

Town of Litchfield, NH
Budget Committee Meeting
August 26, 2021
Litchfield Town Hall

In Attendance:

Members: Andrew Cutter, Chairman; John David Son, Vice Chairman; Derek Barka; Keri Douglas; William Hayes (virtual); Kate Stevens; Scott Taylor; and Robert Leary, Selectmen's Rep.

Absent: Christina Harrison, School Board Representative

Also in Attendance: None

1. Call to Order:

- a. The Budget Committee members wished Derek Barka a happy birthday
- b. 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 one present for Public Input

Public Input ended at 7:03 pm.

3. Review / Additions of Agenda:

- a. There was no review or additions to the agenda.

4. Correspondence:

Chairman Andrew Cutter mentioned that he had a list of correspondence to read off because the last meeting occurred on June 24.

a. Town Budget Reports:

- i. June 25, 2021
- ii. July 2, 2021
- iii. July 9, 2021
- iv. July 16, 2021
- v. July 23, 2021
- vi. July 30, 2021
- vii. August 6, 2021
- viii. August 13, 2021
- ix. August 20, 2021

b. June 26 - Minutes from 6/24/21 sent

c. July 1 - Handshake agreements email from Mrs. Harrison

d. July 5 - Conservation Commission sent an email requesting to review Budget Committee's By-Laws

e. July 6 - CIPC Meeting Cancellation for 7/19

f. July 14 - Town Facilities & Meeting Rooms - COVID restrictions lifted by the BOS

g. July 27 - Town Administrator Troy Brown distributed 2022 Town Budget Schedule to Department Heads

h. August 8 - Request for information submitted by Ms. Douglas to the School - anticipated staffing levels, current enrollment, budget reallocation

August 26, 2021

- i. August 9 – August 4 School BA Report circulated to the Budget Committee
- j. August 11 – Planning CIPC meeting in August, sent from Chairman Croteau
- k. August 11 – Dr. Jette email on the bus contract – as we adjust the start/end times for schools, there is a severe shortage in drivers. We need to be budget-conscious but not too tight we lose staff with no one to drive
- l. August 19 – July Business Administrator’s Report and an August 18 update
- m. August 20 – Ms. Harrison email on School Board conflict for this evening
- n. August 24 – Ms. Stevens email on NHMA training (Tuesday 9/14)
- o. August 25 – Ms. Harrison email update for Budget Committee in preparation for tonight’s meeting

Mr. Cutter stated that if anyone for the Committee was interested in attending the NHMA training, they should inform him, and he would request the registration from the Town.

Ms. Douglas requested the email from Mrs. Harrison about the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) relative to handshake agreements. Mr. Cutter stated that the topic would be covered later in the meeting.

5. Review / Acceptance of Minutes:

- a. June 24, 2021, Meeting Minutes -

Discussion: None

Motion: (Ms. Douglas / Mr. Barka) motioned to approve June 24, 2021, Meeting Minutes.

Roll-Call:

- a. Mr. Cutter - Abstain
- b. Mr. Son - Yes
- c. Mr. Barka - Yes
- d. Ms. Douglas - Yes
- e. Mr. Hayes - Yes
- f. Ms. Stevens - Yes
- g. Mr. Taylor - Yes
- h. Mr. Leary - Yes

Vote: (7-0-1) The motion carried. (Mr. Cutter abstained)

6. Town Business:

a. **General Updates**

Selectman Robert Leary mentioned that the Town has started to review the departmental budgets, and the Town will continue to review the budgets until they are complete. Mr. Leary commented that on Saturday, August 28, the Chaos and Kindness show will have a ‘Back to School Concert Bash’ at Roy Memorial Field. He noted that tickets are on sale for \$30 per ticket.

Mr. Leary said that the Town of Litchfield has received approximately \$452,311.63 and will receive a similar amount next year from the American Recovery Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). He noted that the funds might be used for several things, but the primary use of the ARPA funds is for the replacement of lost revenue. Mr. Leary stated that the Town of Litchfield needs to spend the ARPA funds by December 2026 and said that the Board of Selectmen discussed using the funds to replace the street lights with LED lights.

Mr. Leary commented that the new Building Inspector is Jeff Blackwell and he started working for the Town two weeks ago.

Vice-Chair John David Son mentioned that the Budget Committee was able to receive the 2021 preliminary draft budget last year, as the Board of Selectmen were working through it. He asked Mr. Leary if the Budget Committee could receive the 2022 preliminary draft budget this year. Mr. Leary agreed and said he would ask Town Administrator Troy Brown for the information.

Mr. Leary invited the Budget Committee members to attend the Board of Selectmen meetings to review the budget. Scott Taylor commented that he watched the Board of Selectmen meeting on August 23 and believed that Town Clerk/Tax Collector Theresa Briand did a fantastic job explaining the budget.

b. RSA 32:22: Review of Expenditures

The Budget Committee had received the Town Budget Reports and did not have any questions.

7. School Business:

a. General Updates

Chairman Andrew Cutter mentioned that Ms. Harrison had a conflict and could not attend the meeting tonight. He added that the School Board was interviewing for a new LMS Principal, and Ms. Harrison sent her apologies for not attending the Budget Committee meeting. She sent Mr. Cutter some information that he shared with the Committee.

Mr. Cutter informed the Budget Committee of the following:

- i. The Litchfield School District would open the schools on Monday, August 30. All students will attend in person this year.
- ii. Update with the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the LEA and LSSA.
 - a. The contracts will be included on the March 2022 Ballot for both the LEA and LSSA.
 - b. The School District is close to a tentative agreement with the LSSA.
 - c. The School District is starting to begin the process with the LEA.
- iii. There are various positions still open per the Litchfield School District website as of August 24
 - a. <https://sau27.tedk12.com/hire/index.aspx>

Mr. Cutter commented that the School Board did approve the tuition rate for 2022. He noted that the annual District expense for this year is \$16,376, and this expense is across all three schools. The daily rate is \$90.98 per student.

Based on the August 12 Construction Management meeting with North Branch Construction: many of the items to be completed are on track or ahead of schedule.

- i. The Window installation was anticipated to be completed by August 25.
- ii. The new rooftop Energy Recovery Ventilator (ERV) unit to service the Administration and Guidance area of the building has been installed. The unit has been started and calibrated.
- iii. Flooring is installed and completed. Phase 1 of the project is anticipated to be completed with time to spare for the facilities crew to set up classrooms beginning August 25.

Mr. Cutter mentioned that the acronym for the new elementary school is NLES. The acronym stands for New Litchfield Elementary School. He noted that there is an approved contract with Barker Architects of Concord, NH. They used \$117,000 from the Capital Improvement Fund for the following:

- i. Pre-Bond Planning and Design
- ii. Community Outreach
- iii. The application process for NH Building Aid

Ms. Douglas stated that she had asked Ms. Harrison questions and expected that the questions would be answered in the General Updates. Ms. Douglas expressed how concerned she was because the next time the Committee will see Ms. Harrison will be September 23.

Ms. Douglas requested the emails from Superintendent Michael Jette regarding the bus contracts. She expressed her concern over the email and questioned whether the cost of the bus runs has increased. Ms. Douglas commented how the number of bus runs has changed. The Committee discussed how the number of bus runs has decreased, and whether the contract with the bus company is a fixed price regardless of the number of bus runs.

Ms. Douglas stressed that when the bus contract comes up, the Budget Committee needs to take a serious look at whether the bus company would charge for additional runs. Mr. Hayes agreed that it would be nice to review the bus contract.

b. RSA 32:22: Review of Expenditures

Mr. Cutter asked if there were any questions regarding the School District Budget Reports. Ms. Douglas mentioned that she had raised some questions regarding Special Education Transportation Funds being used for the LMS upgrades. Ms. Douglas was interested in knowing whether the School Board's decision was regarding her concern.

Mr. Barka wanted to know if the Litchfield School District had received ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) Funds.

Mr. Cutter commented that he had requested several times for the School District to provide the Budget Committee with the encumbrances from last year. He added that the Budget Committee has no idea what the encumbrances were and why the funds were encumbered.

The Budget Committee discussed what needs to be done for the School District to provide consistent monthly Budget Reports. Mr. Cutter acknowledged that the Budget Reports should be provided monthly, but that does not happen. He noted that Ms. Harrison would be responsible for ensuring that the School District Budget Reports are provided to the Budget Committee.

Ms. Douglas asked if the School Board has a schedule for the budget review process. Mr. Cutter stated that the schedule had been finalized and circulated. He noted that he expects a Draft School Budget to be delivered to the Budget Committee by November 2. He added that the Joint Budget / School Session would occur on Thursday, November 4, and Monday, November 8. The School District Budget Review will begin on November 18.

Vice-Chair John David Son mentioned that the Budget Committee should contact John Brunelle about having the ability for virtual meetings.

8. Member Input / New Business:

a. Facilities Improvement Update

Chairman Andrew Cutter mentioned that the Capital Improvement Plan Committee (CIPC) has not met, and the Budget Committee received an update on the school facilities. He noted that Ms. Stevens had forwarded the NHMA schedule for upcoming budget sessions planned for September 14, and added that if any Committee member was interested in the workshop, they should email him.

Mr. Barka commented that the School Facilities Improvement Committee did not meet during July or August.

9. Next Budget Committee Meeting

Chairman Andrew Cutter said that the next two Budget Committee meetings would be on September 23 and 30.

10. Public Input #2 @ 7:24 pm

a. There was no one for Public Input

Public Input ended at 7:25 pm.

11. Adjournment:

Motion: (Ms. Douglas / Mr. Hayes) motioned to adjourn the public meeting at 7:25 pm.

Roll-Call:

- a.** Mr. Cutter - Yes
- b.** Mr. Son - Yes
- c.** Mr. Barka - Yes
- d.** Ms. Douglas - Yes
- e.** Mr. Hayes - Yes
- f.** Ms. Stevens - Yes
- g.** Mr. Taylor - Yes
- h.** Mr. Leary - Yes

Vote: (8-0-0) 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