

Town of Epping  
Budget Committee  
January 11, 2023

Call to Order:

The budget committee meeting was called to order at 6pm. Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence for the troops.

Attendance:

Budget Committee members: Michael Charkowski-Chairman, Steve Ozols-Vice Chairman, Ben Leavitt-School Boards Rep., Jen Chapman, Marty Dyer, Mark Vallone, Joe Trombley-Town Selectman Rep., Brian Reed, Jordenne Sargent, Sean Morrison, Greg Dodge, Lisa Fogg and Cynthia Hounam. Cody Belanger was not present.

Other attendees: Christine Vayda, Bill Furbush, Heather Clark, Robin O'Day, Julie Knight, Jn Jacoby, Fire Chief D'Angelis, Police Chief Wallace, Tom Gauthier, Marc Nickerson, John Cody, Erica Robison and Tom Dwyer.

Public notice was read by Mike (attached)

School Warrant Articles

Article 1: Teachers Association Collective Bargaining: Read by Steve (attached).

Open for the budget committee questions/comment:

- Sean asked to clarify the 7% for salaries, Mike said 3.7% for first year and 3.6% for second year.

Close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 1 as written, seconded by Brian. All in favor, all opposed – Sean. Motion carries 9-1, article is recommended.

Article 2: Special Meeting for defeated/amendment Collective Bargaining Agreement: This a non-monetary article so this was not read or reviewed.

Article 3: Operating Budget: Read by Steve (attached)

Open for the budget committee questions/comment:

- Sean said in 22-23 the actual used was \$19.6 million, we are currently working under \$20.7 million with a \$1 million increase for 23-24, Ben said yes.
- Heather said the total number in the warrant article includes the food service and federal funds. The food service pays for itself but they have to be added in.
  - Sean asked how food service pays for itself, Heather said with state and federal funds.
- Christine said the actual number they are asking for is \$16,403,206.00 and the rest will come in as a revenue offset. If everything passes the number will be \$23,772,989 and then the revenues are added in, that is what is presented to the taxpayers.

Close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 3 as written, seconded by Jen. All in favor, all opposed – Sean and Marty. Motion carries 8-2, article is recommended.

Article 4: Add to Buildings and Ground Capital Reserve: Read by Steve (attached)

Open for budget committee questions/comment, close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.

- Brian motions to recommend article 4 as written, seconded by Jen. All in favor, all opposed. Motion carries 10-0, article is recommended.

Article 5: Add to Special Education Capital Reserve Fund: Read by Steve (attached)

Open for the budget committee questions/comment:

- Sean asked what this fund was used for, Ben said if they have someone that moves into the district that needs special ed, this fund offsets the cost so it does not have to be in the budget.
- Sean asked for the balance, Christine said \$353,517.00

Close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 5 as written, seconded by Sean. All in favor, all opposed. Motion carries 10-1, article is recommended.

The last 3 articles are non-monetary and will not be reviewed.

#### Town Warrant Articles:

Mike said we will have people here for the petition articles go first.

Article 30: By petition: Community Children's Fund: Read by Steve (attached).

Karen Dranpaniotis was present to speak:

- 501c non profit based in Exeter, raise and give money to children in need, they supply vouchers to be redeemed at local stores for bedding, clothing and outerwear.
- Last year in Epping alone they served 70 children for \$9730 and \$1500 for school nurses in the elementary, middle and high schools for a total of \$11,230.00
- \$160.00 for teenage and \$130 for younger

Open for budget committee questions/comment:

- Mark said this is money well spent.

Close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 30 as written, seconded by Mark. All in favor, all opposed – Jen. Motion carries 9-1, article is recommended.

Article 31: By petition: Waypoint at the Richie McFarland Center: Read by Steve (attached).

- Paul Staller from Wayfair was present to speak. This was first year they merged with McFarland, they are out of Stratham. They served 44 Epping children, less than \$185 per child, they offer parenting groups, early childhood development, families with chronic illness.

Open for the budget committee questions/comment:

- Sean asked if they work with DCYF, Paul said that DCWY sometimes hires them.

Close to the budget committee, open for public comment:

- Pam Tibbets, 21 Blake Road: She has 2 granddaughters that have benefited from pt/ot, they were both born with neck issues. The 6-year old is going really well, playing sports,

etc and the 10 month old is now crawling. She gets therapy once a week for an hour through Richie McFarland. It is a wonderful benefit.

- Heather Clark, 1 Pawnee Lane: She is in full support of this, she has had no personal experience but many people have stood here supporting it. Every penny spent from year 0-3 is less money they will need to spend in their school budget as the school is responsible for 3 and over. Some may need special ed but because of Richie McFarland they don't need it when they get in the school. The whole goal is to make the kids ready and support themselves. She whole heartedly supports this and hope the budget committee does as well.

Close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 31 as written, seconded by Brian. All in favor, all opposed – Jen. Motion carries 9-1, article is recommended.

Article 7: 2023 Operating Budget: Read by Steve (attached):

Open for the budget committee questions/comment:

- Joe said there were 2 changes:
  - Add the skill training increase to all fire personnel which was not included in the hourly rate increase. Board of Selectmen voted 4-1 to put it in the budget with a start date of April 1. 9-month increase of \$34,790
  - Put \$396.00 back in the budget for the 4% cola increase for non-elected officials. Making the number \$172,242,269.00
- Brian motioned to approve the change to the budget number to \$172,242,269.00, seconded by Mark. All in favor 10-0 motion passes.

Steve read the article again with the amended amount.

- Sean asked why the increase from \$10 million to \$17 million. Joe said the town usually operates on \$7-\$8 million which the proposed is \$8,572,775.00. The water and sewer is generally \$2 million which is offset by the taxes.
- Marc Nickerson said that \$6.2 million of that is a loan that the tax payers voted on to close the lagoon. It is USDA where they need to take out the loan, complete the project and then they will pay us back in full. It is half done and should be done by next summer so we will be paid back in full.

Close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 7 as written, seconded by Brian.
- Sean commented that we will bring an article next year for a civil engineering and also that the we are in need of the extra fire fighter.

All in favor, all opposed – Jen. Motion carries 9-1, article is recommended.

Article 8: Accrued Benefits Expendable Trust Fund: Read by Steve (attached)

Open for the budget committee questions/comment:

- Steve said the way the article is written it is not clear as to what it is, it is important to get info to the voters as to what this is for.
- Joe said it a pay out for when anyone retires or leaves. If any benefits are accrued they need to be paid.
- Tom said that if they leave/retire and we don't have the money it has to come out of the budget.
- Mike said that we should change the wording for next year.

Close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 8 as written, seconded by Mark. All in favor, all opposed. Motion carries 10-0, article is recommended.

Article 9: Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Fund: Read by Steve (attached). Balance \$42,777.55

Open for the budget committee questions/comment, close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 9 as written, seconded by Mark. All in favor, all opposed. Motion carries 10-0, article is recommended.

Article 10: Watson Academy Repairs Expendable Trust Fund: Read by Steve (attached). Balance \$42,664.94.

Open for the budget committee questions/comment:

- Tom said this is for the heating system
- Sean asked if we could ask for state aid or a grant, Heather said they previously received a lcip grant. Tom said they just finished the lcip grant

Close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 10 as written, seconded by Jen. All in favor, all opposed. Motion carries 10-0, article is recommended.

Article 11: Recreation Facilities Expendable Trust Fund: Read by Steve (attached). Balance \$56,651.67

Open for the budget committee questions/comment:

- This is for the playground behind the SAU.
- Sean asked if the public could use it, Heather said yes, it is not a school playground it is going to be next to the tennis courts.

Close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 11 as written, seconded by Mark. All in favor, all opposed. Motion carries 10-0, article is recommended.

Article 12: Landfill Closure Capital Reserve Fund: Read by Steve (attached). Balance \$325,870.73

Open for budget committee questions/comment:

- Sean asked if they have any idea of an estimated cost, Joe no they want to wait until the town is told but make sure the money is there. This is for the engineering costs.
- Joe said this will probably be the last year for a request of \$100,000.
- Steve asked who and why voted no. Tom did because he feels if the state wants it closed, they should pay for it.

Close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 12 as written, seconded by Marty. All in favor, roll call vote: Jen-I, Ben-I, Sean-I, Marty-I, Joe-I, Jordenne-I, Steve-nay, Mike-nay, Brian-nay, Mark-nay. Motion carries 6-4, article is recommended.

Article 13: Government Building Expendable Trust Fund: Read by Steve (attached). Balance \$21,323.79

Open for budget committee questions/comment:

- Joe said this is the first year for all government buildings.

- Brian asked what the building are, Joe said the safety complex, Watson, fire museum. Close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.
- Mike motions to recommend article 13 as written, seconded by Mark. All in favor, all opposed. Motion carries 10-0, article is recommended,

Article 14: Conservation Commission Expendable Trust Fund: Read by Steve (attached). Balance \$2020.43

Open for the budget committee questions/comment, close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 14 as written, seconded by Mark. All in favor, all opposed. Motion carries 10-0, article is recommended.

Skip article 15-19

Article 20: Transfer Station Compactor: Read by Steve (attached)

Open for the budget committee questions/comment:

- Brian said we need to vote for this, whereas Mike is on the opposite side
- Joe said adding this will allow them to open up a second line and allow more people
- Mark asked if we still need the warrant article, Joe said yes because if we don't have this article there will be no compactor go in.
- Mike stated if this gets voted down you cannot buy the compactor, Joe said correct

Close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 20 as written, seconded by Brian. All in favor, all opposed-Jen. Motion carries 9-1, article is recommended.

Article 21: Sidewalk Snow Removal Equipment Lease: Read by Steve (attached)

Open for the budget committee questions/comment:

- Sean asked what the non-appropriation clause is, Tom said if it does not pass, they take it back
- 80% of the amount paid can be put toward the purchase, Joe said this the only piece equipment that addresses the sidewalks and the lease program provided the least cost burden.

Close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 21 as written, seconded by Mark. All in favor, all opposed. Motion carries 10-0, article is recommended.

Article 22: Transfer Station Expendable Trust Fund: Ready by Steve (attached)

Open for budget committee questions/comment:

- The intent is to create a fund to start looking at better enforcement on who is using the transfer station.
- Sean said this fund is open ended, Joe said if they use specific language for enforcement, they could only use it for that purpose. He said this is equipment for the transfer station,

Close to the budget committee, open for public comment, close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 22 as written, seconded by Steve. All in favor, all opposed-Mike & Jen. Motion carries 8-2, article is recommended.

Article 23: Additional Full Time Firefighter/EMT: Read by Steve (attached)

Open for budget committee questions/comment,

- Chief D'Angelis said they have 6 full time and this will make 7, they are a 24/7 department with the majority being part time. This will help correct that.
- Brian said that this is important and should be in the budget, he is in favor.
- Chief D'Angelis said that he is going for another grant for 2 firefighters
- Mike asked if this article was for a firefighter and not an EMT, Chief said it is for a firefighter/EMT cross trainer.

Close to the budget committee, open for public comment:

- Robert Hodgeman asked if it would make sense to make this for 2 firefighters, Chief said they redid the pay system and he thinks this will attract more people and that is why he stayed with one.
- Joe said the desire is 3 but only asking for 1 now because they will be going for a grant for 2.
- Robert asked they are better than last year, how much over than last year. Joe said they were over budget by \$52,000 but that includes the pay rate change since December.
- Chief will apply in February for a grant for 2 more, Mark asked when he will find out if he gets it, Chief said not until the fall.

Close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 23 as written, seconded by Brian. All in favor, all opposed. Motion carries 10-0, article is recommended.

Article 24: Reallocate the Land Use Change Tax:

Open for budget committee questions/comments

- Mike asked who the 1 no vote on Board of Selectman, Joe said Tom as he has never been in support of this without a cap
- Sean asked how much was in this fund, Joe said this is not a fund. The land use tax is a fee that is levied when land is taken out recreation current use to build on. The fee is currently 90% to the general fund and 10% for conservation, luct fund.
- Sean asked what it was used for, Joe said to protect land and open space in the town of Epping
- Mike said this in the only way to slow development in the town
- Marty's only issue is there is no cap

Close to the budget committee, open for the public:

- Sandy Goodspeed said all the luct money is recommended spending on land issues only not administration. Consider why we need open space and how important it is for the entire eco systems and humans.

Close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 14 as written, seconded by Jen. All in favor, all - oppose-Sean, Marty and Steve. Motion carries 7-3, article is recommended

Article 25: Epping Youth Athletic Association: Read by Steve (attached)

- Jason Follansbee said this is a non-profit organization that provides rec level sports on behalf of the town, all the funds are used to maintain the town property. They pay to have it mowed, landscaped, treat the infield and outfield and the trails. It costs about \$10,000 year and 100% of the \$5000 goes towards that.

Open for budget committee questions/comment:

- Jordenne said this is a benefit for the town
- Mark said they are asking for the same amount, it is a good value for the money.

Close to the budget committee, open- for public comment:

- Robert Hodgeman has no issues with them existing or raising funds but is not a good look for elected officials support giving tax payers money to an organization that has violated federal law. He would look for another avenue to raise these funds.
- Tom Dwyer said this is about the kids, lets keep it about the kids.
- Joe asked Greg to reach out to the council, it has bee resolved and if anything else needs to be done.

Close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 25 as written, seconded by Jen. A;l in favor, all opposed. Motion carries 10-0, article is recommended.

Article 27: By Petition: Rockingham Community Action: Read by Steve (attached)

Open for the budget committee questions/comment:

- Jen does not think these petitions should be done through the tax payers
- Steve thinks this is a good bang for the buck

Close to the budget committee, open to public:

- John Cody said per RSA we are mandated to provide, if it does not pass it has to come out of the budget. This saves us a lot of money.

Close to the public.

- Mike motions to recommend article 17 as written, seconded by Brian. All in favor, all opposed-Jen. Motion carries 9-1, article is recommended.

Article 28: By Petition: Rockingham Nutrition & Meal on Wheels Program: Read by Steve (attached).

Open for the budget committee questions/comment:

- Mark thinks that people that are looking for money should always be here to explain.

Close to the budget committee, open to public:

- Heather Clark said in regards to that, you are dealing with volunteers and this time of the year there are many meetings at the same time and they try their best to be here. A lot of them show up at the deliberative session.
- John Cody said sometimes this is the only time they get meals and the only time there are eyes on these people

Close to public

- Mike motions to recommend article 28 as written, seconded by Brian. All in favor, all oppose-Jen. Motion carries 9-1, article is recommended.

Article 19: By Petition: Ready Rides Funding: Read by Steve (attached)

Open for the budget committee questions/comment:

- Greg is on the board of directors and is trying to get volunteers, he advocates for this. The town supported it last year and hopes it does again this year.
- Joe asked John if they would have to supplement this, John said no

Close to the budget committee, open to public, closed to public

- Mike motions to recommend article 19 as written, seconded by Brian. All in favor, all opposed-Jen. Motion carries 9-1, article is recommended.

Mike asked for any other questions.

Ben said at the request of the school board, if there is no changes if you could sign the MS17 before leaving. Steve said we have the same form for the town.

Motioned to adjourn by Brian, seconded by Jen. Meeting adjourned at 9:50pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Cynthia Hounam