

1 **Minutes of the Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting**
2 **Held on September 25, 2014**

3
4 The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, September 25, 2014 at Campbell
5 High School, 1 Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

6
7 **PRESENT:** C Couture (Chair), A Cutter (Vice Chair), W Spencer, R Peeples, C Pascucci, D
8 Vaillancourt, K Douglas, B Bourque (School Board Representative), F Byron (Selectmen's
9 Representative

10
11 **Absent:**

12
13 Mrs. Couture called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

14
15 **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

16
17 **2. PUBLIC INPUT**

18 There was no public input.

19
20 **3. REVIEW/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA**

21 The Budget Calendar was added under Member Input/New Business.

22
23 **4. REVIEW/ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

- 24 • **July 24, 2014**

25
26 **MOTION:** by Mr. Cutter

27 *Move to approve the minutes of July 24, 2014*

28 **SECOND:** by Mrs. Douglas

29 **VOTE: 7-0-2, with Mr. Peeples and Mr. Vaillancourt abstaining**

30 **The motion passed.**

31
32 **5. CORRESPONDENCE**

33 Mrs. Couture announced she received the August School District financials and the 2014 DOE-
34 25. She forwarded the reports to Committee members. She also mentioned that she received
35 availability dates for upcoming meetings.

36
37 **6. OLD BUSINESS**

- 38
39 • **Budget Committee Workshop**

40 Mrs. Couture commented that when scheduling the workshop, we caused some difficulty for the
41 NHMA because we asked to have a presenter that had no experience with Litchfield. She noted
42 that the workshop will address roles and responsibilities of elected officials, specifically the
43 Budget Committee. She invited School Board members, Selectmen and other departments to the
44 meeting.

45
46

1 • **How to Budget for Police Cruisers**

2 Mrs. Couture commented that we had questions about how to budget for police cruisers. She
3 indicated that Committee members discussed direction for the Board of Selectmen, but never
4 made a decision. She noted that this is an opportunity for the Budget Committee to have a
5 discussion or come to direction.

6
7 Mr. Cutter asked if there were any new information from the town regarding police cruisers.

8
9 Mr. Byron reported that there were significant issues with cruisers going in and out of service.
10 He indicated that one was taken out of service because the expense to fix it was too costly. He
11 reported that the town purchased a new cruiser and recommended the cruiser that needs
12 extensive repair be replaced. Mr. Byron noted that the Board of Selectmen are including cruisers
13 in the budget.

14
15 Mrs. Couture commented that she agreed with the outright purchase of cruisers as there are no
16 questions of leasing.

17
18 Mr. Cutter supported including cruiser purchases in the budget.

19
20 Mr. Pascucci agreed as well. He commented there is logical rationale for not leasing anything.
21 He indicated that we now need the cruisers and we need to replace them on a regular basis. He
22 supported purchasing cruisers.

23
24 Mr. Cutter observed that the operating budget will most likely increase with the purchase of a
25 cruiser.

26
27 Mr. Byron indicated that the first year these cruisers will cost a little over \$40,000. He noted if
28 you wait a year, the cost drops approximately \$8,000. Mr. Byron indicated that they have tried
29 to keep the cost of outfitting the cruisers down by recycling existing equipment.

30
31 Mr. Pascucci asked about the life expectancy of the equipment. Mr. Byron commented it is
32 something we have done for many years and unless there is a model change we can remove the
33 equipment from the older cruisers and use it in the new ones.

34
35 Mr. Cutter asked about cruiser purchases if the proposed budget fails and we get the default
36 budget. Mr. Byron suggested to return to the 1-2-1 cycle we had some years earlier and if the
37 proposed budget fails, the default will contain something.

38
39 Mr. Cutter commented there was discussion last year over the Chief's car. Mr. Byron
40 commented there is 90,000 miles on the car and it is not as critical to replace. He indicated there
41 is concern, however, over the forest pick-up truck in the fire department. He noted that the body
42 and chasis are separated and we are discussing what we can do.

43
44 Mr. Spencer agreed with Mr. Byron to return to the old schedule in the operating budget. He
45 commented he will not support any budget with new leases (Board of Selectmen or School
46 Board).

1 Mr. Peebles expressed his support for including purchases of cruisers in the budget.

2
3 Mrs. Douglas expressed her support for cruiser purchases as well.

4
5 Mrs. Couture indicated that the Board of Selectmen have direction from the Budget Committee.

6
7 **7. NEW BUSINESS**

8
9 • **SCHOOL BUSINESS**

10
11 • **General Updates**

12 Mr. Bourque reported that Mr. Markiewicz began reporting on budget transfers and amendments
13 and will continue this practice. He explained it was suggested by the auditor that this report be
14 provided.

15
16 Mr. Pascucci asked how the report is read. Mr. Bourque indicated that transfers and amendments
17 are grouped together under their particular function.

18
19 Mr. Pascucci commented that the amount is included in that one account and transferred out
20 when needed. Mr. Bourque concurred.

21
22 Mr. Bourque reported that a part time study hall monitor was hired, which will save money in
23 stipends for teachers. He explained that the study hall class sizes were very large. Mr. Bourque
24 reported that the FY14 unassigned fund balance for June 30 was \$788,619. Major contributors
25 were unanticipated revenues, both local and federal, and an underspending in appropriations,
26 with Special Services being the largest contributor. He noted it represents approximately \$0.16
27 savings on the tax rate.

28
29 Mr. Spencer asked about enrollment projections. Mr. Bourque indicated that Dr. Cochrane is
30 working on it personally. He explained that the district is no longer a member of the NHSBA.
31 He indicated that the report is being finalized.

32
33 Mr. Cutter asked if Mr. Bourque can provide Mrs. Couture with a copy of the Superintendent's
34 contract. He asked what the School Board thoughts were regarding that subject.

35
36 Mr. Bourque explained he cannot share what was discussed in non-public session. He noted that
37 the vote was 3-2 not to renew the contract and that Mr. Miller, Mrs. Lepore and Mr. Barka voted
38 in the negative.

39
40 Mr. Spencer asked about the news regarding CHS. Mr. Bourque reported that CHS was ranked
41 142 out of approximately 5,000 high schools by Newsweek. He explained that the data used was
42 from 2011-2012 and commented that CHS has exceeded those numbers this year. He believes
43 we are going in the right direction with the high school.

44

1 Mrs. Couture indicated that she reviewed the findings and was interested with the numbers. She
2 commented that the graduation rates were interesting in that many schools had lower graduation
3 rates, but ranked higher than CHS with a high graduation rate.
4

5 • **TOWN BUSINESS**
6

7 • **General Updates**

8 Mr. Byron provided the following information on police cruisers:

- 9 • Car 5 was taken out of service on August 13 and diagnosed with the following issues:
10 overheating, engine replacement, transmission repair, rear end work, suspension work –
11 the cost is approximately \$14,000. It is a 2010 Crown Victoria with 90,000 miles. It was
12 replaced with a new cruiser.
- 13 • Car 6 goes in and out of service with \$3,200 in maintenance costs since the beginning of
14 the year. It is now back in service.
- 15 • Cars 3 and 4 are the 2013 SUVs and are racking up additional mileage as they are being
16 used more when cars are out of service. They have approximately 60,000 miles.
- 17 • Cars 7 and 8 are detail cars and used on a limited basis. They are 2011 Crown Victorias
18 with approximately 80,000 miles and have problems.
- 19 • Car 2 is an unmarked car used for interviewing people and for travel to crime labs. The
20 car is running adequately.
21

22 Mr. Byron reported in terms of items in the budget, the highway department is tight in terms of
23 spending due to the recent bad winter. He commented that we were notified by one of our
24 contractors they will not be plowing for the town this year. He indicated that the town
25 equipment (i.e. sander, plow blades) have to be removed from the contractor's vehicle, which
26 will be costly.
27

28 Mr. Byron reported that the town purchased a state truck for \$8,500 through the state auction that
29 is equipped with an on board computer and pumps. He explained that there will be savings for
30 the town as they would have to pay a contractor \$70 per hour to plow, but with our own truck we
31 can pay someone \$20 per hour to drive.
32

33 Mr. Byron reported that the Board of Selectmen will be meeting on October 6 to complete the
34 budget. He indicated they are trying to hold the proposed budget level with the default budget.
35

36 Mr. Pascucci asked about the year and mileage of the truck the town purchased. Mr. Byron
37 indicated that the truck has over 100,000 miles, but is a diesel truck and the engine will last
38 longer. He noted that Mr. Pinciario pointed out that the computer system was included in the
39 truck and the town only needs to purchase the software to run it. He explained that will allow the
40 driver to regulate the salt application.
41

42 Mr. Pascucci commented that the savings we will get with the driver will be seasonal. Mr.
43 Byron responded in the affirmative and mentioned that some firefighters have a CDL and it is
44 possible they may be able to drive the truck.
45

1 Mr. Pascucci commented that at some point there will be major repairs for the truck. He agreed
2 that the life span of the engine is higher, but repairs are major. He indicated that repairs will
3 most likely happen soon and be included in the budget. He was concerned the truck may need to
4 be replaced in a couple of years. Mr. Pascucci commented there may be more savings in
5 switching the equipment over to another contractor's truck than there will be purchasing a truck
6 and having to make repairs. He indicated that the purchase was not the decision of the voters.

7
8 Mr. Byron pointed out that the highway maintenance employees do their own repairs. He
9 commented that they are always maintaining the vehicles except for the major mechanical work.

10
11 Mr. Pascucci commented that the highway department does a great job. He indicated that the
12 purchase was a big decision and the voters have every right to make that decision. He noted this
13 just another asset and now that we own it we have to maintain it. Mr. Pascucci commented that
14 the contractor trucks were owned by the contractors and when they broke down they had to fix
15 them.

16
17 Mr. Byron commented that it was our equipment on those trucks that we would still have to
18 repair. He indicated the town has a mix of vehicles and equipment that we own and we have to
19 maintain and repair them.

20
21 Mr. Cutter commented that he sees Crown Victorias on the road all the time and some of those
22 cars have over 100,000 miles. He asked why ours need to be out of service at 80,000 miles.

23
24 Mr. Peeples asked why there were massive failures on Car 5.

25
26 Mr. Byron indicated that he cannot answer the question of why Car 5 had massive failures.
27 Referring to Mr. Cutter's question regarding mileage, he commented that we take the cars out of
28 service when the repair costs get too high. He noted the general rule of thumb is that once the
29 cars hit 120,000 miles they get replaced because they become dangerous to run. Mr. Byron
30 indicated that the county replaces their cruisers at 100,000 miles.

31
32 Mr. Cutter commented he is wondering how other municipalities can keep their cars running
33 longer.

34
35 Mr. Byron commented that some have their own garages and it is cheaper to have their own
36 people doing the repairs. He indicated that we have to depend on Londonderry Ford to effect our
37 repairs and those costs have increased.

38
39 Mr. Vaillancourt commented that 80,000 miles does not sound that high. He asked who
40 determines the maintenance schedule?

41
42 Mr. Byron indicated the police department keeps logs on the vehicles. He commented when they
43 are sent to Londonderry Ford he sees the invoices. He noted the vehicles run longer than what
44 the odometer reads.

45

1 Mr. Peeples suggested when ordering new cruisers we ought to have an hour meter installed as
2 well. He indicated that would help the Committee members understand.

3
4 Mr. Spencer asked if the police department has a new officer. Mr. Byron reported an officer was
5 sworn in a week [or so] ago.

6
7 **• Town Budget Review Schedule**

8 Mrs. Couture provided copies of the town budget review schedule. She indicated that based on
9 polling the Committee members' availability, she decided to stay with the schedule proposed last
10 spring. She noted the town budget review will start on October 23 and the Committee will vote
11 the following week.

12
13 Mr. Cutter asked when the town budget portal would be available.

14
15 Mr. Byron indicated that Mr. Hoch will open it when budgets are completed and finalized.

16
17 Mrs. Couture offered to contact him as to the portal's availability.

18
19 Mr. Byron was concerned with the Budget Committee beginning their budget reviews late. He
20 was concerned that it is a lot of work to do over a few meetings.

21
22 Mrs. Couture commented that it is the same number of meetings, but is being started a bit later.
23 She indicated that last year we went through the whole budget, but when it came close to
24 December we asked the Board of Selectmen to reopen the budget.

25
26 Mr. Byron noted that the Board of Selectmen took some of what remained from the prior year's
27 budget and used it for some of the 2014 budget items.

28
29 Mrs. Couture indicated there was a lot of confusing bookkeeping last year. She was hopeful that
30 if the Board of Selectmen decide to pay for some of 2015's budget items with 2014 funds it can
31 be done earlier with not as many last minute changes.

32
33 Mr. Cutter commented he did not see much difference in this year's schedule and last year's
34 schedule.

35
36 **• Review of Expenditures**

37
38 **8. MEMBER INPUT/NEW BUSINESS**

39 **Budget Calendar**

40 Mrs. Couture reported she received the School Board budget schedule. She indicated the
41 Committee will receive the School Board's budget on November 20. She noted there are five
42 meetings set aside for the town budget and six meetings for the School Board budget. Mrs.
43 Couture estimated that budget hearings would be held the second week in January and final votes
44 for the budgets will be on January 6 and 8, 2015.

45

1 Mr. Cutter asked if it has been determined who will prepare the MS-7 and MS-27. Mrs. Couture
2 indicated both the town and district offered to help with the preparation of those reports.

3
4 Mr. Byron commented that the Board of Selectmen received the audit at the last meeting. He
5 noted the there were no findings and Mr. Hoch will forward it to the Budget Committee.

6
7 Mr. Bourque commented that the district received their audit and there were no findings.

8
9 **9. PUBLIC INPUT**

10
11 • **Upcoming meetings**

12
13 The next meeting of the Budget Committee is scheduled on October 23, 2014.

14
15 **MOTION:** by Mr. Cutter

16 *Move to adjourn.*

17 **SECOND:** Mr. Pascucci

18 **VOTE: 9-0-0**

19 **The motion carried unanimously.**

20
21 There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

22
23 **Minutes by:** *Michele E. Flynn (Recording Secretary)*

24
25 **Date approved:**