

TOWN OF EPSOM
BUDGET COMMITTEE
JANUARY 3, 2023

Attendees: Marylou Keane, Chairman; Meadow Wysocki, Selectmen's Representative; Mary Frambach; Joyce Heck; Len Gilman; Linda Hodgdon; Penny Graham; Michael Muise, School Board Representative; Floyd Graham

Not in Attendance: Joni Kitson, Vice Chairman; Joyce Heck; Gary Kitson, Water District Representative

Other Attendees: Dan Smith (representing Gary Kitson); Jerrica Vansylvong; Virginia Drew

Marylou opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

Minutes

The minutes of December 15, 2022 were reviewed and amended.

Floyd motioned to approve the minutes of December 15, 2022, as amended; Linda seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The minutes of December 20, 2022 were reviewed and amended.

Meadow motioned to approve the minutes of December 20, 2022, as amended; Floyd seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Linda discussed the information she researched from the Department of Education for information on salaries for SAU employees, number of children and other information regarding various SAUs. She is looking at the number of students and the number of towns in the SAUs. She pointed out the salaries for various SAUs. She noted she is trying to find similar SAUs with similar numbers. Mike noted that SAU 53 has 10 schools within the five towns plus the Bridge Program.

Floyd asked how SAU positions are approved. The AREA Board approves the positions. It was discussed that not all of the five of Epsom's School Board members attend the meetings to vote.

Len asked what the Committee is looking in evaluating the SAU. Linda noted she is not happy with paying the salaries for the SAU that currently are being paid. She would like to have the SAU budget separate from the School District budget.

Len noted what the Budge Committee is looking at is evaluating the SAU. Linda provided a spreadsheet comparing similar SAUs in New Hampshire.

Len asked how we could get voters to look at the big picture. Floyd noted separating the SAU budget would give the Committee more ability to control the SAU budget. Len asked if it would be wise for the Budget Committee to meet with Epsom's School Board to discuss their concerns. Floyd noted he tries to vote as to how the community wants, not how he personally feels.

Len noted that he discusses within the community that the Committee cannot cut the budget by thousands of dollars. He noted there needs to be more than the Committee to work on the issues and to come up with a plan. Floyd noted they have to network to spread the message. Linda noted that it would be good to have the School Board on the same page as the Committee.

Mary asked Mike if the School Board representative to the SAU Executive Board addresses the concerns of Epsom's School Board. Mike thought the representative did a good job presenting Epsom's concerns, but he did not know about other items.

Linda discussed scheduling the meeting with Mr. Warburton soon.

Dan Smith noted he has attended about 80% of the School Board meetings. He noted that no one wants to rock the boat. He noted that some questions are not answered.

Floyd noted that the School Board is setting up a building advisory committee to review needs of the school. The committee consists of Mike Wiggett, Gordon Ellis, Dan Smith and Floyd Graham. They present information to Mr. Connors so he may review and present to the School Board.

WARRANT ARTICLES

The Committee reviewed the potential Town Warrant Articles.

Article 1 is the Town budget. The figure does not include changes to the budget. Marylou noted the correct amount would be in the Article on Tuesday.

Meadow noted most of the Articles are the same as in previous years. She noted the Selectmen will vote on recommending them on Monday.

Article 7 – This is the highest amount that it might cost for an ambulance.

Article 10 – This Article is to close that fund and move balance to the Fire and Rescue Apparatus Fund.

Article 13 – The funds are to prepare for bridge repair and for matching funds if grants become available.

Articles 6 and 9 – These Articles are for an additional Police Officer and an additional full-time Firefighter/Paramedic position. The funds in the Articles include all costs for wages, equipment and benefits.

Meadow noted except for the two additional positions and the fund transfer, most of the Articles are similar to prior years.

Len asked what would be happening with the existing new ambulance with the motor issues. Meadow noted the motor will be replaced and the Town will use it also. The Fire Department is using the old ambulance but it is getting to the end of its life cycle.

Meadow noted the Town has received approximately \$426,000 from the Rooms and Meals Tax which is more than anticipated. Virginia noted the amounts received in past years.

Len discussed the use of money from the Undesignated Fund to offset taxes. Marylou asked the percentage in the Fund currently – 11%. She asked the percentage the Selectmen planned to keep it at. Virginia discussed the additional funds the Town received due to COVID, etc. Meadow and Virginia indicated they would keep the fund at approximately 11%.

Penny noted if the Town Budget fails, then the salary increases would not be given to the employees.

Marylou noted that the Warrant Articles will be further discussed on Thursday. She asked if there were any adjustments to the Town Budget. It was noted that the Budget Committee's budget is \$800.00 higher than the Selectmen's budget.

Len asked what is the cost of the Library and BCEP to the Town for people who do not use it. Meadow indicated they are things that make the Town attractive and encourage new residents. She noted that the property values are impacted by the services it has for residents.

Meadow discussed the Selectmen reviewed the proposed budget and feels it is reasonable.

Marylou noted there is \$281,623 remaining in the 2022 budget.

Linda noted the Library Trustees are responsible for the Library budget. Len reiterated that he would rather see funding for roads or the Fire Department rather than the Library.

Linda noted the Fire Department Full Time Wages increased \$52,588.00. Jerrica noted that \$41,000.00 is the \$2.00/hour increased from the ARPA funds. It has to show in the budget, but is not being raised through taxes in 2023.

It was noted the Public Hearing will be January 12 at **6:30 PM**.

Len thanked the Committee for their work noting that everyone gives their opinions and works together.

The Warrant Article for the School Special Education Fund was discussed and the maximum amount to keep in the Fund. Mike indicated he believed Mr. Connors had a maximum balance for the fund.

Meadow motioned to adjourn; Mary seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Marylou adjourned the meeting at 8:53 P.M.

Respectfully,

Betsy Bosiak
Recording Secretary