

Town of Plaistow ♦ Budget Committee

145 Main Street ♦ Plaistow ♦ NH ♦ 03865



BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Workshop Meeting: June 18, 2019

Call to Order: 7:08p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Maxann Dobson, *Chair Elect*
Sam Cafiso, *Vice Chair Elect*
Dennis Heffernan, *Budget Committee, excused*
Lisa Lambert, *Budget Committee, absent*
Laurie Milette, *Budget Committee, excused*
Jay DeRoche, *Budget Committee*
Katie Ingalls, *Budget Committee, excused*
Peter Bracci, *Budget Committee, absent*
Bob Hamilton, *Budget Committee*
Greg Taillon, *Selectmen's Representative*
Francine Hart, *Selectman's Representative Alternate*

Agenda Item 4:

Review/Approval of Budget Committee Minutes for May 14, 2019

- **The Budget Committee Meeting Minutes for May 14, 2019 were not available in the Committee Member's folders. Therefore, it was discussed that the review and approval of the Minutes will take place at the next meeting.**

Agenda Item 5: Presentation of Budget Dashboard presented by Greg Taillon:

G. Taillon offered a review of the Approved Budget which has been imported into Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. He stated that by being in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, it will allow for easier updating. Each department has one (1) account, with the exception of the Highway Department, which has two (2) accounts.

G. Taillon offered a review of the Police Department, Fire Department, and Highway Department.

G. Taillon offered a review of individual line items and trends as well as the ability to create pivot tables and charts.

G. Taillon offered that he can make the spreadsheet available for the Committee to review.

M. Dobson offered that the descriptions are very helpful and that the spreadsheet allows lines to be extended for easy viewing.

G. Taillon asked the Committee if they had any questions.

B. Hamilton offered that last year payroll made up over 40% of the budget. He would like the spreadsheet to allow for the identification of what portion of each department's budget is for payroll.

G. Taillon offered that payroll is included in salaries per department.

G. Taillon offered that the hope is to get some feedback and ideas from Greg Colby, Finance Director.

J. DeRoche asked if department revenues could be incorporated into a separate dashboard.

G. Taillon offered that he can get a simple sheet from G. Colby and see about incorporating revenues in as a negative figure. It might also be possible to have revenues as a separate table with filters.

B. Hamilton offered a discussion about creating a list of salary related accounts for each department being e-mailed to the Committee as there may be a couple items that are confusing as to whether they are salary or payroll related. He offered that any overtime would be included.

G. Taillon offered that training would be included in payroll since employees get paid for training. However, we want to be very careful not to count training twice.

G. Taillon offered that he can make the Budget spreadsheet available to the Budget Committee members to review on their free time.

S. Cafiso asked if the newly formatted Budget spreadsheet could be accessed during a formal Budget Committee Meeting.

G. Taillon offered that a Budget Committee member could take a picture of the screen and present it at a formal Budget Committee Meeting. He also offered that he could bring his laptop to the meetings.

S. Cafiso asked if permission would be needed to use the new budget tools.

M. Dobson stated that permission would not be needed as long as it was made available to all members of the Budget Committee.

S. Cafiso offered that it would be better to use actual figures than working with prior year's figures.

Agenda Item 6: Expectations for 2020 Budget:

It was discussed that the majority of the Committee members are looking for a lower budget for 2020. The goal is to try to reduce the budget by \$500,000.

There was a discussion about last year's budget figures.

S. Cafiso offered that he is in favor of having a budget reduction. The Committee needs to pull in the reigns so that the budget doesn't get out of control. It's good to pull it back every couple of years.

There was a discussion about the approval of warrant articles. It was discussed that most Warrant articles have been approved in the past, but it would be good to be able to plan ahead so that there is no concern about additional warrant article figures.

J. DeRoche offered that he abstained from voting for the reduction of the budget because without knowing the upcoming warrant articles a decision to reduce the budget by \$500,000 can not be made right now. It is up to the BOS and M. Pearson, Town Manager to discuss the budget and what they feel is appropriate.

G. Taillon offered a discussion regarding CIP goals and making sure that department heads are planning ahead by having CIP items and start saving for Capital Improvements. He stated that Plaistow is a public serving town and that the Town needs to work toward providing the level of services that the residents expect.

S. Cafiso offered that each resident has subjective needs and not all residents need the same things. He stated that the Committee needs to be careful to not be micro-managing departments.

M. Dobson asked how many people are there in the Town. She asked how many people are needed per department. Where are the departments top heavy? Does the community have the right to tell a department how many employees they need?

There was a discussion regarding possible push back by department heads if the budget is cut at the bottom line. It was discussed that an area of the Highway Department was cut in the past and people got upset and tried to defend their position on the budget cut.

S. Cafiso offered that one department stated that they would do their job with whatever budget figure is available for that department. There are other departments that have the exact opposite response.

G. Taillon offered that changes shouldn't be made without knowing logical facts in how the departments are run. He offered the possibility of looking at survey information.

J. DeRoche asked the Committee if they have any ideas on specifically where the budget could be reduced by \$500,000.

- B. Hamilton offered that there are some people who are against overtime. The Committee May want to see if overtime should be cut in 2020.
- S. Cafiso offered the suggestion of comparing data from surrounding communities to compare populations and services to find a “happy medium”.
- J. DeRoche offered that there are many other factors to consider when trying to compare other town’s data with Plaistow.
- G. Taillon offered the example of looking at what surrounding towns are spending on recreation expenses per resident and compare it to Plaistow’s figures.

There was a discussion that some towns such as Epping and Stratham have commercial strips like Plaistow and have figures available online. It was discussed that having the information available from other towns may be the leverage needed to begin negotiating with departments.

- B. Hamilton offered that from a business perspective, surrounding towns have been growing. However, Plaistow has not been growing for a number of years now. He offered that residents will be paying more every time the budget increases because there is not enough population growth to buffer the budget increases.
- S. Cafiso offered that much of Plaistow’s customer base is people who don’t even live in town.
- M. Dobson asked how the town can go about collecting accurate data. Perhaps conducting a survey?
- G. Taillon offered that the Town needs to be careful conducting surveys and what interpretations and conclusions are made from conducting those surveys.

Agenda Item 7: Discussion of which department heads should come before the Budget Committee:

It was discussed that there are four (4) main department heads that should come before the Budget Committee: Police Department, Fire Department, Highway Department, and the Recreation Department.

- J. DeRoche offered that a service department is any department that generates revenue.
- G. Taillon offered that the Town Report offers a lot of very useful information.

It was discussed that last year’s discussions went well by having questions submitted by the committee to the department heads ahead of time for review. There is to be a review of the departments and the Committee will coordinate with M. Pearson when each department head is to come before the Budget Committee for discussion.

Agenda Item 8: Any other Operating Budget topics and concerns and upcoming budget schedule:

There was a discussion that the New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA) Training Schedule will be forwarded to the Committee for review.

M. Pearson offered a review of the departments that need overtime hours available and those that do not.

There was a discussion about the possibility of assigning a Budget Committee member to each department as a liaison. It was discussed that the budget doesn't officially need to be turned into the Budget Committee until the end of January 2020.

There was a brief discussion regarding calendar year versus fiscal year.

Agenda Item 9: Committee Reports:

There were no Committee reports discussed.

Agenda Item 10: Discussion of Budget review and approval process:

S. Cafiso asked if it would be inappropriate to ask each department if the Budget Committee asked you to reduce your budget by 2%, where would you take it from and what would be your approach?

M. Pearson offered a review of the budget review process with the department heads and going over the details of where things can be cut back. He offered that the budget is reviewed at least three (3) times before it gets to the Budget Committee. The Committee can review previous spreadsheets and see where cuts have been made previously.

S. Cafiso offered that people's expectations change and the Committee needs to find out what expectations are and if they have changed.

G. Taillon offered that changes happen over many years and that residents' expectations are not that specific. One example would be if residents were asked if they felt safe living in Plaistow and at what point would they feel unsafe living in Plaistow. The Committee needs to understand that the Town does not want to change or remove services that would leave the Town vulnerable. It is also understood that services may not change, but the cost of services go up each year.

M. Pearson offered that Animal Control has been consolidated with Atkinson and the cost of the vehicle is being shared. He offered more examples of consolidations and cut back that have been made. He offered that the Town is looking for areas to save money all the time in a number of different areas and to offset costs that go up with no control of the Town. He gave examples relating to topics such as copies and part time police officers.

Agenda Item 11: New Business:

B. Hamilton asked about Allegiant Care.

M. Pearson offered a brief informative discussion regarding the Town's health care insurance.

Agenda Item 12: Old Business:

There was no additional business presented and the meeting was adjourned at 8:39pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Samantha D. Cote
Recording Secretary