

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

April 8, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Kristin Lewis Savage
Martha Sumner
Tricia Holt
David Gerns
Darrell Britton
Dennis Heffernan
Jack Paone
Charles Fowler
Dean Nifakos, Absent
John Sherman, *Selectmen Ex-Officio*

Also Present: Sean Fitzgerald, Town Manager

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by new members Jack Paone and Charles Fowler

K. Lewis Savage noted that she had received and regrettably accepted a letter of resignation from Ben Sadewicz.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

T. Holt moved, second by D. Heffernan, to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2014 meeting. There was no discussion on the motion. The vote was 6-0-3 (Britton, Fowler and Paone abstaining).

ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

K Lewis Savage moved, second by D. Britton, to elect M. Sumner as chair of the budget committee. There was no discussion on the motion. The vote was 8-0-1 (Sumner abstaining).

M. Sumner moved, second by T. Holt, to elect K. Lewis Savage as vice chair of the budget committee. There was no discussion on the motion. The vote was 8-0-1 (Lewis Savage abstaining).

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS:

Highway (New Garage) (2 Appointments)

- C. Fowler
- J. Paone

Public Safety Complex Building Committee (1 Appointment, 1 Alternate)

- D. Heffernan

- J. Paone, Alternate

CIP (2 Appointments, 1 Alternate)

- D. Gerns
- J. Paone
- C. Fowler, Alternate

Recycling (1 Appointment)

- D. Britton

It was noted that the Recycling Committee was not an official committee but more an independent organization, lead by Susan Sherman.

There was discussion of the curb-side recycling in Plaistow and the budgetary savings the program brings. It was noted that current voluntary recycling participation was at 20%.

It was also noted that the Public Safety Complex Building Committee has been very busy with making plans to bring a proposal to the voters for a new facility as well as improvements to the existing building.

REVIEW OF ELECTION RESULTS

M. Sumner noted that everything that was on the ballot passed. It was noted that the vote was 583 in favor, 80 opposing the proposed budget.

J. Sherman offered it was the first time he could remember all Warrant Articles passing.

S. Fitzgerald noted that none of the vote counts were even all that close.

J. Sherman added that closeness of the Conservation Commission Article vote floored him.

There was discussion on the voting. It was suggested that some of the outcomes may have been because of their physical placement on the ballot page. It was also suggested that the hours spent on clarifying the intent of the Articles as well as the recommendations of the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and the Budget Committee (BudCom) were helpful to voters.

There was discussion regarding attendance at the Town's Deliberative Session and the Timberlane School District Deliberative Session. It was noted that the school's Deliberative Session had much higher attendance numbers. It was suggested that there were hotter issues with the school budget, particularly with residents from the Town of Sandown, which accounted for the higher attendance.

D. Heffernan noted that the School Budget passed with the residents of Plaistow, but did not in other towns.

M. Sumner added that the different sources of funding for many of the Warrant Articles probably helped with their passage.

S. Fitzgerald offered that the Town's budget was helped by consolidation of departments and tightening of contracts, which helped to offset the other components of the total tax rate.

There was discussion of the Town's review process for Warrant Articles compared to the School Board's process. It was noted that the School Board Committee doesn't see the Warrant Articles until their Deliberative Session, unlike the Town where the Warrant Articles are reviewed and discussed by both the BOS and BudCom prior to Deliberative Session. It was discussed that the Town of Plaistow takes time to craft the language of the Warrant Articles to enhance voter understanding of the intent of the Article.

It was noted that the Article to reduce the number of members of the Budget Committee from twelve (12) to nine (9) also passed. With the resignation of Ben Sadewicz it was noted that there are now nine (9) members of the committee.

There was a discussion of the budget review process.

- Department Heads put together their individual budgets
- Department budgets are reviewed with the Town Manager
- Budgets are then presented to, and reviewed by, the BOS
- Offset by usually one week the department budgets are presented to the BudCom for review
- Budgets are accepted for consideration by the BudCom at the initial presentation.
- The budgets are reviewed an additional time by the BudCom and there is a vote whether or not to approve the final numbers.
- There is also a Public Hearing on all the budgets
- Changes can also be made at Deliberative Session

J. Sherman explained that the BudCom sets the budget review schedule and the BOS works backwards from that schedule to offset their review with the Department Heads by a week.

M. Sumner noted that Local Government Center (LGC) offered budget committee training last year, which was hosted in Plaistow.

There was discussion about hosting another budget committee training session in Plaistow and inviting other towns and school board budget committees.

K. Lewis Savage requested that books with this year's final budget be prepared for the new members so they would have them for the next year.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

D. Heffernan and S. Fitzgerald gave an update of the work that the Public Safety Complex Building Committee has been doing towards the construction of a new Police Station and upgrades to the existing facility.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business discussed at this meeting

OLD BUSINESS

There was a brief discussion related to a forum held at the Plaistow Public Library. The discussion was regarding the decrease in population and the budgetary process. It was noted that taxes and the budget are not that closely tied to population.

OF NOTE

K. Lewis Savage noted that the annual 5K "Run Of The Savages" would be Saturday, starting at Pollard School. She noted that the monies raised would go to the Dana Farber Cancer Institute and the Jimmy Fund. She added that the Red Sox would be matching funds for monies raised.

M. Sumner noted that the new schedule would be sent out to the members as soon as it was ready.

K. Lewis Savage adjourned the meeting at 7:21 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Dee Voss
Recording Secretary