

1 **Minutes of the Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting**
2 **Held on January 16, 2014 (Session II)**

3
4 The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, January 16, 2014 at Campbell
5 High School, 1 Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

6
7 **PRESENT:** A Cutter (Chair), R Peeples (Vice Chair), W Spencer, C Pascucci, C Couture, D
8 Vaillancourt, J York/B Bourque (School Board Representative), J Brunelle (Selectmen’s
9 Representative), B Cochrane (Superintendent), F Markiewicz (Business Administrator)

10
11 **Absent:**

12
13 Mr. Cutter called the meeting to order at 8:20 p.m.

14
15 **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

16
17 **2. PUBLIC INPUT.**

18 Tim Kearns, 1 Brickyard Drive, commented on Article 21,

19
20 Mr. Spencer commented that the issue Mr. Kearns’ concern is that the Town is providing the
21 insurance and the risk is that it will not continue. He believes that Mr. Kearns would like
22 assurance the insurance will be continued to be paid for by the Town.

23
24 Mr. Kearns commented that the Attorney General’s office is concerned it is a benefit to the
25 employees. He explained that the Fireman’s Association is a non-profit association. The Town
26 started paying for the insurance and the Attorney General said the Association cannot pay for the
27 insurance program. Mr. Kearns indicated that the Town has indicated the payment may not
28 continue. He noted he was concerned that was going to happen, which is the reason for writing
29 the article. Mr. Kearns explained that he contacted the Attorney General’s office for direction.
30 He noted that the non-profit agency has a new benefit program through Provident and the NH
31 Firefighters has an insurance policy as well.

32
33 Mr. Spencer asked what it is that the Town is providing.

34
35 Mr. Hoch explained that the Town is paying for the policy held by the Association in its entirety.
36 He indicated that added this year was membership in the State Firefighter’s Association of which
37 one benefit is that they offer an additional insurance as well. He noted the insurance is
38 incidental.

39
40 Mr. Spencer asked if the existing coverage satisfactory.

41
42 Mr. Kearns commented that one of the issues is that the Firefighter’s Association has been aware
43 of the benefits, but has not individually purchased them. He indicated with two insurance
44 policies, the maximum benefit is the same regardless.

45

1 Mr. Spencer commented that there is no discussion regarding if the coverage is not satisfactory.
2 He indicated that the concern is that it will not be provided next year.

3
4 Mr. Kearns confirmed Mr. Spencer's comments.

5
6 Mr. Spencer commented that there is no reason that money has to be appropriated with this
7 article as you are just trying to ensure it stays in the budget. Mr. Spencer indicated that this is
8 not a Budget Committee issue.

9
10 Mr. Kearns indicated that the amount in the budget is not going to cover the increase.

11
12 Mr. Spencer indicated it is a non-issue as it is a bottom line budget.

13
14 Mr. Brunelle commented that the Town will support the firefighters as they have in the past.

15
16 Mr. Peeples commented that he was one of the people that ensured the insurance was in the
17 budget. He indicated that he is unable to support the article because if it fails, the Town will not
18 be able to pay for it at all.

19
20 Mr. Kearns commented that the actual ownership of the insurance came into question.

21
22 Mr. Brunelle commented that the Town has supported it and will continue.

23
24 Mr. Spencer commented that he cannot support the article because it mentioned money and if it
25 fails the Town will be unable to pay for the insurance. He recommended the petitioners
26 withdraw the article if they all agree.

27
28 Mr. Brunelle commented that the article may not be able to be withdrawn, but can be changed.

29
30 Mr. Hoch commented that if the Town is writing the check then the Town may be able to
31 purchase the policy. He noted it is unusual for the Town to pay for something not held by the
32 Town.

33
34 Mr. Kearns asked if there is an event (i.e. supper event or ceremony) and there is an accident (i.e.
35 someone breaks their arm), would they be covered if the Town owns the policy.

36
37 Mr. Peeples indicated that would be covered by the general liability of the Town or District,
38 dependent upon the location of the event.

39
40 **MOTION:** by Mr. Spencer

41 ***Move to recommend Article 21***

42 **SECOND:** by Mr. Peeples

43
44 Mr. Spencer was concerned that the MS-7 has to show recommendations on articles with
45 signatures. He noted that the article as written needs a recommendation.

46

1 Mr. Pascucci commented that this is concerning issue. He indicated the Town is paying the bill
2 and if the article fails, the Town will be unable to pay for it at all. He noted that this money
3 stated in the article is included in the budget.
4

5 Mr. Spencer suggested the Budget Committee vote and if it is changed at Deliberative Session,
6 the Budget Committee can change its recommendation.
7

8 Mr. Peeples commented that he is concerned that they are voting on the same night it was
9 presented.
10

11 Mrs. Couture commented that this article puts firefighters in jeopardy. She was concerned that
12 the article does more damage than good.
13

14 Mr. Cutter commented that he appreciates Mr. Kearns' presentation, but the article is vague and
15 if it goes to ballot he is concerned it will create confusion in the community. He indicated that
16 he does not support the article because it does not make sense as written and it gives the
17 insinuation that we are double paying the insurance.
18

19 **VOTE: 0-7-1**

20 **The motion fails.**
21

22 **3. REVIEW/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA**

23 There were no revisions or additions to the agenda.
24

25 **4. PRIOR MEETING MINUTE APPROVAL**

26
27 **MOTION:** by Mr. Spencer

28 *Move to approve the minutes of January 9, 2014*

29 **SECOND:** by Mr. Peeples

30 **VOTE: 7-0-1**

31 **The motion carried.**
32

33 **5. SCHOOL BUSINESS**

34 35 • **General Updates**

36 Mr. York reported the School Board would like to reopen Article 2.
37

38 **MOTION:** by Mr. York

39 *Move to reopen Article 2, LEA Collective Bargaining Agreement*

40 **SECOND:** by Mr. Cutter
41

42 Mr. York commented that the School Board would like to ensure that all questions have been
43 answered and would like input from the three Budget Committee members who abstained from
44 recommending the article.
45

46 **VOTE: 5-2-0**

1 **The motion carried.**

2

3 Mr. York asked if Committee members had any additional questions regarding the contract.

4

5 Mr. Pascucci commented that he was satisfied with the answers to his questions. He indicated
6 that his vote will remain a no.

7

8 **RECONSIDERATION ARTICLE 2: 4-4-0**

9 **The motion failed.**

10

11 There was confusion as to what would be recorded for the article recommendation.

12

13 Mr. Byron commented that this vote for reconsideration fails, which makes the previous vote
14 stand.

15

16 **6. TOWN BUSINESS**

17

18 • **General Updates**

19 Mr. Brunelle reported there is no additional Town business.

20

21 **7. MEMBER INPUT/NEW BUSINESS**

22 Mr. Cutter announced that Budget Committee members can go independently to the Town Hall
23 to sign the MS-7 or the SAU Office to sign the MS-27.

24

25 **8. PUBLIC INPUT**

26 Dennis Miller, 37 Wren Street, encouraged the Committee to research past article
27 recommendations that listed tied votes. He commented that he respects Mr. Byron's opinion, but
28 believes the Committee should consult legal counsel regarding the issue. Mr. Miller indicated
29 that he was the advocate to get the abstentions on the record. Referring to Mr. Peeple's comment
30 regarding concerns about voting on something received on the same night, Mr. Miller
31 commented that the Committee voted on two new articles just received this evening.

32

33 Mrs. Couture commented that there can be a tied vote on a recommendation if it is the original
34 vote. She noted this is a reconsideration of the original vote.

35

36 Mr. Pascucci asked if there is a distinction on voting on the article (i.e. financial) or just the
37 recommendation.

38

39 Mr. Cutter indicated that he will ask for a legal opinion.

40

41 Mr. Miller thanked the Budget Committee for reopening and correcting the school budget. He
42 commented that the School Board representative requested a meeting prior to the hearing and the
43 Budget Committee declined. He indicated that the Town brought forward new numbers and a
44 meeting was approved. He asked for clarification.

45

1 Mr. Cutter explained that when we met last week this committee agreed not to have a meeting
2 prior to the hearing. He indicated that he suggested meeting on Tuesday, but the Committee
3 chose not to meet. Mr. Cutter commented that the Committee met tonight after opening the
4 hearing to review the two new articles and vote. He noted that he spoke about this to the School
5 Board Chair.

6
7 Mr. Spencer commented on voting on something received the same night. He indicated that
8 there is a difference when you have to review a contract and something clear cut. Mr. Spencer
9 indicated that a contract is serious business and should have deep thought. He expressed that he
10 respects Mr. Miller's comments, but there are some things that have to be considered carefully.

11
12 Frank Byron, 8 Mallard Court, explained that when the vote was reconsidered it resulted in a tie
13 and you stated it should be recorded as such. He commented when you agreed to reconsider the
14 budget, the vote you took should be the one to go on that article. He noted that the tie vote
15 should go on the ballot as no recommendation.

16
17 Mr. Byron commented regarding the health insurance refund. He noted that he understands the
18 Budget Committee's reticence to take up the \$2,000 change. He noted that the Board of
19 Selectmen has to address it as that is the employees' money and has to be returned to the
20 employees. He indicated that is excess money coming into the Town from the insurance. Mr.
21 Byron commented that his comments are to ensure the Budget Committee is aware of the facts.

22
23 Mr. Spencer asked what would occur if this information arose next week. Mr. Byron indicated
24 that the money would have to be returned regardless.

25
26 Mr. Pascucci referred to the tie vote on the article. He indicated if it were not for the comment
27 from an member of the audience, the tie would appear on the article. He commented that is the
28 vote that should appear on the article. Mr. Pascucci does not believe a legal opinion is necessary.

29
30 Mr. Cutter commented that he would like to do what is legally correct.

31
32 Mr. Pascucci asked that the vote be reflected in the minutes. He commented an inappropriate
33 comment was made outside of public input.

34
35 Mrs. Flynn assured the Committee the vote would be reflected in the minutes.

36
37 Mr. Brunelle commented that Mr. Byron's comments are valuable and he was sharing his vast
38 experience.

39
40 • **Upcoming meetings**

41
42 The next meeting of the Budget Committee will be February 1, 2014 following Town
43 Deliberative Session and February 5, 2014 following School Deliberative Session.

44
45 **MOTION:** by Mr. Spencer

46 ***Move to adjourn.***

1 **SECOND:** Mr. Pascucci

2 **VOTE: 8-0-0**

3 **The motion carried unanimously.**

4

5 There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

6

7 **Minutes by:** *Michele E. Flynn (Recording Secretary)*

8

9 **Date approved:**

DRAFT