

**Minutes of the
Litchfield Budget Committee Hearing
Held on October 1, 2015**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a budget hearing on Thursday, October 1, 2015 at Campbell High School, One Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

PRESENT: K Douglas (Vice Chair), C Pascucci, B Spencer, R Keating, R Peeples, B Bourque (School Board Representative), F Bryon (Selectmen's Representative), T Brown (Town Administrator)

Absent: C Couture (Chair), D Vaillancourt

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Douglas called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

• **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

2. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

3. REVIEW/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

There were no additions to the agenda.

4. REVIEW/ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

• **September 24, 2015**

MOTION: by Mr. Spencer

Motion to approve the minutes of September 24, 2015

SECOND: by Mr. Pascucci

VOTE: 5-0-1, with Mr. Bourque abstaining

The motion carried.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

Mrs. Douglas reported there was no correspondence.

6. REPORTS

• **SCHOOL BUSINESS**

○ **General Updates**

Mr. Bourque reported that the FY17 School Board Recommended Budget may be a week late, but is still on task. He commented that the budget is much cleaner and the administration did a good job with the budgets.

7. BUDGET REVIEW – TOWN

Mr. Byron introduced Troy Brown, Town Administrator for the Town of Litchfield.

Mr. Brown commented that he has begun to get settled in and is learning the community, departments, staff, operating budgets, history, warrant articles and town meeting. He mentioned that he is looking forward to service and is impressed with the town, staff and department heads.

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49 Mr. Byron commented that Mrs. Couture distributed the town's draft budget schedule. He
50 indicated the Board of Selectmen reviewed it and met on Monday night to complete many of the
51 budgets.

52
53 Referring to the budget review schedule, Mr. Spencer suggested that Personnel Administration
54 be moved to the last review session.

55
56 Mr. Byron presented the 2016 Town Budget to the Budget Committee. He reported there has
57 been no reorganization of town departments and no service charges. He noted that of interest is
58 that most budgets are flat.

- 59 • Gas and diesel have been calculated at \$2.50 and \$2.75 per gallon respectively;
- 60 • road salt has increased \$3/ton due to lack of supply at this time;
- 61 • the lease purchase on the backhoe is completed;
- 62 • the Highway Block Grant will increase from \$173,000 to \$193,000 and will be
63 reflected in 2015;
- 64 • a change has been proposed to Health Agencies as they were successful as a
65 warrant article for the past years, they will be included in the budget;
- 66 • Welfare has been reduced to better match spending over the past few years;
- 67 • The Board of Selectmen considered funds for legal counsel supporting the
68 initiative for the pipeline, but will placed this on a warrant article (Litchfield has
69 spent \$18,000 in legal fees for that initiative already);
- 70 • Town Meeting has increased to handle the four elections that will occur in 2016.

71
72 Mr. Byron reported that some budgets are awaiting further review by the Board of Selectmen:

- 73 • Request for two police cruisers (approximately \$43,000/vehicle)
- 74 • Request for exhaust venting in the existing fire station (to vent exhaust fumes when
75 trucks are started up)
- 76 • Personnel Administration reflects the warrant article that passed last year to add \$30,000
77 for the continuation of the employee pay plan.

78
79 Budgets awaiting further review by the Board of Selectmen:

- 80 • Personnel
- 81 • Other Insurance
- 82 • Police
- 83 • Police Support
- 84 • Ambulance
- 85 • Fire
- 86 • Emergency Management
- 87 • Solid Waste Management
- 88 • Animal Control
- 89 • Parks & Recreation
- 90 • Library.

91

92 Mr. Spencer asked if budgets are online. Mr. Byron indicated that some modifications have to
93 be made to the actual spreadsheet before we can go live. He noted we are in the process of
94 completing that.

95
96 Mr. Spencer commented last year we were able to go online and see what was being proposed
97 and the changes.

98
99 Mr. Brown commented that he will meet with the Board of Selectmen to wrap up more budget
100 review and see if we can go live.

101
102 Referring to the budget review schedule, he asked if the Budget Committee will receive revenue
103 projections on November 5. Mr. Byron indicated that is the case.

104
105 Mr. Spencer believes the revenue presentation is out of sequence. He commented we need to see
106 the estimate so we are informed when we deal with the impact of the budget. Mr. Byron offered
107 to present the projections earlier.

108
109 Mr. Byron commented the town currently issues weekly expense reports to the department
110 heads. He asked about the format for the Budget Committee. Mr. Pascucci indicated the
111 Committee currently receives the reports weekly and would like to continue. Mr. Keating
112 agreed.

113
114 Mr. Bourque asked if the Budget Committee plans to follow the same review and vote pattern as
115 the previous year-vote the following week and then at the end of the review.

116
117 Mr. Pascucci clarified that the Committee voted the week following the presentation, but did not
118 vote the bottom line.

119
120 Mr. Byron asked about the format for department heads. He noted last year we brought
121 department heads when the Committee requested or if those department heads had additional
122 information.

123
124 Mr. Spencer commented that he suspects the process will mirror the previous year.

125
126 Mr. Byron asked if department heads should attend for presentations as Mr. Brown is new to
127 Litchfield and does not have the history.

128
129 Mr. Bourque indicated he spoke to Mrs. Couture in reference to this and she encouraged the
130 department heads to attend for the review and the vote. He noted the School Board is handling it
131 the same way.

132
133 Mr. Byron was concerned that if the department heads attend both nights, on the voting nights
134 questions may arise and department heads may not have that information.

135
136 Mr. Bourque suggested that the Budget Committee submit their questions ahead of time.

137

138 Mr. Pascucci commented that when we review the budgets we go home and dissect them and
139 then have more questions.

140
141 Mr. Byron commented that it is challenging to have information at hand not knowing the
142 question ahead of time. He suggested emailing questions to the Chair to forward to the town, we
143 will gather the information and bring the department head if needed.

144
145 Mr. Bourque commented that the School Board's process is to receive the budget a week ahead
146 so we can look through it and prepare questions for the presentation.

147
148 Mr. Byron commented that he is hearing it is acceptable to bring the department heads in when
149 there is a need to answer questions.

150
151 Mr. Spencer indicated it would be helpful to have representation on the nights when the Fire,
152 Police and Roads budgets are presented, as well as at the voting meeting so we can ask additional
153 questions.

154
155 **8. MEMBER INPUT/OLD BUSINESS**

156 Mr. Byron mentioned that Mr. Pascucci sent an email correspondence to the Board of Selectmen
157 and he assumes it was as a member of the Budget Committee.

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159 Mr. Pascucci clarified that he sent the correspondence from his personal email address as a
160 citizen and signed it as such.

161
162 Mr. Byron commented as part of the Budget Committee operation, Mr. Pascucci was concerned
163 about the Board of Selectmen eliminating the access for the Budget Committee to consult with
164 counsel. He clarified that the Board of Selectmen said if the Budget Committee (members) want
165 to consult with counsel to work through the Chair and ensure the communication is clear. He
166 noted all we asked for is a response from counsel to copy both the Budget Committee and the
167 Board of Selectmen so we all have the same information. Mr. Byron indicated it does not limit
168 the Budget Committee from consulting counsel.

169
170 Mr. Pascucci commented he was concerned with the discussion of the Board of Selectmen
171 regarding who was using the NHMA. He indicated that part of the discussion was that the
172 NHMA got little use and only the Budget Committee was utilizing the association. Mr. Pascucci
173 noted he referred back to that past discussion regarding the NHMA where the Board of
174 Selectmen blocked the Budget Committee from consulting with the NHMA.

175
176 Mr. Byron indicated that was about Budget Committee operations.

177
178 Mrs. Douglas commented that the Budget Committee has not questioned the procedures.

179
180 Mr. Pascucci indicated because a person is an elected official does not mean that person gives up
181 their rights as a citizen. He noted that at times members of the Board of Selectmen speak as
182 citizens at their own meetings.

183

184 Mr. Keating commented it is important when we communicate in the media as a Budget
185 Committee that we articulate the fact we are speaking as a citizen and not a member of the
186 Committee. He noted he does not participate in that type of media and does not want to be
187 involved if something comes up on a public comment board.

188

189 **9. PUBLIC INPUT**

190 There was no public input.

191

192 **10. ADJOURN**

193 **MOTION:** by Mr. Pascucci

194 *Move to adjourn*

195 **SECOND:** by Mr. Bourque

196 **VOTE: 6-0-0**

197 **The motion carried.**

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199 The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

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201 **Next Meeting:** Thursday, October 8, 2015

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203 **Recorded by: Michele E. Flynn, Recording Secretary**

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