

Town of Brentwood Municipal Budget Committee
Minutes of December 18, 2023 regular meeting, held at Brentwood Town Office

Members present: Jack Mitchell (chair), Alina Arida, Gabbie Kelly, Anthony Phillips, Letty Bedard (Swasey rep), Jon Morgan (selectmen's rep).

Member attending remotely: Michelle Siudut (secretary)

Guests: Fire Chief Joe Bird, Katerina Tennant, Doug Finan, Town Administrator Karen Clement, Police Chief John Ventura, Liz Faria, Dexter Swasey, Swasey Principal Ron Kew, Chris Andrewski, Mollie O'Keefe, Allison Higgins, Brian Duffy, Ken Christiansen, Justin Doty

Jack called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

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

Meeting Minutes

Motion by Gabbie, seconded by Alina to approve the committee meeting minutes from the December 11, 2023 meeting, as amended. Voting to approve were Letty, Alina, Jon, Gabbie, Michelle, Jack; Anthony abstained.

Jack thanked Karen/Selectboard for getting all the budgets approved and to us for this evening.

Selectmen's Report - Jon Morgan

The Selectboard discussed trying to combine with the school for better health insurance rates. They will write a letter of inquiry to Health Trust asking if they can pool with Swasey; they will ask the Swasey board to write a letter also.

Swasey School Board Report - Letty Bedard

There have been two presentations for the solar project. There will be another presentation at the school board meeting scheduled for January 8 at 6 pm; Letty requests BudCom attend.

Budgets

General Government. During discussion of this budget at a previous meeting, some questions were raised. In the Long Range Planning line, Jon had previously stated the addition of \$20K from TAN, was for an emergency fund, however it is intended to hire a grant writer. This position could potentially pay for itself if we can apply/receive more of the grants that are available. It was suggested to move those funds from the Long Range Planning line into an Expenditure Offset line.

Travel/Mileage was said to be for town office staff and treasurer going to concord. The largest amount is 6mo of Joyce going to the bank.

Misc Contracts - this line is used for unplanned community events such as shredding event.

Town Events - This is for team building for staff, not town wide events

Citizen Comments: Liz Faria asked why travel is in this budget; questioned what the Long Range Planning money is for.

Motion by Alina to move \$20k from Long Range Planning line to Expenditure Offset line, and to approve the General Government Budget of \$68,077, an increase of \$28,099 or 70.29%. Motion seconded by Gabbie. Letty, Alina, Anthony, Jon, Gabbie, Jack voted in favor; Michelle opposed.

Fire presented by Chief Bird. Cuts were made in the salaries and overtime lines.

Currently 4 FT providing 24 hr coverage, with per diems (usually 6/wk)

This is the first full year w/full time personnel. 25 weeks this year had 3 FT.

Salary adjustment for Chief, Secretary, and 2 others at 5%; everyone else received 4%.

Additionally, a retention stipend has been added for those with 2 or more years.

Question if Secretary wages included an increase in hours, no simply a wage increase. Secretary is paid hourly, and there is some overtime built into that line.

Question about remaining balance of over \$200K. Chief said truck maintenance is not complete; equipment repairs are pending; this week's and last week's payroll will be large, due to covering shifts in Rye; there is also storm coverage built in.

Question on building repair line being zeroed out; BOS is putting all building maintenance funds in the Government Building budget.

Citizen Comments: Liz Faria asked about the salary adjustment for Chief; salary is 4.1%; overall increase is 17.5%.

Motion by Alina, seconded by Letty to approve the Fire Budget of \$1,007,289, an increase of \$15,834 or 1.6%. Voting in favor were Letty, Alina, Anthony, Jon, Gabbie, Michelle, Jack.

Police presented by Chief Ventura. Budget changes were presented using the amount approved by the Budget Committee and BOS last year, NOT the amount the budget was decreased to after Town Meeting, which was a \$40K reduction of the salary line.

The LT wages were moved to Wages - Administration. This line is now LT and Chief.

COLA/merit increase for Admin Assistant and related FICA/retirement increases.

Another officer will be added by end of this year using encumbered funds, so that salary is not shown in this budget.

Still trying to work down the overtime line, which will go down as more officers are hired.

Other reductions in Firearms Qualification, travel, uniforms.

Prosecutor increase will continue over next 3 years. Prosecutor is underpaid, and felony prosecutions will be coming back to district court. Question as to how much time a prosecutor spends on each case; Chief said it varies greatly, depending on whether it goes to trial.

Other increases for K9, vehicle repairs, vehicle fuel/oil.

Question about remaining funds, Chief said there are outstanding bills for Nov-Dec.

Question about the uniforms line, Chief said we are on schedule to replace 2 vest/yr. Uniform replacements are not on a schedule, but we do have an officer in charge of uniform distribution. We will have 10 FT personnel. The goal is to have 2 personnel (a supervisor and an officer) on from 2am to 6am by April. Currently we have double coverage almost every evening.

Citizen Comments: Liz Faria asked for confirmation of current FT officers, which is 9.

Motion by Anthony, second by Alina to approve the Police budget of \$1,256,508, an increase of \$189,836 or 17.8%. Voting in favor were Letty, Alina, Anthony, Jon, Gabbie, Michelle, Jack.

Government Buildings. Building maintenance lines from other budgets have been brought into this budget. The new amounts in this budget, with the exception of Fire station, are re-added from last year's town meeting vote. Rec center monies are for sheds, snack shack.

Motion by Gabbie, seconded by Letty, to approve the Government Buildings budget of \$100,460, which is an increase of \$33,651 or 50.37%; voting in favor were Letty, Alina, Anthony, Jon, Gabbie, Michelle, Jack.

Insurance - Benefits. These are contractual. 15% is for rate increase, 24% is employee changes.

Citizen Comments: Liz Faria asked for amounts for health insurance increase (\$161,401), and total benefits increase (\$159,793).

Motion by Letty, seconded by Gabbie to approve the Insurance Benefits budget of \$568,649, an increase of \$159,793 or 39.08%. Voting in favor were Letty, Alina, Anthony, Jon, Gabbie, Michelle, Jack.

Insurance. These are contractual. Motion by Letty, seconded by Alina to approve the Insurance budget of \$159,615, an increase of \$20,484 or 14.72%. Voting in favor were Letty, Alina, Anthony, Jon, Gabbie, Michelle, Jack.

Swasey School by Letty Bedard

Enrollment was steadily decreasing from 2008 (402) to 2021 (275); has been increasing since 2021, for a population of 280 in 2024. Swasey is leading SAU with our math & reading testing. More than 90% of the budget is contractually obligated, either by CBA, the state, insurance, etc. This budget includes the new collective bargaining agreement approved for para retirement last year. Cost per pupil is lowest in SAU at \$17K, State avg is \$20K+.

There are 21.2 FT employees; 1 position that switched to a different step; there were salary increases; no additional positions from last year to this year. STEM instructor is mostly student related but also does training etc for staff.

#100-50118 this line reduced for a regular instr aide moved to SE aide

#100-50610 is for teacher supplies

#100-50641 Regular Education Books & Media - this includes \$20K for whole school Ready math curriculum workbook; and \$20+K for social emotional workbook.

#210-50118 Salaries of SE aides - moved a regular instr aide to SE aide

#210-50320 SE Contracted services - driven by student need; based on currently enrolled student need for next year

#210-50330 - special ed summer school

#210-50561 this line reduced because a student moved to another school

#210-50562 Spec Ed tuition is necessary by law; amount based on projection. There is also a Capital Reserve Fund for this purpose.

#222-50110 Media Salaries were budgeted incorrectly last year, did not include holidays. Also increasing from 3 days to 4 days. This should follow same CBA as para.

#225-50610 Computer services supplies - all routers (50) need to be replaced. Chromebooks (provided for all students) also need to be replaced, which is grouped through SAU (SAU has better purchasing power). Alina suggested budgeting in a fund for this; Letty said they don't want to buy all at once, they want to do a few at a time, as needed. K-2 have iPads; grade 5 and STEAM labs have their own Chromebooks.

#225-50650 Software subscriptions are grouped through SAU for better pricing. Some teachers also get Chromebooks and need new software licensing

#260-50320 english as second languages

#313-50110 - stipend for elected position

#314-50120 - Election services - price of ballots increased

#321-50319 - This is the SAU Admin staff budget. Every school has this line, but amounts vary by town, based on average daily metriculation. The whole admin budget increased \$3,183,082 or 9.76%. Brentwood town portion increased \$191,713 or 16.02%. Main changes are max 3% salary increases; grant writer was previously funded by a grant (grant line was 4M total, even ones we don't need to apply for); Heath/Dental increases; Conferences are no longer grant funded. Similarly to how the town uses fund balance to decrease tax impact, the SAU did that last year for software upgrade, so this year is a bigger hit.

#410-50110 - co curricular salaries include enrichment activities; these not paid by parents, but covered by town. Additional pay required for teachers staying longer than contracted day.

#410-50611 New line for DEI support. All schools are investing time to look at curriculum and materials to be inclusive for all students. Swasey has a DEI committee for this.

#610-50119 - Maintenance salaries are contracted through SAU; there is a staffing change; Swasey has 3 FT custodians

#620-50430/50739. Needed repairs include replacing exterior door frames to library which are rusting, concrete work at entry, landscaping especially in courtyard, sidewalk repaving, gym roof. This year a roof was installed from the main building to the portable classroom.

#721-50519 Bus contract

#722-50511- Special Ed transportation. This line is 25K annually for transportation for someone living outside of district; ex. if someone moves out of town but still wants to attend Swasey.

AL2900 Support Services - some of the decreases were due to incorrect entries last year, they're not really going down.

AL3110 #110-50570. Food Service management. There cannot be a negative food service line at end of year. Lunches have been fully subsidized over the last few years; this line is "just in case". Breakfast is \$2 w/milk; milk only or juice only 50cents; lunch is \$3.10. Food costs of \$111K exceed the \$97K revenue. 50-60% of kids eating school lunch is a good day; would like to see 60-70%; would need 80% in order to break even. Preparing as much home made as possible, and providing different options; kids are picky. Meal is provided during summer school. Question if after school/summer school programs are paid for by families? The only students in summer school are SPED, which is included in this budget. Extra curricular such as cross country and jump rope are paid by families. After school program is run by YMCA, not funded by town. On average, over 10 years, the budget has increased 2.91%. A bond was paid off Aug2021 which reduced the budget. One of the biggest changes has been contracted services. Motion by Gabbie, seconded by Alina to approve \$7,057,382, an increase of \$415,700 or 6.26%. Voting in favor were Letty, Alina, Anthony, Jon, Gabbie, Jack; Michelle opposed.

Old Business

At a previous meeting, a motion was made and seconded to accept the budget committee bylaw changes, which have been under discussion since our September 18, 2024 meeting. Voting in favor of all changes reviewed as of December 11, 2024 were Letty, Alina, Anthony, Gabbie, Michelle, Jack; Jon abstained.

New/Other Business

Discussion about the town hiring a grant writer.

Doug Finan stated there is a Rockingham Planning Commission meeting on January 10th at 6pm

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

Jan 8 2024 at 6 pm: Swasey School will do a presentation on a solar array for the school. The

Budget Committee has been asked to attend

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 8:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Siudut, Secretary