

**Town of Brentwood Municipal Budget Committee
Minutes of September 8, 2025 Meeting held at Town Office**

Members Present: Jim Hajjar (Chair), Michelle Siudut (Secretary), Alina Arida, Kat Niemiroski, Dan Hebert (Swasey rep, left at 5:50), Letty Bedard (Selectboard rep), Gabbie Kelly (arrived at 5:54)

Hajjar called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Motion by Bedard, seconded by Hebert to approve the August 18 2025 committee meeting minutes; approved 4-0-2.

Motion by Bedard, seconded by Arida to approve the August 22 2025 Highway site walk minutes; approved 3-0-3.

Motion by Niemiroski, seconded by Bedard to approve the September 4 2025 Police department site walk minutes; approved 4-0-2.

Selectboard Report - Letty Bedard

*Town Administrator resigned

*New Finance Director Julie Stevens started on August 19.

*Department heads have been asked to submit budgets to the Finance Director by 9/15 at 4pm.

Swasey School Report - Dan Hebert

*The first meeting of the 2025-2026 year is tonight.

*Financials have been submitted to the Department of Education. The unassigned fund balance of \$249,000, is higher than what was projected due to PO closeouts, and end of year salary adjustments. Hebert will forward the final report to the committee.

*Hebert will obtain an update on the solar rebate at tonight's meeting.

Old Business

*One site walk remains, which would be all departments headed by Town Administrator. Hajjar is working to reschedule that visit with the new Finance Director. Hajjar will reach out to BHS president to reschedule Grange building site walk. Niemiroski suggested we schedule the grange site walk sooner rather than later to have the visit be in daylight. Hajjar will send out potential dates for a visit.

New/Other Business

FY2026 Departmental Budget Review Process. Hajjar addressed the conversations pitting support for employees VS town residents. Really it is the BudCom's job to support both. Hajjar outlined the roles and responsibilities of budget committees per NH Municipal Association, which can be viewed on the town website under the Budget Committee (<https://www.brentwoodnh.gov/agendalist.aspx?categoryid=12621>). Public was asked for comments; none given.

Brentwood Compensation Ratio Analysis. (All of the slides presented on this topic can be viewed at (<https://bit.ly/4pqkEJM>) Hajjar reviewed slides to explain. Benefits include health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance, short term disability insurance, NH retirement (group 1, Group 2), FICA (group

1, group 2), earned time accrual, paid holidays. Hajjar compared compensation ratios per US Bureau of Labor Statistics: private sector averages 30-40% of salary; public sector (municipal, state, federal) commonly 40-60% of salary. BLS typical total compensation in private sector is salary x 1.3-1.4 = total compensation (get these from slides). Public Sector salary x 1.4-1.6 = total compensation (\$50K salary is actually \$70-80K). Hajjar presented examples of compensation ratios for various potential positions for employee payrates and compensations. Per the salary samples used, Brentwood compensation rates range from 1.59% to 2.24%. That is 25% higher than the BLS average of 1.4-1.6% for public sector compensation ratios.

Request to have ratios/salaries specific to our area/demo rather than nationally. Bedard shared numbers for NH which are 69.2% = wage & salary and 30.8% = other. However, that was not specific to public sector. Discussion about using different numbers/ratios/demographic comparisons. Hajjar will run higher salaries and try to obtain more localized compensation ratios.

Public comment:

Jim Berlo, Scrabble Road: Taxpayers appear to be very generous to employees. He is uninterested in comparisons to other places, it really just needs to focus on Brentwood and what Brentwood can afford.

Health Insurance Subcommittee Update. (All of the slides presented on this topic can be viewed at (<https://bit.ly/4mdWHIY>) Hajjar reviewed the Health Insurance Summary shared at the August 18, 2025 BudCom meeting. Hajjar, Siudut and TA Hansen met with our HealthTrust representative to discuss ideas of cost savings to town without a great reduction in benefits.

Hajjar looked at employee handbook and noticed that current practice does not align with town policy. Hajjar presented several slides to show the discrepancies between what the handbook says and what actually occurred. Hajjar also showed a slide of what it should have been, revealing nearly \$95K overpaid for health insurance because employees were not charged appropriately per policy.

Andrew at HealthTrust suggested the Town consider offering different plans. He is happy to come to do workshops for employees to explain the new insurance options as well as the FSA, HSA, use of SOS, etc. New rates should be available October 7.

Hajjar said we have also talked to an outside benefit consultant to see if this would make more sense than HealthTrust. This could be proactive to the risk of needing to fund additional monies into the risk pool in the future. This consultant is also looking at other insurances (dental, disability, etc). He highlighted the dental insurance; because we offer 2 plans we pay higher; if we offer just one plan it is an overall lower rate.

Public comment:

-Liz Faria, South Road: suggested the policybook be changed to offer "2-4 options".

-Selectboard Chair Paul Kleinmann: Thanked Hajjar for bringing this issue forward, and for obtaining information that he was unable to previously obtain. He is concerned that employees will have a "huge increase". Is there an intermediate policy that can be implemented to have a smoother transition than just a complete bump in cost to employees? Selectboard will discuss, but Paul would like that to take place with a 5-person board (currently they are down 1 person).

-Finance Director Julie Stevens: Paul had spoken to her about this issue. Julie created a step process to take 2 years to implement the expense to employees. She will share the document with Hajjar.

-Selectboard member Jim Michaud: As a town, we need to address the things that are wrong; thanked Hajjar for finding the error and finding the best way to move forward.

-Robin Wrighton: Thanked Hajjar for finding the error. She is not supportive of phase-in of employee increase, as a taxpayer we've been overpaying for an unknown length of time. Employee health insurance options often change year to year.

Public Comment

Jim Berlo: Appreciates what has been discussed tonight, as these topics were not touched in the past. Commend BC and BOS and Finance Director for their efforts.

Liz Faria: would like the year to date appropriations report to include a column of "committed" such as salaries and other things that will need to be spent. Bedard said the new system will be more easily modified.

Motion by Bedard, seconded by Arida to adjourn; meeting adjourned at 7:25 pm.

Upcoming Meetings - All meetings are open to the public and livestreamed on Brentwood YouTube channel. Site visits are not livestreamed or recorded, but the public is welcome to attend.

Sep 29 at 6pm: Budget Committee meeting

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Siudut, Secretary