

Town of Litchfield, NH
Budget Committee Meeting
May 27, 2021
Litchfield Town Hall

In Attendance:

Members: Andrew Cutter, Chairman; John David Son, Vice Chairman; Keri Douglas; William Hayes (virtual); Kate Stevens (virtual); Christina Harrison, School Board Rep.; Robert Leary, Selectmen's Rep.

Absent: Derek Barka, and Scott Taylor

Also in Attendance: None

1. Call to Order:

a. 7:00 pm - Chairman Andrew Cutter called the meeting to order, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Input #1 @ 7:02 pm:

a. There was no Public Input.

Public Input ended at 7:03 pm.

3. Review / Revision of Agenda:

Chairman Andrew Cutter requested to move Chairman Update to next on the agenda.

4. Chairman Update:

Chairman Andrew Cutter commented that the Committee received a resignation letter from the Recording Secretary Michele E. Flynn and added that Ms. Flynn was a dedicated note taker for the Budget Committee. Given the resignation, the Select Board reached out to Matthew Sullivan to be their Recording Secretary. Mr. Cutter noted that Mr. Sullivan currently writes the meeting minutes for other Town of Litchfield Boards and Committees.

Mr. Cutter thanked Ms. Flynn for her work with the Budget Committee over the years and welcomed Mr. Sullivan to the Committee.

5. Correspondence:

Chairman Andrew Cutter mentioned that he had a list of correspondence to review. Mr. Cutter stated that on April 26, the Committee received the minutes from the April 22 meeting. Selectman Robert Leary sent in some amendments to the minutes on April 26, and William Hayes sent in some amendments to the minutes on April 28.

The Committee received the Town Budget Reports on April 30, May 7, May 14, and May 21.

Mr. Cutter received Ms. Flynn's resignation on May 13, and he forwarded the resignation to the Committee members. Mr. Cutter also had an email exchange with Scott Taylor regarding his swearing-in as a Budget Committee member. Mr. Cutter mentioned that Mr. Taylor received the approval paperwork to see Town Clerk Theresa Briand for the formal swearing-in. Mr. Cutter will follow up with Mr. Taylor.

On May 18, Town Clerk Theresa Briand requested the meeting minutes to formalize the Budget Committee's voting regarding Mr. Taylor's appointment.

Kate Stevens made some changes to the Budget Committee bylaws on May 20.

The Budget Committee received confirmation on May 24 that Mr. Sullivan would start writing the minutes on May 27. Christina Harrison also circulated the School Budget Report on May 24. Mr. Cutter mentioned that he had a couple of questions regarding the report, and the questions were answered by School Business Administrator Cory Izbicki and Ms. Harrison on May 25.

John David Son made some changes to the Budget Committee bylaws on May 25.

Mr. Cutter received an email yesterday from Tyler Distefano of 16 Weatherstone Road. Mr. Distefano was inquiring about getting a sidewalk installed on Weatherstone Road. Mr. Cutter directed Mr. Distefano to Town Administrator Brown.

6. Review / Acceptance of Minutes:

a. April 22, 2021, Meeting Minutes -

Mr. Cutter commented that two amendments to the minutes came in on April 26 and 28 by Mr. Hayes and Mr. Leary. Mr. Cutter noted that he would personally make the changes to the April 22 meeting minutes.

Discussion: None

Motion: (Ms. Douglas / Ms. Harrison) motioned to approve April 22, 2021, Meeting Minutes, as amended.

Roll-Call:

- a. Mr. Cutter - Yes
- b. Mr. Son - Yes
- c. Ms. Douglas - Yes
- d. Mr. Hayes - Yes
- e. Ms. Stevens - Yes
- f. Ms. Harrison - Yes
- g. Mr. Leary - Yes

Vote: (7-0-0) The motion carried.

7. Town Business:

a. General Updates

Mr. Leary mentioned that the Select Board was presented with a project by Barons. Baron's Major Brands is looking to build a warehouse at 490 Charles Bancroft Highway, and Baron's would use the same driveway as the Saint Francis School. He noted that a presentation was made, but the project is only in the preliminary stages.

Mr. Leary also commented that the Select Board is looking to appoint a Conservation Commission member still. The Board also had a meeting with lawyers regarding the PFOAs as well as discussing Pennichuck Water. Mr. Leary added that the Town of Litchfield would have a Memorial Day Parade on May 31 at 10 am. The parade will start on Simeon Lane and go back towards Town Hall. Mr. Leary stated that the Historical Society hopes to return to its typical setup next year regarding the parade.

Town Clerk Theresa Briand attended the Select Board meeting and requested a part-time clerk for Town Hall. The Board is still discussing the request, but the request will likely become a Warrant Article for the March 2022 election.

Mr. Son asked if the town had completed the road paving project? Mr. Leary confirmed that the road paving was complete and the roof at Town Hall was completed. He added that the roof repair workers showed up around 6:30 am and left around 9:00 pm.

b. RSA 32:22: Review of Expenditures

Mr. Cutter mentioned that the Budget Committee had received the Budget Reports. No questions were asked.

8. School Business:

a. General Updates

Ms. Harrison mentioned that the LMS Canopy Project is almost complete, and the School District is working on the landscaping. She noted that there were discussions about either repaving or correcting the grading of the property. The correction to grading would be done to make sure that the District is complying with accessibility codes. Ms. Harrison noted that she believes the District will hold off on the regrading at this time.

Ms. Harrison commented that the new windows had been ordered regarding the Energy Efficiency Project at LMS. The windows are on track to be delivered and installed during the summer. She added that the District had its walk-through with the subcontractors.

The LMS Portables will be removed on July 1, and the fifth graders will be heading into LMS. Ms. Harrison stated that having the fifth-grade students and teachers in LMS would provide increased security, and she added that the roof replacement is targeted to begin in the fall. Ms. Harrison noted that as soon as the District receives the materials, the sooner the replacement can begin.

Ms. Harrison said there had been some questions about the ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) Funds collected and spent. She stated that the School District had spent \$56,500 of the ESSER I Funds on ventilation and HVAC projects. The ESSER II Funds are still in the application process, so the District is still applying for grant funding. Some of the funds are being requested for student support. Ms. Harrison said that the ESSER III Funds are not open for application at this time.

At the last School Board Meeting, there was a discussion about hiring and how the School Districts are having a tough time staffing the schools this year. Ms. Harrison noted that the Litchfield School District has had difficulty hiring custodians, food technicians, and substitute teachers. She said that the School Board is working on some incentives to attract and retain staff. Furthermore, tomorrow she will sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), which has been announced to the staff regarding a referral program to recruit some new staff for the next school year.

b. RSA 32:22: Review of Expenditures

Mr. Cutter asked if all the windows at LMS were being replaced? Ms. Harrison confirmed that all the windows were being replaced. Mr. Cutter then asked if the roof was being replaced so that solar panels could be installed? Ms. Harrison stated that the roof is being replaced to support a solar array and because the roof is at the end of its useful life. She noted that the current roofs' warranty was voided right after it was installed. Ms. Harrison commented that the roof would be replaced this year, but the solar array would not be added.

Mr. Cutter asked if the LMS parking lot was going to be repaved after the portables were removed? Ms. Harrison stated that they would need to wait until they see the parking lot without the portables. She added that part of the Capital Plan is to repave the parking lot if a new school is approved.

Keri Douglas asked if the Committee would see an actual Business Administrators Report that details the end-of-year under-spend and where the School Board is planning to allocate the funds? She mentioned that she saw a lot spent towards the HVAC and was curious about where the funds were coming from. Ms. Douglas also questioned how much the Committee could anticipate for the total under-spend? Mr. Cutter mentioned that only the expense report was sent, and the Committee was looking to receive an end-of-year report.

Ms. Douglas commented that she saw that the School District was spending \$800,000 on HVAC with an end-of-year balance of \$800,000. She pointed out that the total was \$1.6 million and wanted to know if that would have been spent on the HVAC. Mr. Cutter mentioned that an updated report from Mr. Izbicki about the School District's current state and projections for the end of the year would be helpful.

Mr. Cutter noted that some of the questions asked and answered on May 25 were regarding the facility improvements and the costs associated with the improvements. He wanted to know why the costs were heavily geared towards CHS? The answer provided to Mr. Cutter was that the costs were allocated across the three schools.

The Committee spent time discussing where the \$800,000 for the HVAC was coming from.

Mr. Cutter then mentioned that his second question from May 25 was why there were many 110 line items throughout the budget already running in the negative? Ms. Harrison stated that the School District has difficulty with custodians and hourly staff, not with the teachers and professional staff. She explained that this required the School Board to spend more money on substitutes.

8. Member Input / New Business:

a. Bylaws/Finalization

Ms. Stevens mentioned that Section V regarding the Responsibilities and Duties of the Budget Committee reads, "F. The Communication Archivist shall be appointed by the committee to provide regular updates from scheduled, and special meetings to the town via approved communication platforms, including but not limited to the town website, town social media platforms, and other approved social media groups. The updates shall include high-level information from each meeting, including public and member input, old and new business."

Ms. Stevens stated that she would like to add the following to clarify what can be posted in response to some social media comments.

The addition would read, "The Communication Archivist may respond to general questions and comments on social media by referring to specific meeting minutes, recordings, or local regulations. To the extent requested information is not recorded, recommend the commenter provide public input to the committee directly."

Mr. Son commented that the area in the bylaws that he was reviewing was Section IV regarding Vacancies. He stated that there were some spirited conversations about the subject at the last meeting, and he wanted to clarify what would happen if a vacancy was to occur.

Mr. Son read the current section regarding filling a vacancy, "The Chair of the Committee shall notify the next highest vote receiver for the Budget Committee that sought election to the Committee and who received at least 1% of the vote at that year's Annual Town Meeting of the vacancy and invite them to seek appointment until a member is appointed."

Mr. Son then read the proposed section regarding filling a vacancy, “The Chair of the Committee shall notify the next highest vote receiver for the Budget Committee that sought election to the Committee and who received at least 1% of the vote at that year’s Annual Town Meeting of the vacancy and invite them to seek appointment until a member is elected at the next Town Election. The appointment is confirmed by majority Committee vote.”

Discussion: None

Motion: (Mr. Cutter / Ms. Harrison) motioned to approve both amendments to our bylaws, as presented this evening.

Roll-Call:

- a. Mr. Cutter - Yes
- b. Mr. Son - Yes
- c. Ms. Douglas - Yes
- d. Mr. Hayes - Yes
- e. Ms. Stevens - Yes
- f. Ms. Harrison - Yes
- g. Mr. Leary - Yes

Vote: (7-0-0) The motion carried.

Mr. Cutter mentioned that would circulate the final version of the bylaws to the Committee, put the date on the top page, and be ready for the upcoming year. He added that the Budget Committee bylaws would be on the town website, as well.

b. Facilities Improvement Update

Mr. Son commented that Ms. Harrison had updated the Committee with most of the last School Facilities Meeting updates. Ms. Harrison added that the next School Facilities Meeting is at LMS. The meeting will be in the school, and they will discuss all the energy efficiency projects. Mr. Cutter commented that he saw that the granite benches were installed by the front entrance.

Mr. Cutter added that the next Budget Committee meeting would be in July.

9. Public Input @ 8:30 pm

- a. There was no Public Input.

Public Input ended at 8:31 pm.

10. Adjournment:

Discussion: None

Motion: (Ms. Douglas / Mr. Son) motioned to adjourn the public meeting at 8:32 pm.

Roll-Call:

- a. Mr. Cutter - Yes
- b. Mr. Son - Yes
- c. Ms. Douglas - Yes
- d. Mr. Hayes - Yes
- e. Ms. Stevens - Yes
- f. Ms. Harrison - Yes
- g. Mr. Leary - Yes

Vote: (7-0-0) The motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,
Matthew Sullivan
Budget Committee Recording Secretary

Approved by the Budget Committee:

Andrew Cutter, Chairman

John David Son, Vice Chairman

Derek Barka

Keri Douglas

William Hayes

Kate Stevens

Scott Taylor

Christina Harrison, School Board Representative

Robert Leary, Selectmen's Representative