

TOWN OF EPSOM

BUDGET COMMITTEE

APRIL 17, 2008

Present: Harvey Harkness, Chairman; Marylou Keane, Vice Chairman; Joanne Randall; Carol McGuire; Joyce Heck; Carole Brown; Larry Yeaton; Brad Keyes; David Fiorentino

Other Attendees: Nancy Wheeler; Ed Nutter

Carole opened the meeting at 7:00 P.M. saying her job was to accept nominations for Chairman.

Larry nominated Harvey as Chairman with Brad seconding the motion.

Carole asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Carole called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Harvey assumed the position of Chairman. He said the next item of business was to elect a Vice-Chairman.

Joyce nominated Marylou as Vice Chairman with Carole seconding the motion.

Harvey asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Harvey called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Harvey welcomed everyone and had everyone introduce themselves for the new members.

Harvey said Don Harty has resigned from the Budget Committee and he hoped to have a replacement by the next meeting. It was discussed the committee appoints a new member with a consensus to post the position for a new member.

The minutes of February 2, 2008 were reviewed.

Joanne made a motion to accept the minutes of February 2, 2008 with Joyce seconding the motion.

Harvey asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Harvey called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

The minutes of January 10, 2008 were reviewed.

Carol made a motion to approve the minutes of January 10, 2008 with Joyce seconding the motion.

Harvey asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Harvey called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Harvey said in time all the minutes will be on the website. Joanne explained the minutes had to be sent as a word document for them to all be on the Website. She said Harvey may want to discuss this with Barbara.

Harvey wanted to discuss and list lessons the committee learned from last year's process. Larry discussed not having the recommendation after the budget Warrant Article. Nancy explained with SB2 the budget presented to the voters at the deliberative session is the Budget Committee's budget. She said at the deliberative session anything in the budget could be changed. The wording of the Warrant Article and the ballot are typed from the Warrant. She said the "recommend/not recommend" was not on the Warrant and therefore not on the ballot. She said the Selectmen were asked if they wanted to add the "recommended/not recommended" on the ballot with no response so Nancy left it as it was.

Joyce asked about the Warrant Article that passed regarding the "recommended/not recommended". Nancy explained this was to put on the numbers for the vote. Nancy explained the number recommended by the Budget Committee is the basis for the 10% that the voters cannot exceed.

Further discussion ensued regarding leaving the "recommended/not recommended" off the ballot for this one article. Carole felt it did not matter to the people this year, but she would rather have it on. Discussion ensued they needed to clarify this issue. Joyce suggested they record a vote to see if the Budget Committee would like "recommend/not recommend" for the articles on the ballot.

A list of lessons learned was discussed (see list at the end of the minutes).

The first item discussed was the need to clarify the role of the Budget Committee in recommending the budget.

Brad said the way they went through the budget line by line is okay, but they did not see the increase until they got to the end. They voted to approve lines that he would not have voted to approve. Joanne thought the big lesson is people on the Budget Committee have the ability to change the budget and know that. Brad felt they should start by looking at the bottom line of the total budget followed by departmental analysis.

Marylou thought after they set up liaisons the liaisons should work with their departments as the budgets are being developed. Harvey said the role of the liaison is critical. Nancy said the departments start presenting their budgets to the Selectmen in October.

Discussion ensued the Selectmen haven't made a lot of changes in the departments' budgets when presented to them.

Nancy said the Selectmen have Department Head meetings the third Monday of each month and these things are discussed. She said the liaisons could attend and hear the information. Marylou thought the liaisons should meet one on one with the departments. Harvey thought the liaison should be able to share with the Budget Committee the impact of the default budget. It was discussed a police officer left due to monetary reasons.

Marylou said another lesson was the CIP committee is volunteer. The CIP is part of the town's long range planning and it needs to be integrated with the budget. The Budget Committee members should be matched with the departments based upon their skills, etc.

Marylou suggested everyone take the class in September. Harvey said he sent everyone the information for the workshop.

Harvey asked how people felt the committee functioned together as a group. Joanne discussed the Suncook Valley Regional Town Association. She said it consists mostly of Selectmen but there are also other town officials that attend. She said they get good ideas from the people and it is a good resource. She recommended people attend the next meeting if they were able. It is June 19th in Pembroke. She will get the location.

Harvey asked if the committee felt they received enough information regarding the budget and other information necessary. Marylou said the BCEP budget shows the revenue and expenditures for 3 years back. She said the committee received that information last year but did not utilize it enough to determine trends.

Harvey said most of the trust funds were set up by families or individuals for a specific department. Joyce asked if there were a lot of Capital Reserve Funds. Nancy explained they are listed in the Town Report and other places. Joyce asked if Nancy could generate a report for the funds. Nancy said she had to ask the trustee of the Trust funds for that information. The trustee is only required to give an annual report.

Joyce questioned if the committee should ask for a report at a certain time. Nancy said they were given the information in January. It was based upon the latest information the town has.

Harvey said one concern is the committee members' personal organization of the information. Last year Nancy did notebooks for each member and they have the information for the Trust funds. Nancy said they would get updated information in January when they are getting ready to approve the budget. Larry said they should get the information when the meetings start.

Marylou suggested they split the meeting times to discuss issues, i.e. revenue, expenditures, etc. on different nights. Harvey and Marylou will design agendas with special focuses in mind and get the necessary information from Nancy.

Ed said one thing that bothers people are the town's liabilities. He asked what insurance the town has and are the lawsuits covered by insurance, what is the town's exposure.

Joanne discussed the settlement with the nursing home. She said the Selectmen have to vote to discuss the suit as the litigation has ended.

Harvey reviewed the recommendations. It was discussed they would like the information that covers a period of time so they get trends and fluctuations.

Joanne said it was not the Budget Committee's duty to communicate the budget beyond presenting it at the deliberative session. She thinks something needs to be done with a better job of communicating the components to the public.

Harvey said David and he had met regarding communicating the information to the public. He discussed what information works and doesn't work and how people get information, saying today most get information through computers. He contacted Carole and T J Rand as to how to get information out to the public. They met to discuss the Budget Committee's link on the town Website.

Larry asked if they knew how many people use the Website. Harvey thought the use would go up if the information was there. They are on a goal of getting the current information on the Budget committee's Website. He discussed items they could put on the Website. Harvey said the Budget Committee has to become transparent. The people have elected them to do their business and the goal is to hide nothing, have no political agenda and no opinions, just information.

Joanne said the town has been having issues with the Website but they are being fixed. Joanne discussed having something simplifying the Warrant Article descriptions for the voters.

Carole discussed Pembroke sends out a town newsletter to households 4 times a year. It takes 2 days to develop.

Joanne said the BCEP is looking for a Budget Committee member with Larry volunteering.

The next meeting was set for May 8 at 7:00 P.M. at the Library. Please contact Harvey if you have items for the agenda.

Larry made a motion to adjourn the meeting with Carole seconding the motion.

Harvey asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Harvey called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Harvey adjourned the meeting at 8:32 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Bosiak
Recording Secretary

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE 2007 & 2008 BUDGET SEASON

1. They need to clarify the role of the Budget Committee in recommending the budget.
2. Begin the budget review by looking at the bottom line followed by departmental analysis.
3. Liaison representatives need to be thoroughly familiar with their department's budget.
4. Budget proposals should reflect the planning contained in the CIP.
5. Match Budget Committee members with departments based on a match of skills, etc.
6. Take the class.
7. Attend the Suncook Valley Regional Town Association meetings.
8. Consider factors impacting the budget – revenue, economy, State mandates, Capital Reserve Funds, Trust Funds, etc.
9. Agenda items should be specified, i.e. revenue, Capital Reserve, expenditures, etc.
10. Financial exposure of the Town.
11. Multi-year trends.