Town of Epping

Budget Committee

April 20, 2022

Call to Order:

The budget committee meeting was called to order at 6:30pm. 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 Board Rep, Marty Dyer, Jen Chapman, Mark Vallone, Joe Twombley-Town Selectman Rep, Brian Reed, Jordenne Sargent, Sean Morrison and Cynthia Hounam. Cody Belanger was not present.

Opening Comments:

Michael would like to welcome the newest members to the board: Sean Morrison, Jordeen eSargent and Joe Twombley replacing John Cody.

Roll Call: Cody Belanger-not present, Sean Morrison, Brian Reed, Jordenne Sargent, Mark Vallone, Steve Ozols, Michael Charkowski, Jen Chapman, Marty Dyer, Ben Leavitt and Joe Twombley.

Reconstruction of the board:

* Michael made motion for Steve Ozols as Vice Chairman, seconded by Mark. All in favor. Motion passes unanimously
* Steve made a motion for Michael Charkowski for Chairman, seconded by Mark. All in favor, opposed-Sean. Motion passes 8-1

Michael would like to speak about the vote for the school CBA.

* Article did not pass to which many people were not happy.
* The board voted not to recommend for a variety of reasons. Information came up after the vote regarding the CBA regarding evergreen clause, it turned out to be true that there was not one and it had more impact on teachers, it affects more than the cost of living and recent changes to the law there is no way to vote on it again.
* Steve asked if there will be a new contract coming this year, Ben said yes.
* Joe asked if there was going to be an evergreen clause, Ben does not want to speculate but they are looking into it.
* Steve stated that the sooner they get the numbers the better, the CBA numbers were not given to the board until after the budget last year. Ben will bring that up during negotiations but cannot guarantee anything.
* Mark said it would be helpful to see what the tax impact would be if you could share the negotiations
* Ben stated as long as you meet the deadline in November you can negotiate in the summer.

Michael said along with setting the target next month we should get the number to the town and school as soon as possible.

* Joe said that he did not have a problem with 2.1 target, it was when you manipulated the index, the board should have just said 2.1 and owned it and not pin it to the index.
* Sean asked if the COLA was negotiated in the police contract this year, Joe said that anyone that is contracted we try to budget for.
* Mike asked everyone to come up with some ideas for next months meeting. He to try and separate year to year cost and whether or not you would like to see the budgets different.
* Joe suggests to break it into 4 categories: energy, labor (COLA), consumables and state requirements. Joe said labor is going to be an issue this year.
* Sean asked if we look at projects coming up, long term or take it as it comes. Joe said they are working on it and how to execute it.
* Steve asked what the task is for next month, Mike said to do research, look at inflation and try to come up with numbers and ideas.
* Sean asked what they are budgeting for in retirement, Joe said they will not know until the state sets the rates until October. Right now, they apply worse case scenario and when the state comes out with the numbers they apply the actuals.

Mid-term budgeting for the school:

* The chairman of the school does not support doing a joint sub-committee. If there is a concern with the budget they would like to bring the two committee together.
* Steve said that the school budget is a mystery and part of the subcommittee was to get a better understanding and cut the budget, it is 80% of our taxes.
* Ben said they are trying to get an organization together to see how the school budget works, he will take it back to the board and see what we could look at for a 5 year projection.
* Joe suggested the school board to go back and consolidate by line for elementary school, middle school and high school (example supplies), the smaller numbers will get overlooked but the bigger numbers will not.
* Ben thinks they should push for a sub-committee as it would be much better for the town.
* Ben said in late September-October they have their workshop meeting on ETV where they meet with department heads and ask questions regarding the line items.
* Joe suggests writing a letter to the chairman of the school board stating clearly what the sub-committee intent is.

1st Quarter Reports:

* Steve asked if the year end estimate of $1.5 million is the potential surplus number, Ben said yes and that is not including the expenditure for the year.
* Steve said that the number for the essar funds was larger on the website, Ben said the final number went from $542,000 to $823,972. They have until September 30, 2024 to use the funds. There is a survey on the school website on how to use the funds.

Mike asked for any other questions.

Joe would like to see if the budget committee can to the 4th Wednesday rather the 3rd Wednesday for the conflict of the planning board and conservation. Brian thinks if it is an issue with them they should work it out between them.

Ben asked if we should discuss how frequently they would like to meet. Mike said he will go back and look at the calendar for the last couple of years and come up with something.

Steve motions to accept the minutes of January 12, seconded by Jen. Ben, Joe and Jordenne abstain.

Steve motions to accept the minutes of February 10, seconded by Jen. Ben, Joe and Brian abstain.

Mike motions to adjourn, seconded by Jen.

Meeting adjourned 8:40pm.

Sincerely submitted:

Cynthia Hounam