

**Amended Draft Minutes of the
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting
Held on April 23, 2020**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, April 23, 2020, at Litchfield Town Hall, Two Liberty Way, Litchfield, NH 03052.

In response to COVID- 19 and the resulting need to practice social distancing, the meeting will be held remotely via Webex and be broadcast live via LCTV

PRESENT: K Douglas (Acting Chair); J Bourque, N Fordey, B Hodgkins, A Cutter, W Hayes, J Son, C Harrison (School Board Representative), 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.

Mrs. Douglas asked for nominations for Chair.

MOTION: by Mr. Hodgkins

Move to nominate Keri Douglas as Chair

SECOND: by Mr. Leary

MOTION: by Mrs. Bourque

Move to nominate Nicole Fordey as Chair

SECOND: by Mrs. Harrison

MOTION: by Mr. Son

Move to nominate Andrew Cutter as Chair

SECOND: by Mrs. Harrison

VOTE on Nomination of Mrs. Douglas as Chair was taken by roll call:

Mrs. Douglas, abstain; Mr. Cutter, no; Mr. Hodgkins, yes; Mrs. Harrison, no; Mr. Leary, yes; Mrs. Bourque, no; Mr. Son, no; Mrs. Fordey, no. The motion failed.

VOTE on Nomination of Mrs. Fordey as Chair was taken by roll call:

Mrs. Douglas, no; Mr. Cutter, no; Mr. Hodgkins, no; Mrs. Harrison, no; Mr. Leary, no; Mrs. Bourque, yes; Mr. Son, no; Mrs. Fordey, yes. The motion failed.

VOTE on Nomination of Mr. Cutter as Chair was taken by roll call:

Mrs. Douglas, no; Mr. Cutter, abstain; Mr. Hodgkins, no; Mrs. Harrison, yes; Mr. Leary, yes; Mrs. Bourque, yes; Mr. Son, yes; Mrs. Fordey, yes. The motion carried.

Mr. Cutter was elected Chair of the Budget Committee and accepted the position.

Mr. Cutter asked for nominations for Vice Chair.

MOTION: by Mrs. Harrison

Move to nominate Nicole Fordey as Vice Chair

SECOND: by Mr. Cutter

MOTION: by Mr. Hodgkins

Move to nominate Keri Douglas as Vice Chair

SECOND: by Mr. Leary

VOTE on Nomination of Mrs. Fordey as Vice Chair was taken by roll call:

Mr. Cutter, yes; Mr. Hodgkins, yes; Mrs. Douglas, no; Mrs. Harrison, yes; Mr. Leary, no; Mrs. Bourque, yes; Mr. Son, yes; Mrs. Fordey, abstain. The motion carried.

Mrs. Fordey was elected Vice Chair.

Mr. Cutter welcomed Mr. Son to the Committee. He commented that he is looking forward to working with the Committee.

Note: Mr. Hayes was having audio connectivity issues.

3. MEMBER ASSIGNMENTS

- Social Media Archivist - post meeting summaries, agendas, information

Mr. Cutter indicated the person serving in this position posts meeting summaries, agendas and information from the Budget Committee meetings on social media. He asked for nominations for the Social Media Archivist.

MOTION: by Mr. Cutter

Move to nominate John David Son as Social Media Archivist

Mr. Hodgkins commented that the Litchfield What's Up Facebook page should not be used to post on because it excludes many people.

Mrs. Bourque commented it still provides a fair amount of information to a fair amount of people.

Mr. Hodgkins asserted that they block people on that page.

Mrs. Douglas suggested posting to the Litchfield Town social media page and the information will be distributed elsewhere.

Mr. Cutter indicated he had difficulty using it last year. He suggested posting on the Town website and that information can be pushed out to the appropriate outlets.

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

Mr. Hodgkins claimed that the What's Up page excludes Litchfield voters.

Mr. Cutter suggested working with John Brunelle to come up with a solution.

Mrs. Harrison suggested creating a Facebook page for the Budget Committee where all their information can be posted.

Mr. Son felt that was a good suggestion and added that the location of the information can also be advertised on the What's Up page.

Mr. Hodgkins asked if the person would be posting just agendas and not opinions.

Mr. Cutter commented that can be discussed when we get to the Bylaws.

MOTION: by Mr. Hodgkins

Move to remove the Social Media Archivist position

SECOND: by Mr. Leary

Mr. Hodgkins asked if fact or opinion will be posted. He commented that the What's Up page is biased.

Mrs. Bourque pointed out that the page may be biased, but Mr. Cutter's posts were not.

Mr. Hodgkins asked why the Committee has to have that position at all.

Mr. Cutter indicated that is a separate issue.

VOTE on Mr. Hodgkins' motion was taken by roll call vote:

Mr. Hodgkins, yes; Mrs. Harrison, no; Mr. Leary, yes; Mrs. Bourque, no; Mr. Son, no; Mrs. Douglas, no; Mrs. Fordey, no; Mr. Cutter, no; Mr. Hayes, no. The motion failed.

VOTE on nomination of Mr. Son as Social Media Archivist was taken by roll call vote:

Mr. Hodgkins, no; Mrs. Harrison, yes; Mr. Leary, no; Mrs. Bourque, yes; Mr. Son, yes; Mrs. Douglas, yes; Mrs. Fordey, yes; Mr. Cutter, yes; Mr. Hayes, yes. The motion carried.

Mr. Son was appointed as Social Media Archivist for the Budget Committee.

- Budget Committee Member to the School Board Capital Planning Committee

Mr. Cutter asked for nominations to appoint a Budget Committee member to the School Board Capital Planning Committee. He commented that Mrs. Fordey served on this Committee last year.

MOTION: by Mrs. Fordey

Move to nominate Nicole Fordey as Budget Committee Member to the School Board Capital Planning Committee

SECOND: by Mr. Leary

MOTION: by Mr. Cutter

Move to nominate John David Son as Budget Committee Member to the School Board Capital Planning Committee

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

VOTE on nomination of Mrs. Fordey as Budget Committee Member to the School Board Capital Planning Committee was taken by roll call vote:

Mr. Hodgkins, yes; Mrs. Harrison, yes; Mr. Leary, yes; Mrs. Bourque, yes; Mr. Son, abstain; Mrs. Douglas, no; Mrs. Fordey, yes; Mr. Hayes, yes; Mr. Cutter, yes.

Mrs. Fordey was elected as the Budget Committee Member to the School Board Capital Planning Committee.

- Budget Committee Member to the Select Board Capital Planning Committee

Mr. Cutter asked for nominations to appoint a Budget Committee member to the Select Board Capital Planning Committee.

MOTION: by Mrs. Bourque

Move to nominate Keri Douglas as Budget Committee Member to the Select Board Capital Planning Committee

SECOND: by Mr. Leary

Mrs. Douglas declined the nomination due to availability.

MOTION: by Mrs. Douglas

Move to nominate Andrew Cutter as Budget Committee Member to the Select Board Capital Planning Committee

SECOND: by Mr. Leary

VOTE on nomination of Mr. Cutter as Budget Committee Member to the Select Board Capital Planning Committee was taken by roll call vote:

Mr. Hodgkins, yes; Mrs. Harrison, yes; Mr. Leary, yes; Mrs. Bourque, yes; Mr. Son, yes; Mrs. Douglas, no; Mr. Hayes, yes; Mrs. Fordey, yes; Mr. Cutter, abstain. The motion carried.

Mr. Cutter was elected as the Budget Committee Member to the Town Capital Planning Committee.

4. PUBLIC INPUT

Residents were encouraged to submit comments via email to Keri Douglas, Acting Budget Committee Chair, at kdouglas@litchfieldnh.gov; messages must include commenter's first and last name & address.

There was no public input.

5. REVIEW / ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

- February 1, 2020

MOTION: by Mr. Hayes

Move to approve the minutes of February 1, 2020

SECOND: by Mrs. Fordey

VOTE to approve the minutes was taken by roll call vote:

Mr. Hodgkins, yes; Mrs. Harrison, abstained; Mr. Leary, yes; Mrs. Bourque, yes; Mrs. Fordey, yes; Mr. Son, abstain; Mrs. Douglas, no; Mr. Hayes, yes; Mr. Cutter, yes. The motion carried.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

Mrs. Douglas reported that financial reports were received from the Town and School District, enrollment information was received from the School District, COVID 19 impact information was received from the Town and School District.

Mrs. Fordey indicated that the information on the financial impact from the virus outbreak was helpful.

7. ELECTION RESULTS

Mr. Cutter commented that the election results reflected many of the town and school warrant articles were approved. He asked if Committee members had any comments or questions.

Mrs. Douglas commented that she was surprised the Highway Employee warrant article for the Town was not approved.

Mr. Leary indicated it failed by a small amount of votes.

Mr. Cutter commented the warrant article for the Plow Truck was approved, but because the Highway Employee article failed, there is no one to drive the truck.

8. REPORTS

- **Town Business**
 - **General Update**
 - **Financial Impact of COVID-19 Measures**

Mr. Leary commented that although some items were approved by the voters, we should control our spending because we do not know where everything is going. He indicated the impact report reflects what has been purchased for COVID 19 and the revenue impact, as well as what may increase and what may decrease. He noted included are things that have been completed and items that we will not spend on at this time. Mr. Leary commented the Town has a healthy balance and the Select Board is unsure if the Town will need to tap into it. He indicated if an item is not necessary, we are trying not to spend on it. He noted that department heads were notified and have been cooperative.

Mr. Son asked about what items will be eligible for FEMA reimbursement.

Mr. Leary indicated it is not known at this time what the Town will receive, but what is listed is eligible.

Mr. Hayes asked if that would cover overtime from the police department or the solid waste department.

Mr. Leary indicated it may cover the overtime. He noted it is taking longer to process because of social distancing guidelines.

Mr. Hodgkins asked when social distancing began at the dump because he has not witnessed it.

Mr. Leary indicated that everyone should be social distancing at the dump.

Mr. Hodgkins reported he goes each week and has noticed that is not the case.

Mr. Leary reported that the Town Administrator mentioned a potential impact in welfare costs because there are many people out of work and they may ask for assistance.

- **School Business**
 - **General Update**
 - **Financial Impact of COVID-19 Measures**

Mrs. Harrison reported that schools are closed for the remainder of the school year and remote learning continues. She indicated teachers and staff have been working very hard to make it work. She reported that teachers and staff who are working remotely are being paid and remaining purchase orders are being processed. She commented the general fund balance is projected and the School Board intends to return approximately \$789,000 to stabilize the tax rate so that a tax spike will not occur, with the remaining \$550,000 to be used for end of year projects and purchases. She reported the transportation contract contains a clause regarding a reduced rate for the number of days school is closed due to an epidemic, which will provide a savings of \$161,217.56.

Mr. Cutter asked if the district has looked at any other contracts or areas where money can be saved.

Mrs. Harrison indicated that the district is also analyzing special education daily runs billing, supplies, and utilities. She commented this is a good opportunity for the district to catch up on deferred maintenance. She noted that she will provide an update at the next meeting.

Mr. Hayes commented this is a good opportunity to give some relief to the taxpayers.

Mr. Cutter commented the Town is taking a hard look at putting a stop on unnecessary spending and he would like to see what the expected impact would be on the total savings in the budget.

Mr. Leary commented the district has done a wonderful job with virtual learning. He indicated teachers and staff are on top of it. He believes that they need to be thanked.

Mr. Cutter commented he was impressed with how fast the program was rolled out and how professional the teachers have been.

Mr. Son agreed with Mr. Cutter's statement. He commented he has worked with a number of school districts across the state and Litchfield has been one of the quickest and most prepared.

9. MEMBER INPUT / NEW BUSINESS

• Budget Calendar 2020-2021

Mr. Cutter commented that he did not prepare a budget calendar, but he will do so and distribute it.

Mrs. Bourque asked if there is any consideration to meeting earlier in the evening.

Mr. Cutter remarked that all members would have to be available. He asked how last year's schedule worked for everyone.

Mr. Leary commented that Mrs. Douglas did a good job and feels that we should keep the schedule the same.

Mrs. Fordey commented she plans to attend the all day budget session for the school district budget in the fall. She indicated many questions were raised during the budget reviews and it would be beneficial to attend and hear that information. She asked if the Committee would consider a Saturday session for budget reviews.

Mr. Cutter indicated he will prepare a draft schedule and the Committee can review it at the next meeting. He asked members their thoughts on the account based review of the school budget this past year.

Mr. Hodgkins commented that although the account based method was comprehensive, he found it hard to follow. He indicated that he would find it easier to follow the school district's method.

Mrs. Fordey commented some people find it harder to manipulate the data, but there are benefits of viewing the budget from an account method. She indicated that she is planning to review it from a function based approach. She noted as we plan on how we are going to meet the goals there are certain things we expect the district to do and look at it with those expectations.

Mr. Cutter cautioned if we go page by page it will take more time, which will need to be built into the budget calendar.

Mrs. Douglas commented that she has gone line by line, but came prepared with those line items that were in question. She indicated the model would be going line by line and being able to have those larger discussions.

Mr. Cutter suggested that the review can be done by section and motions can be made according to what is on those pages.

Committee members were amenable to the approach.

Mrs. Bourque suggested considering a hard stop for budget review meetings since they ran late the previous year.

Mr. Cutter suggested adjourning at 9:30 p.m.

Mr. Hayes suggested starting the budget review meetings earlier.

Mr. Cutter agreed on starting the meeting earlier, but noted it may not work for everyone's schedule.

Mrs. Bourque suggested asking members about their availability. Some members indicated they can meeting at 6:30 pm and some could meet earlier.

Mr. Cutter indicated that he will confirm with members if they can all start at 6:30 pm for budget review meetings.

- **Bylaws - 1st Review**

Mr. Cutter indicated the bylaws were reviewed last year and adopted April 18, 2019. He noted that social media posting is not addressed in the bylaws.

Mrs. Fordey commented with regard to the section on Officers, the Committee voted to nominate an archivist position, which should be in the bylaws, and the Committee should come to an agreement on the charge for that position.

Mr. Leary believes that the bylaws should remain the way they are.

Mrs. Douglas commented that the archivist position is addressed in Section D: Subcommittees.

Mr. Cutter indicated it is not a subcommittee, but an appointed position within the committee.

Mr. Son commented that the Committee keeps referring to social media when discussing the archivist, but it is about communication. He agreed with Mr. Hodgkins that it should not be opinionated. He indicated we owe it to the people to inform them of what is discussed and be able to have input and discussion. He noted social media is just a tool.

Mr. Hodgkins disagreed that the social media archivist should interact with people. He indicated that meetings are streamed on YouTube, there are minutes and people have the right to attend meetings. He believes there is no reason to do anything further.

Mrs. Douglas asked if the concern is the What's Up page or Facebook in general. She suggested posting to the Town website. She believes the Committee is too focused on the What's Up page.

Mr. Hodgkins asked what does this person actually do that people cannot see or access?

Mrs. Douglas commented the person provides a summary of what has occurred.

Mr. Hodgkins commented that he would prefer the Budget Committee have a page and have the information disseminated out.

Mr. Son indicated that John Brunelle suggested using the Town website. He noted we can explore the best way to communicate the information and how we plan to do so.

Mr. Cutter suggested the conversation on updating the bylaws be tabled.

- **Member Input**

Mrs. Harrison commented she put in a request to Mr. Izbicki for the information Mr. Cutter mentioned earlier when discussing the impact of COVID 19.

Mr. Cutter commented that it is his intention to make sure we are reviewing contracts and other areas for savings.

Mr. Son thanked the Committee for the opportunity to serve and indicated he is excited to work with Committee members.

Mrs. Fordey agreed that the school district should be looking for any savings from the pandemic, but to keep in mind that some of that money needs to go into the schools. She indicated it would be prudent to use some of the funds for that purpose.

Mrs. Harrison thanked Mrs. Fordey for her statement. She indicated the School Board is working hard as well.

Mr. Cutter commented that relative to the Capital Planning Committee, the Town is looking at reviewing every expense above \$50,000. He indicated that he would expect any materials, infrastructure, or payments would be the responsibility of the district Capital Planning Committee.

Mr. Hayes agreed with Mrs. Fordey's statement about long term projects, but feels that there is a need to table any large expenditures.

Mr. Cutter commented that the taxpayers deserve to get the maximum relief from end of year funds.

10. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

11. ADJOURN

MOTION: by Mrs. Bourque

Move to adjourn the meeting.

SECOND: by Mr. Hayes

VOTE to adjourn the meeting was taken by roll call:

Mrs. Bourque, yes; Mr. Hayes, yes; Mr. Hodgkins, yes; Mrs. Fordey, yes; Mrs. Douglas, yes; Mr. Son, yes; Mrs. Harrison, yes; Mr. Leary, yes; Mr. Cutter, yes.

The motion carried.

Next meeting: May 28, 2020

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Recorded by: Michele E. Flynn, Recording Secretary

Approved: