

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

**Minutes of the
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting
Held on March 28, 2019**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, March 28, 2019, at Litchfield Town Hall, Two Liberty Way, Litchfield, NH 03052.

PRESENT: K Douglas (Acting Chair); J Bourque, J Martin, N Fordey, B Hodgkins, A Cutter, W Hayes, R Meyers (School Board Representative), B Lemire and R Leary (Selectmen Representatives)

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

• PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR; VICE CHAIR; WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Mrs. Douglas welcomed new members and representatives from the Board of Selectmen and School Board. Committee members introduced themselves.

Mr. Lemire informed the Budget Committee he was authorized to vote on motions for this meeting.

Mrs. Douglas asked for nominations for Chair.

MOTION: by Mr. Cutter

Move to nominate Keri Douglas as Chair

SECOND: by Mr. Lemire

Mr. Cutter commented that Mrs. Douglas has done a nice job and has been Vice Chair for several years.

MOTION: by Mrs. Bourque

Move to nominate Andrew Cutter as Chair

SECOND: by Mr. Meyers

Mr. Cutter expressed appreciation for the nomination and mentioned it may be challenging for him to fulfill during the budget season.

**VOTE on first motion to nominate Keri Douglas for Chair: 6-1-2, with Mrs. Bourque opposing; Mrs. Douglas and Mr. Meyers abstaining.
The motion carried.**

Mrs. Douglas is Budget Committee Chair.

MOTION: by Mr. Lemire

Move to nominate Andrew Cutter as Vice Chair

48 **SECOND:** by Mrs. Bourque

49

50 Mrs. Douglas commented that Mr. Cutter does an excellent job for the Committee.

51

52 **VOTE: 7-0-2, with Mr. Cutter and Mr. Meyers abstaining.**

53 **The motion carried.**

54

55 *Mr. Cutter is Budget Committee Vice Chair.*

56

57 **3. PUBLIC INPUT**

58 Brian Bourque, 1 Westview Drive, School Board Chair, congratulated members who were
59 recently elected. He mentioned that recently he reached out to the four members of the
60 Committee who did not support the teachers' contract and has had no response from Mr.
61 Hodgkins or Mrs. Martin. He reported that the School Board is once again negotiating with the
62 LEA and working toward holding a special meeting. He asked why the members did not support
63 the contract article and what would it take to gain their support.

64

65 Mrs. Martin indicated she is in the process of drafting her email and will send it to Mr. Bourque
66 tomorrow.

67

68 Mr. Lemire commented that public input is not a question and answer session. He indicated to
69 Mr. Bourque that questions can be asked of the Committee members, but they do not have to
70 respond.

71

72 Mrs. Douglas encouraged Committee members to communicate with Mr. Bourque.

73

74 Mr. Bourque commented he hopes the School Board can be successful and bring forth a contact
75 the Budget Committee can support.

76

77 Mr. Cutter suggested that new members of the Committee weigh in on the contract as well.

78

79 Mr. Hodgkins commented that he was sick last week and has not yet drafted his response.

80

81 Mr. Bourque asked Committee members if it is possible for members to raise their hands when
82 they vote either yes or no at future meetings. He explained it is challenging for those watching
83 to tell who is voting in support or in opposition to a question.

84

85 **4. REVIEW / ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

86

- **January 10, 2019**

87

- **February 9, 2019**

88 The minutes were tabled until the April 18 meeting.

89

90 **5. CORRESPONDENCE**

91 There was no correspondence.

92

93

6. ELECTION RESULTS

94

Mrs. Douglas asked Committee members if anything stood out on the Town election results.

96

Mr. Cutter commented that everything on the Town ballot made sense.

98

Mr. Lemire commented that the Board of Selectmen worked hard to stay within the tax cap and provide the services for the residents.

100

101

Mrs. Douglas asked Committee members if there were any comments or questions with the School District election results.

103

Mr. Cutter asked about the School Board's position on Article 3 (LMS Enrichment Tutor).

106

Mr. Meyers indicated the School Board has not re-evaluated that at this time and may take up a discussion for the following year.

109

Mr. Hodgkins referred to Article 4 (LMS Math Tutor) and asked why hiring a math tutor is necessary.

112

Mr. Meyers indicated there are students who struggle in math.

114

Mr. Hodgkins asked why their parents do not pay for a tutor if their children are not learning.

116

Mr. Meyers commented that those children will be set up for failure if the district does not provide the additional assistance they need.

119

Mr. Lemire pointed out that State law requires school districts to provide an adequate education.

121

Mr. Meyers commented we want the children to succeed with competency assessments, but some children learn differently. He indicated that there is a need to get those struggling students up to grade level so they are not foundering through their education. He noted that teachers are teaching to all different levels.

126

Mr. Hodgkins commented the taxpayers are paying for curriculum and does not understand why parents of the struggling students do not pay for the additional assistance they need.

129

Mr. Hayes commented for those students that do not learn as well some extra time has to be spent with them. He indicated teachers should be providing that time and asked why a tutor is needed.

133

Mr. Meyers explained the tutor will help those students catch up with the rest of the class.

135

Mr. Hayes commented that teachers provided that extra time when he attended school. Mr. Meyers commented that times were different when we went to school.

138

139 Mrs. Douglas commented she would typically agree with the views expressed by Committee
140 members, but this tutor will help bring the students to grade level so that teachers can focus a bit
141 more on the students that are learning on target or are advanced learners.

142

143 Mrs. Fordey commented that ultimately there is always more we can provide and asked where
144 the line is drawn on what the taxpayers should provide.

145

146 Mrs. Bourque called the question. Mrs. Douglas acknowledged.

147

148 Mr. Lemire commented the Budget Committee should be focusing on expenditures and not
149 policy as they are not a policy making body. He indicated members need to remember to focus
150 on the finances.

151

152 Mrs. Fordey commented people's reference point is "this is how it was when I was in school"
153 and there is a gap in understanding for those people. She asked about the requirements of the
154 schools and noted that she is disconnected from the schools as well.

155

156 7. REPORTS

157 • Town Business

158 ○ General Update

159 Mr. Lemire mentioned that one of the Committee members noticed new appropriations were at
160 zero, but the appropriations cannot be uploaded until the budget is approved. He indicated the
161 appropriations should now be loaded in the system.

162

163 Mr. Lemire reported the Town Hall is on a temporary heating system and the furnace
164 replacement is scheduled for summer. He indicated a new police officer was hired this month
165 who was fully certified; there is only one vacancy as the officer is on Workers Compensation and
166 we do not have the status at this time.

167

168 ○ Fire Station Update

169 Mr. Lemire reported water and propane costs were more than expected because costs from
170 January, February and March; the sprinkler system has to be installed on a separate line, which
171 will cost \$300 per month. He noted that the project is still under budget. Mr. Lemire indicated
172 that some items are being moved in, but equipment cannot be moved into the station until the
173 concrete pad is poured and cured. He commented that punch list items are currently being
174 addressed and it is anticipated the move will be complete by mid-April.

175

176 ○ Water Update

177 Mr. Lemire commented that the Board of Selectmen have to enter into non-public negotiations
178 with St. Gobain and legal counsel. He indicated there are laws being filed at the Legislature. He
179 noted we will have to wait and see what happens in Merrimack. Mr. Lemire indicated that the
180 Board of Selectmen do not want to settle anything until we can be in the best position for the
181 town.

182

183 Mr. Cutter asked about the plan for the current fire station.

184

185 Mr. Lemire indicated the Board of Selectmen have not had the discussion, but there are many
186 options. He commented they would like to wait until the new building is occupied.

187
188 Mr. Cutter commented the will of the voters is to keep the old building.

189
190 Mr. Lemire indicated the Board of Selectmen will do what the people want, but want to do the
191 right thing. He noted the building cannot be occupied without major renovations, and can only
192 be used for a garage or storage.

193
194 • **School Business**

195 ○ **General Update**

196 Mr. Meyers reported that Mr. Bourque was voted School Board Chair and Mrs. Harrison was
197 voted Vice Chair; the district completed ALICE training and the protocols will be rolled out
198 between now and next spring.

199
200 ○ **Financial Update**

201 Mr. Meyers reported there are three ongoing vestibule projects: CHS entryway security upgrades
202 will be completed this summer; GMS is near completion; LMS vestibule cost is offset by
203 \$100,000 funding from the Department of Homeland Security, but \$217,000 is still needed for
204 the entire project.

205
206 Mrs. Douglas commented the LMS entryway is being redone for safety reasons.

207
208 Mr. Cutter asked for further explanation of the project.

209
210 Mr. Meyers explained as the result of recommendations from the Homeland Security audit, a
211 new entrance for LMS was proposed. He noted the entrance will be a central entrance with a
212 secure vestibule and visibility from the main office. The district applied for grant money for the
213 project which was capped at \$100,000, which is being held for the district.

214
215 Mr. Meyers reported that the new Food Services director has increased the numbers for
216 reimbursed meals and teacher contract negotiations has commenced.

217
218 Mr. Bourque commented the School Board hopes to have the special meeting by the end of the
219 school year.

220
221 Mr. Cutter asked if, under the no means no law, this will result in another election. He asked Mr.
222 Bourque about plans to move forward.

223
224 Mr. Bourque explained that first a contract has to be negotiated and ratified by the LEA and the
225 School Board. If ratified, the contract will go to the Budget Committee for approval and the NH
226 DRA. We will have to file for a court date for a judge to rule on a special meeting and, if the
227 ruling is favorable for a special meeting, the district has 30 days to set up Deliberative Session
228 and an election for one article.

229

230 Mr. Cutter asked if the Support Staff contract is separate from the teachers' contract. Mr.
231 Bourque indicated that it is a separate contract.

232
233 Mr. Leary asked if there are any plans to reach out to the Support Staff union. Mr. Bourque
234 indicated there are no plans at this time.

235
236 Mr. Meyers commented that community input was sought to see what we can do to get the
237 contract approved by the voters this time.

238
239 Mrs. Douglas commented that it is good to get community input.

240
241 Mr. Cutter commented that teachers approached him saying they hoped the contract article failed
242 because it is better for their family to stay on the current health plan. He indicated that voters
243 become conflicted between what the LEA is saying and what the teachers are saying in public.

244
245 Mr. Leary commented that is the same thought process for the Support Staff contact.

246
247 Mrs. Bourque commented the lack of a reduction in insurance contribution was the issue for the
248 Budget Committee.

249
250 Mr. Cutter commented he supports making the insurance plan more in line with the private
251 working world.

252
253 Mr. Meyers commented that individuals that approached him stated the Budget Committee's
254 decision swayed them.

255
256 Mr. Cutter asked if there is a way to offset the costs to use end of the year funds to pay the first
257 year of the contract ahead.

258
259 Mr. Bourque commented a contract would have to be in place before June 30 for end of year
260 funds to be used for that purpose.

261
262 Mr. Cutter believes there is a large number of funds in the budget that could easily offset the
263 teachers' contract.

264
265 Mrs. Douglas commented if we want the contract to be approved we need to see what the new
266 costs will be.

267
268 Mr. Bourque commented he would not be in favor of placing his signature on the unassigned
269 fund balance to pay for the first year costs of the teachers' contract. He believes that is not the
270 responsibility of the School Board.

271
272 Mrs. Fordey commented that she felt it was the price we had to pay to get rid of the Green plan
273 and to get in line with industry standard for health insurance.

274
275 Mrs. Bourque indicated she struggled with the dollar amount of the contract.

276
277 Mrs. Douglas commented that it will be challenging to get to 80% contribution for the district.
278
279 Mrs. Bourque commented that the Cadillac plan tax will not occur for two years, but the School
280 Board is considering it.
281
282 Mrs. Douglas acknowledged it is an emotional decision to switch to a consumer driven plan, but
283 their concerns may not be founded. She indicated long term decisions need to be made.
284
285 Mr. Hodgkins commented that he noticed Litchfield was compared with several towns, but
286 realistically does not have the business tax base the other towns have. Many towns had double
287 or triple the business. He believes that burden should not be put on a town with very little
288 business and our taxes keep increasing. He commented if teachers want higher salary perhaps
289 they can look into what other districts pay.
290
291 Mr. Meyers indicated that it is not healthy for the district to be a stepping stone where teachers
292 only work for a year or two and move on. He commented that he understands taxes increase, but
293 it is the price of a good education.
294
295 Mr. Hodgkins compared the town budget with the district budget.
296
297 Mr. Meyers commented that is apples to oranges. He indicated police, fire and schools are the
298 largest costs to a town. He noted it is an investment and people will move to towns based on the
299 schools.
300
301 Mr. Lemire commented when you focus strictly on taxes, the town and school district are service
302 agencies. We only have a limited pot of money to provide those services. He indicated NH is
303 ranked among the lowest taxes and relies on property taxes for most funding as the State does
304 not provide adequate funding. He commented that we need to provide the services.
305
306 Mrs. Douglas commented the State is downshifting those costs and agrees that they do not
307 provide enough funding. She indicated sometimes you are stuck and have to make sure the
308 money requested is spent responsibly. She was concerned that the justification for budget
309 requests are that the money is needed, but it is not all spent and the following year more is being
310 requested. Mrs. Douglas commented we need to try to reduce the budget more to make room to
311 fund the contract.
312
313 Mr. Bourque commented bringing business in does not necessarily bring in funding. He
314 indicated that we are talking about expenditure numbers when speaking about insurance. He
315 noted the 80% / 20% plans for the Green and Yellow plans cannot be compared.
316
317 Mr. Meyers pointed out even if we level fund or decrease the district budget it will still increase
318 4% per year in taxes.
319
320 Mr. Hodgkins commented when families move into town, the town has to provide services for
321 those children.

322
323
324
325
326
327
328
329
330
331
332
333
334
335
336
337
338
339
340
341
342
343
344
345
346
347
348
349
350
351
352
353
354
355
356
357
358
359
360
361
362
363
364
365
366
367

8. MEMBER INPUT / NEW BUSINESS

• Analysis of Town Budget

Mr. Cutter reviewed an analysis of the town budget that he prepared for the Committee. He indicated the actual data goes back to 2004 and includes a master list of accounts and data of the budgeted and actual expenditures. He commented that he would like the Town Administrator to research some of the questions that have risen. Mr. Cutter noted in 2014-2015, the town budget was \$4.9M and it is now at \$6.7M. He commented there are many different factors and much has been unexpended. He asked what was not spent from last year.

Mr. Lemire indicated that information is not available at this time, but he will get the information for the Committee.

Mr. Cutter commented that in looking at 2019 he believes there is much excess and would like the Committee to think about how he is reviewing this information. He indicated the level of IT infrastructure increased over the last year, which was concerning.

Mr. Lemire mentioned that a whole new system had to be installed and run for the fire station and the infrastructure will be there when the police department moves over.

Mr. Cutter commented he is looking at trends over the last 3 or 4 years. He indicated much is justified, but we need to understand why.

• Budget Calendar 2019-2020

Mrs. Douglas distributed the 2019-2020 Budget Committee meeting calendar and commented that the same method was used as the previous year.

Mr. Cutter suggested the Budget Committee review the budgets on a Saturday, which is similar to what the School Board does. He commented with this approach we can actually have the conversations.

Mrs. Douglas commented that it is the will of the Committee and cautioned it is a lot of information to process.

Mr. Lemire indicated that the Town tried a Saturday session and opted to revert back to the weekly method because it is challenging to process all that information and you do not get all the information you need.

Mrs. Douglas commented the Committee can digest it and discuss it at another meeting.

Mrs. Fordey indicated it is helpful to have the different department heads available to answer the questions. She commented we have to think about people's availability.

Mr. Cutter suggested perhaps half sessions over a few Saturdays.

- **Bylaws**

368
369 Mr. Cutter asked what the Budget Committee's process is on transparency to the community.
370
371 Mrs. Bourque indicated that Mrs. Couture started updates in social media, but it fell off.
372
373 Mr. Cutter offered to take on that communication for the Committee.
374
375 Mrs. Bourque cautioned that as Budget Committee members we have to remind ourselves to
376 separate out our personal viewpoints.
377
378 Mr. Lemire cautioned against interacting or responding to comments from the public. He
379 indicated you cannot do anything electronically without convening a meeting.
380
381 Mr. Cutter suggested that a disclaimer be posted stating comments will be addressed at a
382 committee meeting.
383
384 Mr. Hodgkins commented the What's Up page is not a Town page and believes the Budget
385 Committee should post on the Town Facebook page.
386
387 Mrs. Bourque commented that there are many more people that use the What's Up page and
388 believes that the Budget Committee should post there.
389
390 Mr. Lemire asked if the bylaws was reviewed by legal counsel. He suggested having legal
391 counsel review them to ensure nothing is in conflict with the municipal budget law.
392
393 Mrs. Douglas indicated to the Committee questions from members go through the Chair and will
394 be distributed to the proper party and the information will be reviewed at the next meeting. She
395 asked Budget Committee members to review the bylaws for the next meeting.
396
397

- **Member Input**

398 Mr. Cutter was concerned that the current IT manager for the Town still has access to town email
399 information that is exchanged with elected officials.
400
401 Mr. Lemire indicated that it is all public record according to the law.
402
403 Mr. Cutter was concerned that there is access to Budget Committee information.
404
405 Mr. Lemire indicated anything in electronic mail is subject to the right to know law.
406
407 Mrs. Douglas commented there is a difference between unfettered access to the information and
408 RSA 91A. She asked if there are more steps to go through with 91A.
409
410 Mr. Lemire indicated that requesting information under the right to know law is very simple. He
411 commented the current IT situation is not a concern. He noted external IT managers have
412 unfettered access to everything in private corporations.
413

414 Mrs. Bourque commented that the IT position is a paid position and she would assume there is
415 some sort of confidentiality or non-disclosure agreement.

416
417 Mr. Cutter asked the Board of Selectmen to look into it.

418
419 Mr. Lemire indicated that the Board of Selectmen do not have an issue.

420
421 Mr. Cutter expressed his gratitude to Mrs. Couture for her many years of service. Mrs. Bourque
422 echoed his sentiments.

423
424 Mrs. Douglas mentioned there is legislative and financial training with the NHMA if any
425 members are interested. She indicated that the Budget Committee had an in-house training a few
426 years earlier which was very helpful. She commented she will reach out to them to try to
427 schedule it during a regular Budget Committee meeting.

428
429 **9. PUBLIC INPUT**

430 There was no public input.

431
432 **10. ADJOURN**

433 **MOTION:** by Mrs. Bourque

434 ***Move to adjourn the meeting.***

435 **SECOND:** by Mr. Cutter

436 **VOTE: 9-0-0**

437 **The motion carried.**

438
439 **Next meeting: April 18, 2019**

440
441 The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

442
443 **Recorded by: Michele E. Flynn, Recording Secretary**

444
445 **Approved:**