Overtime Training, we seem to have great ideas on what we want to do, but we never seem to spend what is budgeted. Chief O’Brion explained that most of the training is done at the end of the year and the laws have changed, so we will be short this year.

Police Support Services

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Police Support budget with a bottom line of \$162,061, which is an increase of \$3,288 over the 2018 budget.

Chief O’Brion indicated that the dispatcher’s wages have increased.

Animal Control

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Animal Control budget with a bottom line of \$19,415, which reflects no changes from the 2018 budget.

Information Technology

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Information Technology budget with a bottom line of \$116,319, which is an increase of \$10,236 over the 2018 budget.

Mr. Brunelle explained that the telephone data services increase is based on the run rate and the expected cost for the new fire station. He indicated there is not a large increase in equipment maintenance, and the equipment purchase increase is due to upgrades in the operating systems and laptops.

Revaluation of Property

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Assessing budget with a bottom line of \$50,752, which is an increase of \$50 over the 2018 budget.

Legal Expenses

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Legal Expenses budget with a bottom line of \$65,000, which reflects no changes from the 2018 budget.

Mrs. Couture asked about the status of the current legal expenses. Mr. Brown indicated that the town is still utilizing legal counsel. He commented the goal of the Board of Selectmen is to negotiate a settlement agreement directly with St. Gobain.

Personnel Administration

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Personnel Administration budget with a bottom line of \$649,804, which is an increase of \$7,862 over the 2018 budget. He indicated there is an estimated increase of 10% for Workers Compensation and the remainder of the increase is driven by increases to wages granted in 2018.

Planning Board

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Planning Board budget with a bottom line of \$44,593, which is an increase of \$650 over the 2018 budget.

Zoning Board

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Zoning Board budget with a bottom line of \$596, which reflects no changes from the 2018 budget.

Cemeteries

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Cemeteries budget with a bottom line of \$7,483, which reflects no changes from the 2018 budget.

Town Insurance

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Town Insurance budget with a bottom line of \$60,536, which reflects no changes from the 2018 budget.

Advertising & Regional Associations

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Advertising and Regional Associations budget with a bottom line of \$16,064, which is an increase of \$544 over the 2018 budget.

Mosquito District

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Mosquito District budget with a bottom line of \$31,150, which reflects no changes from the 2018 budget.

Health Agencies

Mr. Brown presented the 2019 Proposed Health Agencies budget with a bottom line of \$39,037. This is the amount requested in correspondence from various agencies based on providing services to the community of Litchfield. He reported the Board of Selectmen discussed this request, which includes correspondence from all agencies listed. He noted the Board of Selectmen have decided not to put any amount into the budget and instead will have a separate warrant article for Health Agencies with all the agencies listed.

- **School Business**
 - **End of Year Financial Report**

Mrs. Couture indicated that the School District audited end of year balance was supposed to be presented on the September agenda. She noted that after encumbering funds and year end spending, the district returned \$626,350 (\$201,309 from Special Services; \$425,041 from the FY18 General Fund).

Mrs. Douglas commented that this is not an isolated incident and there is always much returned to the taxpayers by the school district.

7. MEMBER INPUT/ NEW BUSINESS

There was no member input.

8. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

9. ADJOURN

MOTION: by Mrs. Bourque

Move to adjourn the meeting.

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion carried.

Next meeting: October 25, 2018

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Recorded by: Michele E. Flynn, Recording Secretary

Approved: November 1, 2018