

Town of Brentwood
Budget Committee Meeting at Brentwood Town Office
Meeting Minutes of May 8, 2023

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

Guests: Liz Faria

Jack called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Meeting Minutes

Motion by Letty, seconded by Gabbie to approve the committee meeting minutes from March 27, 2023, as amended; approved 5-0-0

Selectmen's Report - Jon Morgan

- The issue with NE Dragway has been resolved. Our police chief will be in charge of our roads.
- Resignations were received from one employee at the highway department (the person who was doing much of the mechanical repairs) and one at the fire department. Jack asked Jon the reason; Jon implied it was wages, although there has been a focus on morale, pay and benefits over the past 2 years. Jack asked if there had been an opportunity to retain either employee. Jon did not know, but would inquire.
- The planning board received a \$40K grant to study affordable housing.
- Followup on collecting fees for the construction of the new county building on North Road. Kip said he does not have the manpower to work that job. Multiple Supreme Court cases state the town does not have the ability to collect impact fees from county construction. The county is exempt from all zoning regulations.

Swasey School Board Report - Letty Bedard

- The School Board voted to expend impact fees from both school and police dept to relieve the expense of an unexpected safety and security infrastructure project.
- Swasey was selected top elementary school in the state per the Excellence in Education Awards.
- Michelle inquired about the "budget freeze". Letty clarified that it was not a "freeze". The school budget works differently from the town budget. The Board receives monthly reports and they are very conservative with those numbers. There is no budget freeze.

Old Business

Jack asked if anyone was aware of the municipal facility meeting. Per Letty, there have been no meetings since our last meeting.

Jack reviewed the joint meeting with the Planning Board, focusing on the Capital Improvement Plan. Planning Board Chair Kristen wants to form a subcommittee to include herself and two member(s) of the Budget Committee. Anthony is interested in being on the sub-committee. If no one else from BudCom wants to be on it, Jack will volunteer. Letty would like to have someone from the school board; she will ask. Glen Greenwood would like to use the subcommittee to help determine priorities for the town, rather than for each department. Jon asked for clarification on the role of the sub-committee. The CIP is advisory only; the Selectmen have the final say on any projects. Anthony said the current CIP does not include all capital assets. Forms are not due until June 5; so no meeting will likely be scheduled until after that. Jack asked Anthony to follow up with Kristen and/or Glen Greenwood.

New Business

Jack would like to continue meeting with department heads; discuss the necessity of the capital improvement plan as well as inquire about the effect of budget cuts. He will set meetings with Police, Highway, Fire, Rec, Library. Letty offered visits to the school.

Population 2010-2020 increased 1/10th%; however from 2020-2023 increased 5%. Three Ponds alone added 119 total houses. Total tax valuation (before exemptions) in 2010 was \$478,627,296; in 2022 was \$731,776,705 .

Gabbie/Alina will be meeting with Karen to discuss and understand budgeting of line items.

Anthony would like to have the Budget Committee bylaws amended to give this Committee authority of CIP. Basically procedure. Expenditures that meet the cap of CIP would be approved by this process. Jack asked Anthony to create the wording to amend the bylaws.

Letty inquired if the town can fund their capital improvement funds with unreserved fund balances, rather than raise & appropriate.

Letty reiterated her desire to switch the town budget from Jan-Dec to Jul-Jun, to align with how the town is operated. This would require one 18 month tax year (3 tax bills). Gabbie indicated there may be additional costs to changing reporting periods, such as additional audit costs. There may be other disadvantages. Letty will look into this further.

Discussion about consideration of setting an increase cap for each department.

Letty said the Communications Committee will be producing a voter guide, which will be a pdf on town website. Michelle questioned who would prepare that, to ensure pros and cons of each item would be provided.

Discussion about the Selectmen's entire packet now being available to all. Jack suggested the BudCom consider providing budget packets (minus personal information) before our meetings.

Question as to who will run the audio/video of meetings without Andy. Jon said the town is looking into a more simple method.

Jon mentioned the Community Engagement Workshop to discuss revenue generation, sustainability on Friday, May 12. Town leaders will meet 1:30 - 3 (members of this committee are welcome to attend that session); two public sessions will be held from 3:30-5 and 6:30-8. Saturday at 3 pm will be the unveiling of all the ideas. All of these sessions will be held at the Rec Center.

Public Comments

Liz Faria asked about the following:

- school budgets are not budgeted to penny; we pay a LOT to the finance people at SAU. which has poor management. Confusion of co-mingling school budget from the police impact fees.
- The last budget included the biggest raises, but with the least amount of enrolled students
- She clarified to Jon that there is a cap override, as the town can increase the budget by up to 10%
- Would like this Committee to meet with Scott Dennehy (Co-op rep) to discuss such large budgetary increases while student population continues to decline. At a minimum she suggests this BC attend Co-op budget meetings
- Municipal building Committee is supposed to meet monthly, the first Tues at 1:30. However, no meeting has yet been posted.
- The highway department person who resigned has opened his own business, maybe he could help with our equipment
- Would town farms donate food to Swasey?
- How many fire positions are open? The 2 new were filled, one quit, so there is 1 open
- Concerned about Highway department leadership, as that head is near retirement
- Inquiry as to how long WC claims affect insurance premiums
- She feels with all other expenditures expected this year, it would be a bad time to try to change the town budgeting term

Motion by Jon to adjourn; meeting adjourned at 7:44 pm.

Upcoming Meetings

May 12 from 1:30 - 3 pm: Opportunity for town leaders to give input to Community Engagement Workshop

June 12, 2023 at 6 pm: Budget Committee Meeting

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Siudut, Secretary