

**Approved Minutes of the  
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting  
Held on October 25, 2018**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, October 25, 2018 at Litchfield Town Hall, 2 Liberty Way, Litchfield, NH 03052.

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

Absent: J Bourque, 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**
- **October 11, 2018**

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Fordey

*Move to approve the minutes of October 4, 2018*

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Martin

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

**The motion carried.**

The minutes of October 11, 2018 will be addressed on the November 1 agenda.

**4. CORRESPONDENCE**

Mrs. Couture reported that responses to budget questions regarding the Fire Department and radios was received, as was the School District budget review schedule.

**5. NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business

**6. TOWN BUDGET DELIBERATION**

- **Revenue Estimates**
- **Tax Impact and Tax Cap**

Mr. Brown reported that there were some budget adjustments that were a result of some budget item increases and decreases.

## Increases:

- Health Insurance 10.5%
- Dental Insurance adjusted in the Police budget
- Unemployment Insurance
- Property and Liability Insurance
- Water line item in Fire Department budget
- Highway Block Grant

## Decreases:

- Overlay reset to \$50,000
- Police Contract (due to retention of funds raised in 2018)
- Purchased skid steer for Solid Waste instead of leasing
- Electric
- Portable toilets

Total overall tax cap projection reflects we are exceeding by \$3,773, which includes the first bond payment for the new fire station and excludes the Health Agencies budget, which will be placed on the warrant.

- **Changes to the Proposed Budget**

- **4130.10 Board of Selectmen**

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Couture

***Move to reduce Account 4130.10, Board of Selectmen, by \$2,200***

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

Mrs. Couture indicated that she is making a bottom line reduction based on historical spending in clerical support, background checks and training.

Mrs. Douglas commented that the reduction should be amended as it is \$1,000 higher than the motion she would have made.

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Couture

***Move to amend the motion to reduce Account 4130.10 by \$1,200***

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

**VOTE on the amended motion: 6-1-0, with Mr. Brunelle opposing**

**The amended motion carried.**

**VOTE on the main motion to reduce Account 4130.10 by \$1,200: 6-1-0, with Mr. Brunelle opposing**

**The main motion carried.**

- **4130.30 Town Meeting**

There were no changes to the 2019 Town Meeting budget.

- **4140.10 Town Clerk**

Mrs. Couture commented that each year money is budgeted for the Municipal Clerks Institute, but is never used.

**MOTION:** Mrs. Couture

*Move to reduce Account 4140.10, Town Clerk, by \$850*

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

**VOTE: 6-1-0, with Mr. Brunelle opposing**

**The motion carried.**

- **4150.10 Accounting**

There were no changes to the 2019 Accounting budget.

- **4150.20 Information Technology**

Mrs. Douglas asked if it will be necessary to keep internet access at the old fire station into 2019.

Mr. Brunelle indicated that it is necessary for communication. He commented we do not know the exact date the fire department will move into the new station. He noted that the internet access will be discontinued at the old station once the fire department moves to the new building.

There were no changes to the 2019 Information Technology budget.

- **4150.40 Tax Collection**

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Couture

*Move to reduce Account 4150.40, Tax Collection, by \$1,000*

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

Mrs. Couture commented that Postage was increased to \$6,500 last year, but the actual expenditures for last year and this year show it will be well under spent.

Mr. Brown indicated that current expenditures do not reflect the mailing of the tax bills at this time.

***Mrs. Couture withdrew the motion. Mrs. Douglas withdrew the second.***

There were not changes to the 2019 Tax Collection budget.

- **4152 Revaluation of Property**

There were no changes to the 2019 Revaluation of Property (Assessing) budget.

- **4153 Legal Expenses**

Mrs. Douglas expressed concern regarding the legal costs for the PFOA case.

Mr. Brunelle indicated a demand letter was sent to St. Gobain three weeks ago and there has been no response. He noted there is still much that has to be done.

Mrs. Couture mentioned that the town felt last year was going to be an expensive legal year and legal costs were under \$45,000.

Mr. Brown indicated a strategic meeting was held with legal counsel regarding the demand goals. He noted there will be more spending in the legal budget.

Mrs. Couture asked for an estimate of costs.

Mr. Brown commented we wrapped up projects over the summer; however, one face to face meeting can cost \$5,000 in legal fees.

Mrs. Couture indicated that in 2016 approximately \$38,000 was spent; in 2017 under \$45,000 was spent; and this year approximately \$38,000 has been spent. She commented that she has examined the budget and expenditures and feels that a reduction of \$10,000 will still leave the town with a total of \$55,000 for 2019.

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Couture

***Move to reduce Account 4153, Legal Expenses, by \$10,000***

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

**VOTE: 3-4-0**

**The motion failed**

Mrs. Fordey believes a \$10,000 reduction is too high.

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Fordey

***Move to reduce Account 4153, Legal Expenses, by \$5,000***

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

**VOTE: 6-1-0, with Mr. Brunelle opposing**

**The motion carried.**

- **4155.10 Personnel Administration**

There were no changes to the 2019 Personnel Administration budget.

- **4191.10 Planning Board**

Mrs. Couture asked about the NRPC Planner and what other services will be offered than were offered in the prior year.

Mr. Brown commented the planner will provide the same service; however, the Planning Board is trying to update two or three sections of the Master Plan. He indicated there was a postponement of work on the plan this year because the planner resigned. He noted there was a change in the NRPC Planner and a change of Chairmanship on the Planning Board.

Mrs. Couture felt that there is room in the budget for a reduction since the totals budgeted for the NRPC Planner, mileage/tolls, and seminars has been underspent.

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Couture

***Move to reduce Account 4191.10, Planning Board, by \$1,500***

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

**VOTE: 6-1-0, with Mr. Brunelle opposing**

**The motion carried.**

- **4191.30 Zoning Board**

There were no changes to the 2019 Zoning Board budget.

- **4194.10 General Government Buildings**

Mrs. Douglas asked if the difference in Line 410, Electric, is attributed to the old fire station.

Mr. Brown indicated the calculation includes the old fire station. He noted that there are different locations account for in that line.

Mrs. Couture commented that Line 750, Furniture and Fixture Purchase, has not been used in the past. She asked what type of furniture is budgeted in that line.

Mr. Brunelle indicated it is for the purchase of chairs, tables, or other furniture for the Town Hall.

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Couture

***Move to reduce Account 4194.10, General Government Buildings, by \$1,250***

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

Mrs. Couture indicated that the County Prisoner program (as budgeted in Line 396) has not been used more than once, and feels that there is room in the Propane line and the Furniture Purchase line.

**VOTE: 6-1-0, with Mr. Brunelle opposing**

**The motion carried.**

- **4195 Cemeteries**

There were no changes to the 2019 Cemeteries budget.

- **4196 Town Insurance**

There were no changes to the 2019 Town Insurance budget.

- **4197 Advertising and Regional Planning**

There were no changes to the 2019 Advertising and Regional Planning budget.

- **4210.10 Police Administration**

Mrs. Couture commented that spending tends to be lower in the Captain's Overtime line, Court Overtime is lower and the Overtime Training has never been fully spent despite having great goals. She also indicated she believes the Overtime for the Prosecutor will decrease.

Chief O'Brion explained that the Seminars line is substantially overspent and offsets the training lines. He indicated that they will be overspent this year.

Mrs. Fordey felt that the Pre-Employment Screening line could be reduced. She commented it has not all been spent this year and the request for 2019 is for more.

Chief O'Brion indicated there are two new hires for 2019.

There were no changes to the 2019 Police Administration budget.

- **4210.50 Police Support**

There were no changes to the 2019 Police Support budget.

- **4215.10 Ambulance**

There were no changes to the 2019 Ambulance budget.

- **4220.10 Fire**

Mrs. Fordey thanked Mr. Brown for providing the information she requested regarding the comparative salary information for the Fire Chief.

Mrs. Couture thanked Mr. Brown for providing information regarding the radios.

Mrs. Douglas asked if the radio plan is ongoing and when year one radios will be replaced.

Chief Fraitzl indicated that radios will be replaced when the radios cannot be serviced any longer. He noted the current radios are 15 years old and are unable to be serviced any longer.

Mr. Brunelle commented the estimate for useful life of the portable radios is 10 years. He indicated the radios in the budget will go into the new station.

Chief Fraitzl noted everything we have was on a grant. He indicated the goal is to be on a plan that is more cost effective than purchasing up front.

Mrs. Couture mentioned that Overtime Training is historically under spent and is now increasing.

Mr. Brown indicated there were some wage increases, which will increase those costs. He noted there has been much activity.

Chief Fraitzl commented there was a year when the department was without a full time firefighter for 6 months. He indicated there are three trainings per month with an average of 3.5 hours, which is approximately 10 hours of overtime for each.

Mrs. Couture commented Repairs/Maintenance increased by \$1,200; however, the assumption is the majority of the time will be spent in the new station. She indicated it is assumed there will be no need for repairs/maintenance in the new station.

Chief Fraitzl indicated there are three holding tanks for the new station and he is not sure how quickly they will fill. He noted once full, they will need to be pumped. He commented the floor drains will need to be cleaned as well.

Mrs. Couture commented that repairs/maintenance for the old fire station has been significantly under spent. She asked if anything new was added to the Seminars/Conventions line because the current year expenditures for are not fully spent.

Chief Fraitzl indicated there is training that has not yet been submitted. He added the increase in the budget are not due to cost of individual classes that increased in cost.

Mrs. Douglas expressed concerns with the dress uniforms line item.

Mrs. Couture commented that the Budget Committee held off because they were removed every year. She indicated that they should have dress uniforms with the new station.

Mrs. Douglas commented that she is not comfortable starting the dress uniform program (a 10 year program) as she anticipates larger expenses in the future.

Mrs. Couture believes that it is a program that is needed. She indicated there are other areas that reductions can be made. She commented that she is not opposed to the reduction or the reallocation of funds in the budget to be able to purchase dress uniforms.

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Douglas

***Move to reduce Account 4220.10, Fire, by \$1,500 (line 680)***

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Couture

**VOTE: 6-1-0, with Mr. Brunelle opposing**

**The motion carried.**

Mr. Hodgkins expressed concerns regarding the \$5,000 stipend that is in addition to the Chief's salary. He does not believe the Fire Chief should be receiving a bonus and is opposed to the increase in the Chief's salary.

Mr. Brunelle indicated that the Chief's salary is negotiated in his contract and we have to pay the contract.

Mr. Hodgkins commented the Board of Selectmen made that decision. He asked why the Chief needs a bonus.

Mr. Brunelle explained that during negotiations the Board of Selectmen evaluated the salary rate because the Chief was being under paid. He indicated the new fire station is completed on budget, the Board of Selectmen felt he should be rewarded for his time.

Mr. Hodgkins commented he did not get a large increase in his salary or a \$5,000 bonus. He believes the public will have issue.

Mrs. Douglas commented that the Town says the Chief is under paid, but there is a town on the survey that is lower. She indicated 21% is a huge increase. She asked if there were any other people that weighed in on the Chief's performance review.

Mr. Brunelle explained anyone can file a complaint, but we are not aware of any at this time. He indicated the Chief has done a great job stabilizing the department, putting policies in place and has spent much time on the new station plans and project. He added the Chief was under-compensated for his background and experience. He noted there has been no feedback on the contract negotiated.

Mr. Hodgkins commented that the Chief is supposed to have the department running well, but does not believe that a 21% raise for doing his job is appropriate. He indicated that the Police Chief was not given a 21% increase.

Mrs. Couture commented the rationale is not doing the job you are requested to do, but is also about comparing other communities in all categories. She explained the Town re-evaluated wages and used the same method to consider the Chief's salary. She noted that the Police Chief's salary was already in line with other communities.

Mr. Brown explained if the Chief left today and the Town wanted to replace this position with someone with the same background and experience as Chief Fraitzl possesses, this is the salary you will pay for a professional fire chief. He indicated that Chief Fraitzl always resolves issues in a professional manner.

Mr. Hodgkins commented that he looked at other towns (that are not mentioned in the survey) and they do not pay what Litchfield pays.



Mrs. Couture indicated the average pay is \$45 per hour and the current pay rate for Litchfield is \$37 per hour.

Mrs. Fordey commented it may look bad, but it does make sense. She felt budgeting for it all at once will be hard to sell to the voters.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Hodgkins

***Move to reduce Account 4220.10, Fire, by \$12,348 (Line 110)***

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

**VOTE: 1-6-0, with Mr. Hodgkins voting in the affirmative**

**The motion failed.**

- **4220.90 Fire Hydrants**

There were no changes to the 2019 Fire Hydrants budget.

- **4241.20 Code Enforcement**

There were no changes to the 2019 Code Enforcement budget.

- **4290.10 Emergency Management**

There were no changes to the 2019 Emergency Management budget.

- **4311.10 Road Agent**

Mrs. Couture commented that the amount budgeted for highway consulting services is historically under spent.

Mr. Brown explained that a contractor will be providing engineering design work for the project on Robin Avenue (or Roberts Road), which will cost \$10,000. He indicated the other \$10,000 is budgeted as a placeholder for the storm water management permit required by the EPA.

Mrs. Couture asked if this project has already been completed.

Mr. Brown indicated that the Road Agent has done preliminary work on the design for Robin Ave or Roberts Rd. He noted \$6,000 has been contracted for GPS coordinates on all catch basins and \$2,000 contracted to join the Joint Storm Water Coalition.

There were no changes to the 2019 Road Agent budget.

- **4312.10 Road Maintenance**

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Couture

***Move to reduce Account 4312.10, Road Maintenance, by \$10,000***

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

Mrs. Couture commented that she looked at the history of salt purchases and between 2011 and 2017 the average use is 1,525 tons. She indicated in the past couple of years the salt shed has

been empty and there were concerns that it would not be able to be filled. She noted that currently the shed is full and there is 30% remaining in the salt budget. She feels that there is room to reduce in that account.

Mr. Brown indicated that usage over the last five recent years is more realistic than going back to 2011 and 2012.

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Couture

*Move to amend the previous motion to reduce Account 4312.10 by \$5,000*

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

**VOTE on the amended motion: 6-1-0, with Mr. Brunelle opposing**

**The amended motion carried.**

**VOTE on the main motion to reduce Account 4312.10 by \$5,000: 6-1-0, with Mr. Brunelle opposing**

**The motion carried.**

- **4316.30 Street Lighting**

There were no changes to the 2019 Street Lighting budget.

- **4321.10 Sanitation Administration**

Mrs. Couture commented in reading the study provided, it was mentioned how well the department is functioning. She indicated that recommendations included the budget should take into consideration solid waste and disposal.

Mr. Brown commented that the Solid Waste Manager has a good feel for the market and calculates the waste and debris well. He mentioned the problem is that China does not want recyclables anymore and our recyclables are going into the trash. He noted there is no market for some recyclables anymore.

There were no changes to the 2019 Sanitation Administration budget.

- **4411.10 Health Department**

There were no changes to the 2019 Health Department budget.

- **4411.20 Mosquito District**

There were no changes to the 2019 Mosquito District budget.

- **4414.10 Animal Control**

There were no changes to the 2019 Animal Control budget.

- **4415 Health Agencies**

Mr. Brown indicated that the Board of Selectmen intend to include the Health Agencies requests in the Warrant.

- **4445.20 Vendor Payments**

Mrs. Couture commented that she looked at the history of the vendor payments and has seen a significant decline. She indicated the economy is doing better and houses are being sold. She noted that we have been budgeting \$10,000 for a number of years and always underspending the account.

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Couture

***Move to reduce Account 4445.20, Vendor Payments, by \$5,000***

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

Mrs. Douglas commented she is concerned that the taxpayers are raising money that is not being spent. She suggested creating a revolving fund for vendor payment use.

Mr. Hodgkins believes the account can be further reduced.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Hodgkins

***Move to amend the motion to reduce Account 4445.20 by \$6,000***

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

**VOTE on the amended motion: 6-1-0, with Mr. Brunelle opposing**

**The amended motion carried.**

**VOTE on the main motion to reduce Account 4445.20 by \$6,000: 6-1-0, with Mr. Brunelle opposing**

**The motion carried.**

- **4520.10 Parks and Recreation**

Mrs. Douglas expressed concern with budget item descriptions that state “as needed”. She wanted to know what the “as needed” items referred to in terms of repairs, equipment and capital overlay.

Mr. Brown indicated these are funds we budget for unplanned repairs. He mentioned that there is a group of volunteers that try to maintain the recreational areas in good condition. He noted there is also a group that came forward to upgrade the playground at Darrah Pond.

Questions were raised regarding program expenses and under spending of current expenditures.

Mr. Brunelle commented that some activities are expected over the next year and some organizations do help. He indicated that we would like to have the funds to run programs when someone comes forward.

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Couture

***Move to reduce Account 4520.10, Parks and Recreation, by \$1,500***

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

Mrs. Couture commented that historically it is known that not all events occur. She explained that she looked at the percentage of the budget that is requested and what is actually spent.

**VOTE: 6-1-0, with Mr. Brunelle opposing**  
**The motion carried.**

- **4550.20 Library**

With reference to the Trustees' budget request for health insurance, Mr. Hodgkins asked if you take a job that does not have health insurance, is there an expectation that you will get health insurance. He asked if employees can be scheduled for part time hours. He believes that providing health insurance for the library employees will set a precedent.

Mr. Brunelle indicated it is challenging to attract part time employees. He commented the Trustees want to offer the single coverage insurance in the event it is needed.

Mrs. Douglas was concerned that once you offer the insurance you are tied in for a full plan. She indicated that it is a nice thing to do, but it may not be appropriate to include in the budget.

Mrs. Couture commented the Trustees are the ones that decide who to hire and the hours their employees work. She indicated that the Budget Committee has control over finances. She asked if we want to offer a buy out for employees that do not pay healthcare.

Mr. Brown indicated that the Trustees believe the employees will all take the buyout.

Mrs. Douglas was opposed to offering insurance or a buyout for fear there will be unintended consequences. She asked if we do not provide funding, can it be taken from somewhere else.

Mrs. Couture believes if they do not take health insurance it is not unreasonable to offer a buyout.

Mr. Brown explained what happened was they budgeted for health insurance for an employee who did not take it and they would like to offer a buyout.

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Douglas

***Move to reduce Account 4550.20, Library, by \$8,000***

**SECOND:** by Mr. Hodgkin

Mrs. Douglas indicated she would like to see it more thoroughly vetted. She commented she does not see the checks and balances.

Mrs. Couture indicated the Board of Selectmen does not have any authority over the Library as they are a separate entity. She noted the voters are the overseers.

**VOTE: 6-1-0, with Mr. Brunelle opposing**  
**The motion carried.**

- **4583.10 Patriotic Purposes**

There were no changes to the 2019 Patriotic Purposes budget.

- **4611.20 Conservation Commission**

Mrs. Douglas asked if the Conservation Commission would be using the prisoner program this year for property management. Mr. Brown indicated that may not be the case.

Mrs. Douglas commented the voters approved a warrant article in March that allows the Conservation Commission to use their funds for property management. She indicated that if the prisoner program will not be used, the property management line should be reduced to be more in line with average past expenditures.

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Douglas

*Move to reduce Account 4611.20, Conservation Commission, by \$1,000*

**SECOND:** by Mr. Hodgkins

**VOTE: 6-1-0, with Mr. Brunelle opposing**

**The motion carried.**

- **4723.10 Debt Service**

There were no changes to the 2019 Debt Service budget.

- **Total Budget – Tax Cap**

Mrs. Couture indicated the Budget Committee made a total of \$32,800 in reductions to the 2019 Town Budget, which resulted in the budget totaling \$29,027 below the tax cap.

## 7. REPORTS

- **School Business**

- **General Update**

Mr. Meyers provided an update on the sink hole at LMS. He reported that due to a washout, the boulders shifted under the road and crushed the drainage pipe. He noted the district has a quote for repairs. The traffic pattern was revised as a result and is working out well.

- **Budget Presentation Schedule**

Mrs. Couture reviewed the School District budget presentation schedule with Committee members.

## 8. MEMBER INPUT/ NEW BUSINESS

There was no member input.

## 9. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

10. **ADJOURN**

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Douglas

*Move to adjourn the meeting.*

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Fordey

**VOTE: 7-0-0**

**The motion carried.**

**Next meeting:           June 28, 2018**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

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

**Approved:               November 1, 2018**