

Town of Brentwood Municipal Budget Committee
Minutes of December 11, 2023 regular meeting, held at Brentwood Town Office

Members present: Jack Mitchell (chair), Michelle Siudut (secretary), Gabbie Kelly, Letty Bedard (Swasey rep), Jon Morgan (selectmen's rep). *Member attending remotely:* Alina Arida

Member absent: Anthony Phillips

Guests: Library Trustee Liz McConnell, Library Director Janice Wiers, Officer James Saltzman, Bruce Stevens

Jack called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Motion was made by Letty, seconded by Gabbie to allow Alina to attend remotely. Voting to support were Letty, Gabbie, Jon, Michelle, Jack.

Meeting Minutes

Motion by Gabbie, seconded by Letty to approve the committee meeting minutes from the November 27, 2023 meeting, as amended. Voting to approve were Letty, Jon, Gabbie, Alina, Michelle, Jack.

Selectmen's Report - Jon Morgan

Police budget and Government Buildings budget are being held for revisions.

New website is not yet live. Letty reported the transfer of information to the new site and installation of new equipment - all being done by volunteers - is more work than expected.

Jon said the Economic Development Committee will be meeting this Thursday at 6 pm.

Swasey School Board Report - Letty Bedard

The proposed Swasey budget has been sent to Committee members and is on the schedule for next week; Letty requested any questions be sent in advance.

Due to the number of budgets on the agenda for next week, we discussed postponing the Solar Panel presentation. Letty said a spreadsheet/presentation has been prepared, and offered to present at our Jan 15 meeting. Gabbie requested the spreadsheet/presentation be distributed. Question of combining town and school employees into the same health insurance plan. It was suggested that the Board of Selectmen write a letter to the Swasey board to request more information. The school and town being on different budget cycles may be an obstacle.

Budgets

Library presented by Library Director Janice Wiers and Trustee Liz McConnell.

The proposed budget is 5.4% over what Board of Selectmen and Budget Committee approved last year; or a 7.1% increase over the final budget amount after the overall operating budget reduction was approved at town meeting.

The biggest increase is the media line.

Salaries/Benefits lines are up 6%; there were no wage adjustments, just COLA and merit, although not everyone received full merit. They are required to have at least 2 people in the building at all times; they cannot have one staff person alone. Sometimes trustees are asked to be present when staff unexpectedly need time off. Question as to why the "F/T Town Employee" is not listed as a position; it is listed separately because they need to treat that person as f/t for the town, even though not full-time at the library. There was discussion about earned credit. Question, of how much was reduced by town meeting vote; answer \$5000. It was noted that the lines that were reduced, have not been fully spent. Janice said she hasn't paid all the bills yet and will probably spend it all.

Building repairs to steps are not included in this budget as they should come out of capital improvements or building maintenance fund. Some of the stair repairs will be part of the amphitheater remodel. Question, why is there a building maintenance line if it's a town owned building? Janice replied because of the governing structure; the RSA says the trustees are responsible for the building. This led to discussion about library governance. The town owns the building, but the trustees govern the budget. Library partners with town for propane - the town sends a bill to the library for their portion of propane.

Professional Development. They try to take advantage of free resources as often as possible. However, trustees can change annually and different resources may be needed. There currently are 5 trustees, 3 alternates.

Question, does the library currently benefit from the solar array; no.

Motion was made by Letty, seconded by Gabbie to approve the library budget of \$335,150, an increase of \$22,158, or 7.08%. Voting in support were Letty, Gabbie, Alina, Jon, Jack; opposing Michelle.

Conservation. There were questions as to what some of the lines were for, specifically Audit Expense and Easement monitoring. Audit expense is for review of properties. Most easement monitoring is done by volunteers on the Commission, but funds are kept in the budget in case they are needed. Annual appropriation is being deleted and being funded by land use fees. Jon Morgan stated the Commission has new leadership.

Motion by Letty, seconded by Gabbie to approve \$12,703, a reduction of \$949 or 6.95%; voting to approve were Letty, Gabbie, Alina, Jon, Michelle, Jack.

General Government.

Jon explained \$20K of TAN was moved from Debt Service budget to Long Range Planning line in this budget. He said the funds are for disasters/emergencies/unexpected needs. After further discussion, Jon stated the Long Range Planning line is Economic Development. Discussion ensued about this line being the wrong place for funds deemed for emergencies; we have funding in other budgets for emergencies.

Postage increased because postage for all departments has been put into this budget. The Committee requested Jon obtain clarification on: Travel/Mileage (for whom, as travel is generally in each budget), Miscellaneous Contracts, Town Events, Expenditure offset (2), Long Range Planning, Miscellaneous Expenses. Jon will forward answers to Jack, who will share with the Committee.

Motion by Letty to table.

Street Lighting. Motion by Jon, seconded by Letty to approve \$1, which is level-funded. Voting in support were Letty, Gabbie, Alina, Jon, Michelle, Jack.

Animal Control. Motion by Letty, second by Gabbie, to approve \$9, which is level-funded. Voting in support were Letty, Gabbie, Alina, Jon, Michelle, Jack.

Jon asked committee members to send him questions about any of the remaining budgets, to which he can get answers prior to our next meeting.

Letty asked committee members to send her questions about Swasey budget in advance, so she can get answers prior to next week's meeting.

Old/Other Business

Bylaws. Jack presented one more change to the bylaws, which is to move Section III B 3 under the role of the Chair, as Section III A 5.

5. The Chair shall assure the legal posting of all official meeting and hearing notices, required advertising in local publications, and delivery of the recommended budget to the respective governing body or bodies at least 20 days before the annual meeting, to be posted with the warrant.

Motion by Jack, seconded by Gabbie to make this change.

YTD Budgeted Expenditures and ARPA Fund distribution reports were reviewed.

Warrant Articles. We know of none at this time, but there will not be one for paving.

Gabbie asked why no encumbrances are listed, Jon said they will be coming. The encumbrances shown are from last year.

Letty requested a list of encumbrances going into next year. Discussion about what the monies were encumbered for, were the monies used, is there any left? Encumbrances are good for one

year for a specific purpose. If encumbrances are not used for their purpose, the money is returned to the general fund.

Discussion about tax rates, Letty will send the SAU tax distribution rates to Jack to share. Jon said NH is not meeting constitutional requirements for school funding; towns are not contributing equitably. More affluent towns overpay their school tax, so get more back and keep it. NH School Funding Fairness Project has done presentations to explain how this works.

Discussion about need increases as compared to population increases; getting citizens to attend meetings to ask questions prior to town meeting.

New/Other Business

Letty asked if unreserved fund balance could be used to fund Warrant Articles instead of appropriating new funds.

Public Comment

Bruce Stevens said he attended tonight partly due to the article in The Brentwood Newsletter; said we're doing a good job. Bruce suggested Jack ask Jillian for the RPC presentation on housing to distribute to the committee.

Bruce Stevens announced there is a ZBA meeting next Monday to discuss a large commercial business, where The Castles formerly were. This will bring revenue.

Discussion about changes in appropriations (increased average of 7% over 10 years), expenses, and total valuation (has increased 46% over ?? years). Changes such as NH retirement funding and education funding have increased the burden on towns.

Upcoming Meetings. The following schedule has been revised since our last meeting.

Dec 18 2023 at 6 pm: Budget Committee Meeting. Potential budgets to discuss: Swasey, Swasey Solar, Fire, Benefits, Police, Insurance, Government Buildings, General Government

Jan 15 2024 at 6 pm: Budget Committee Meeting.

*Feb 5 2024 at 7 pm: Budget Committee Meeting. Warrant Articles

Feb 12 2024 at 6 pm: Budget Committee Meeting.

Feb 12 2024 at 6:30 pm: Budget Committee Public Hearing

Mar 16 2024 at 9 am: TOWN MEETING

Meeting adjourned at 8:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Siudut, Secretary