

**Draft Minutes of the Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting
Held on January 31, 2015**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Saturday, January 31, 2015 at Campbell High School, 1 Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

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

Absent: R Peeples

Mrs. Couture called the meeting to order at 11:55 a.m.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. PUBLIC INPUT.

3. REVIEW/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

There were no revisions or additions to the agenda.

4. PRIOR MEETING MINUTE APPROVAL

- **January 6, 2015**

MOTION: by Mr. Cutter

Move to approve the minutes of January 6, 2015

SECOND: by Mr. Spencer

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed.

- **January 8, 2015**

MOTION: by Mrs. Douglas

Move to approve the minutes of January 8, 2015 as amended

SECOND: by Mr. Pascucci

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed.

- **January 15, 2015**

MOTION: by Mr. Cutter

Move to approve the minutes of January 15, 2015

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

VOTE: 7-0-1, with Mr. Vaillancourt abstaining

The motion passed.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

Mrs. Couture indicated there was some communication with the school district regarding the MS-27 as well as an article she wrote for the HLN.

6. TOWN BUSINESS

- **Budget Voting (only if changed at Deliberative)**

Mrs. Couture indicated there were no changes in the budget or on the warrant.

7. MEMBER INPUT/NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Spencer asked if there is a current expenditure report for the school district and requested a copy of the MS-27 as filed.

Mrs. Couture indicated she has had much difficulty community with the Business Administrator regarding the MS-27. She commented that she will get a copy of the MS-27 to Committee members.

Mr. Byron commented that the new system of electronic filing may be impairing the ability to print the report.

Mrs. Couture indicated that she asked questions about the MS-27 numbers and allocations several times and received no answers. She expressed frustration with the Business Administrator. Mrs. Couture commented that Mr. Hoch, on the other hand, has been very transparent, helpful and responsive. She indicated that he assisted with setting up access for Mrs. Couture to input the numbers for the town. Mrs. Couture mentioned that she is very frustrated with the lack of response from the school district. She indicated she asked four times if the Budget Committee has revenue numbers and was told school district numbers are to be used. She noted that they were changed at the last minute.

Mr. Byron asked if it is within the purview of the Board of Selectmen or School Board to change revenue numbers. Mrs. Couture commented she did not have that answer.

Mr. Byron commented that the definition of budget in RSA 32:3-III indicates the budget means a statement of recommended appropriations and anticipated revenues. He noted it is the Budget Committee's responsibility.

Mr. Spencer commented that at the Town Deliberative Session the Budget Committee presented the operating budget. He indicated that the budget presented to the voters is the Budget Committee's budget and we ought to present it. He asked what the School Board is planning.

Mr. Bourque commented that at this point the School Board plans to present, but it is the Budget Committee's budget.

Mr. Spencer indicated it is the logical way and has always been done that way. Mr. Bourque commented that the way it was presented is the way it should be done.

Mr. Byron commented that he would like to see a change in the way the Budget Committee reviews and prepares its budget. He indicated that he is crafting a proposal as a private citizen to

suggest a way the Budget Committee can have more in-depth review of the budgets and prepare to address the town.

Mr. Byron indicated his proposal will recommend the Budget Committee go through the budget prior to department heads attending budget meetings. He commented that once the Budget Committee has gone through the budget, department heads can attend meetings and answer questions. Mr. Byron noted this would allow each member to have a deeper understanding and allow Committee members to question department heads. He indicated Budget Committee members can then do their due diligence and amend the budget.

Mr. Bourque commented he had a conversation with the Business Administrator yesterday regarding presenting the budgets to the School Board much sooner. He indicated that the presentation should be more streamlined and that departments heads should attend budget meetings after the initial presentation. He noted that this method would allow more questions to be answered.

Mrs. Couture indicated that she met with Mr. Hoch (Town Administrator), Dr. Cochrane and Mr. Markiewicz (Business Administrator) and asked for input on the process. She noted Mr. Hoch stated he would provide the budget presentation and if there were any questions department heads would be asked to attend. She noted the Superintendent stated he was comfortable presenting the budget and that department heads would be available for questions. Mrs. Couture commented that past practice was that department heads presented the budget and attending [on their own] on voting night. She indicated that she understands that the Town Administrator and Superintendent have a good idea of what is in their budgets, but there are many deep questions we ask that they cannot answer. She believes it is wise if department heads attend both meetings.

Mr. Byron disagreed and explained that this creates a situation where we have no idea of the concerns of the Budget Committee. He commented that some people do not take an opportunity to look at the budget prior to the meeting. He indicated having workshop sessions ahead of time would help keep the Committee's focus together. He noted following the workshop sessions, the Budget Committee can do its due diligence and meet with department heads who will clarify the concerns of the Committee. Mr. Byron commented this gives Committee representatives a better understanding of those questions or concerns. He believes having those work sessions creates an atmosphere where the Budget Committee dives deeply into the budget and is more focused.

Mr. Cutter commented that Mr. Byron's proposal is a good idea. He noted that the Budget Committee has had these discussions with both the town and school district and at that point in time there was no appetite for change. He indicated as a committee, we have given the school and town the ability to come back to us.

Mr. Byron commented that the Budget Committee needs to decide the best way to help you understand the budget. He does not believe questions are totally answered when the Town Administrator and Business Administrator cover the budget for the Committee.

Mr. Cutter suggested that an executive summary of some type is provided in advance of the work sessions.

Mr. Byron commented that his intention was that the budget is presented to the Committee and a general discussion ensues regarding goals and potential accomplishments. He noted the Budget Committee then begins its work on the budget.

Mrs. Couture commented that this Committee has been open to what is the best process.

Mr. Byron indicated he is not bringing this proposal forward as an opinion of the Board of Selectmen. He believes a change is needed and a discussion of what creates the best review of the budget.

Mr. Spencer believes the proposal is a good idea. He commented that the budget would have to be delivered in a timely manner.

Mr. Byron suggested starting the budget review a month earlier for work sessions and perhaps meet twice per week.

Mr. Spencer commented that the school district may have more difficulty with delivery. Mrs. Couture commented the school district managed to deliver their budget a week or two earlier.

8. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

9. ADJOURN

MOTION: by Mr. Cutter

Move to adjourn

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion passed.

• Upcoming meetings

The next meeting of the Budget Committee will be February 7, 2015 following the School District Deliberative Session.

MOTION: by Mr

Move to adjourn.

SECOND: Mr

VOTE: -0-0

The motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Minutes by:

Michele E. Flynn (Recording Secretary)