

Town of Brentwood Municipal Budget Committee
Minutes of November 20, 2023 regular meeting, held at Brentwood Town Office

Members present: Jack Mitchell (chair), Michelle Siudut (secretary), Gabbie Kelly, Anthony Phillips, Letty Bedard (Swasey rep), Jon Morgan (selectmen's rep)

Members absent: Alina Arida

Guests: Daphne Woss, Heather Haggett, Joyce Keegal, Karen Clement, Kip Kaiser

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

Meeting Minutes

Motion by Gabbie, seconded by Letty to approve the committee meeting minutes from the October 20, 2023 meeting; approved unanimously.

Selectmen's Report - Jon Morgan

No update

CIP - Anthony Phillips

Anthony said it has been completed and is now before the planning board.

Swasey School Board Report - Letty Bedard

The board began review of the budget at their November meeting. There will be student need increases; they hope to have a final budget for their December meeting.

School Board wondered about the public hearing date; Karen Clement was present and said probably February 12.

The Board has also questioned if the primary would be held at the school; the primary date had not been determined as of their last meeting.

Budgets

Debt Service. Library bond is paid off; fire station bond is level funded at \$25K, which is coming out of impact fees. Tan reduced to \$1. Question as to if these amounts are usually level funded - Karen said the principal is level funded, and the interest decreases annually.

Motion by Anthony, seconded by Letty to approve Debt Service budget of \$240,081, a decrease of \$36,650 or 13.24%; approved unanimously.

Code Enforcement. Kip introduced himself to new members explaining he is part time and does not take NH retirement. He performs building inspections, zoning code enforcement and coordinates RFPs. Revenue generated from permits usually covers the full code enforcement budget. Currently has an electrical inspector. Next year he hopes to add a plumbing inspector

(had the money this year, but couldn't find an appropriate candidate; as he wants someone qualified for other things as well.). Other inspectors are not on payroll, but receive a fee per job. Letty asked about establishing a revolving fund for the other inspectors; Karen explained that would not be practical, as funds are only appropriated once a year at Town meeting.

Jack asked if other town code enforcement departments self sustain; Kip said that is hard to determine.

Kip expects up to 100 more houses and a potential large commercial development next year. Motion by Letty, seconded by Gabbie to approve Code Enforcement budget of \$88,300, an increase of \$7,009 or 8.62%; approved unanimously.

Town Clerk. Increases are wage increases and COLA; training costs for hotels, conferences; dog licenses. Postage is removed from this budget and will go into Admin budget. There are extra hours for all staff due to the number of elections.

Michelle went on record as saying she believes we should be reviewing total compensation rather than just salary, and had been provided that information in the past; Karen said she previously provided what employees are eligible for, not what they actually take, that information is protected by HIPAA. Question as to new hires and how insurance is budgeted; Karen said they budget for what they are eligible for; the new police officer position is being budgeted for family plan.

Motion by Anthony, seconded by Letty to approve Town Clerk budget of \$76,610, an increase of \$2,079 or 2.79%; approved unanimously.

Tax Collector. Increases are wages and COLA; conferences and hotel costs. Motion by Letty, seconded by Gabbie to approve Tax Collector budget of \$77,709, an increase of \$5,988 or 8.35%; approved unanimously.

Town Meeting. We will have a total of 4 elections, plus town meeting, with 2 moderators at each. This budget will decrease in 2025 with fewer elections. Motion by Anthony, seconded by Gabbie to approve Town Meeting budget of \$4,001, an increase of \$1,200 or 42.84%; approved unanimously.

Election. Supervisor salaries are up due to number of elections. Ballot clerks will get paid hourly rather than a stipend. Daphne said we may be purchasing a new ballot machine for \$7-10K that ARPA funds may be available for; machines have not been decided on; state has tentatively approved 2 options. The state will not require use in 2024, but will require use in 2025. Current machine is great, Daphne doesn't know why we need to change our machine.

Software support line, which we have not had to use, is maintenance contract for our voting machine.

Advertising/notices line wasn't used this year; however next year, more legal notices will need to be posted.

Motion by Gabbie, seconded by Letty to approve Election budget of \$17,501, an increase of \$10,175 and 138.89%, passed unanimously.

Town Administrator. Increases are in wages, training line so Karen can get HR certificate. Question as to who does reviews/decides on merit increases; Selectboard Chair does performance review for Karen; selectboard approves merit raise. Karen does department head reviews; department heads review their own staff; employees are evaluated individually. Question as to if every employee received the full 2% merit increase; Karen said no. Question are annual salary increases of 5% the plan going forward; Jon replied we are trying to stay competitive. Question as to the number of hours worked; does everyone work a 40 hour week? Question as to if everyone has work-at-home days; Karen said it varies by employee. Motion by Gabbie, seconded by Letty, \$129,528, increase of \$7,239 or 5.92%; approved unanimously.

Finance. The wages line includes \$18K for bank reconciliation done by a 3rd party through MRI on an annual contract. Question about possibly hiring a P/T person to do reconciliations; Karen said she would if they could find the right person who was qualified and willing to work a small number of hours. Majority of increase is audit increase. Cola and 2% merits in both salaries; bookkeeper is full time. Karen said the audit report for 2022 is not yet finished. Motion by Gabbie, seconded by Letty to approve Finance budget of \$113,991, an increase of \$6,508 or 6.05%; approved unanimously.

New/Other Business

Discussion about the cost of health insurance. Karen said health trust premiums will be increasing 15.6%; this is just their increase and does not include changes to employees plans (getting married, having babies). Karen presented options to SB, they've decided to stay with what they have. Jack asked what other towns pay/provide. Karen said other towns offer similar plans and pay up to 100% premium with an average of 90%; Brentwood pays 75% of premiums. (Town family plan is currently \$3257/mo - the town portion is \$2,442.) Karen said we need to maintain the benefits esp when trying to keep employees. The Benefits budget includes Medical, dental, Short term disability, life insurance. Letty suggested pooling with school to reduce the rate, as they are a larger pool. She will send school health costs to Jack to share.

Gabbie questioned the feasibility of switching the town budget to July to June, like the school has. Karen said that would result in additional 6 months of cost in one budget year.

ARPA. Karen said our original funding was \$472K. We used some on phase 1 of highway addition, some on new firefighter position. Jack requested from Karen, a breakdown of what has been used, what is projected to be used, and what remains. All remaining funds need to be committed by 2024, and spent by 2026.

Old/Other Business

Bylaw review. Karen said she received comments from counsel today, and will forward to Jack.

Budget growth discussion continued.

Budget presentation suggestions were discussed.

Gabbie/Alina/Karen have not met, but questions were answered during discussion.

Public Comment

No one present.

Motion to adjourn at 8:02 pm.

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

Nov 27 2023 at 6 pm: Budget Committee Meeting. Potential budgets to discuss: Highway, General Government, Government Buildings

Dec 4 2023 at 6 pm: Budget Committee Meeting. Potential budgets to discuss: Fire, Library

Dec 11 2023 at 6 pm: Budget Committee Meeting. Potential budgets to discuss: Police, Animal Control, Insurance

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Siudut, Secretary