

**Minutes of the
Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting
Held on August 25, 2016**

The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday, August 25, 2016 at Campbell High School, One Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

PRESENT: C Couture, (Chair), K Douglas (Vice Chair), C Pascucci, J Bourque, D Miller, A Cutter, K Bourque (Selectmen's Representative) joined at 7:12pm, B Bourque (School Board Representative)

Absent: R Keating

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Couture 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

● **May 26, 2016**

MOTION: by Mrs. Douglas

Move to approve the minutes of May 26, 2016 as amended

SECOND: by Mrs. Couture

Vote: 4-1-2, with Mr. Miller, and Mr. Cutter abstaining

The motion carried.

● **June 23, 2016**

MOTION: by Mr. Pascucci

Move to approve the June 23, 2016 minutes

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

Vote:4-0-3, with Mrs. Couture, Mr. Miller and Mrs. Bourque abstaining

The motion carried.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

Mrs. Couture mentioned there is a Budget Committee workshop on 9/20/16 in Manchester. She indicated it is a good opportunity to learn about budgeting.

6. REPORTS

- **School Business**
 - **General Updates**
 - **Budget Calendar**

Mr. Bourque reported:

- The School Board appointed a new member, Paula Izbicki who is a Principal in Hollis
- The final FY16 General Fund balance is \$238,728
- The FY18 Budget Development calendar has been revised and it is anticipated the FY18 budget will be finalized on October 26 and delivered to the Budget Committee on November 3
- Four budget meetings are anticipated.

Mrs. Couture asked about the method for budget presentations. Mr. Bourque indicated the same format as the previous year will be followed with the Superintendent presenting a budget overview on November 3.

Mr. Cutter asked about the newer budget format. Mr. Bourque indicated the format will include 3 year of expenditures and year to date actuals for the current budget.

Mr. Bourque reported that freshmen orientation occurred at CHS today; teachers were welcomed back on Tuesday, August 23; the district will start a Twitter account for the schools to increase the flow of information into the community. He explained that Scott Spradling, formerly of WMUR, introduced it in Londonderry a few years ago.

- **Enrollment**

Mr. Bourque reported there are approximately 12 new students enrolled at GMS and 11 at LMS.

Mrs. Couture commented that the Budget Committee typically receives an indication regarding grade numbers on track. Mr. Bourque indicated that the enrollment for grade one is on track.

- **Building Assessment**

Mr. Bourque reported that the Capital Planning Committee will meet on September 7 and choose a vendor for the building assessment.

Mr. Cutter commented the proposal costs were extremely varied.

Mr. Bourque reported the School Board will be discussing the security assessment completed by the NH Department of Homeland Security.

Mrs. Couture asked if the Budget Committee can be provided an overview of the security assessment. Mr. Bourque indicated the School Board has not yet discussed it. He explained the NH DHS went through all three schools and looked at all aspects of security and safety. He

noted they presented a report to the Superintendent with suggestions for better security and safety, which have budgetary impact.

Mr. Cutter asked about progress with the new District website. Mrs. Flynn indicated that the design team is currently working on the design and coding. She explained that she provided the web designers with a layout made up of different features from various clients of the vendor and schematics of what is required on the sites and what is required of the district. Mrs. Flynn indicated that she spoke with the designers very recently and within a couple of weeks a beta site will be provided to the district, as well as training. The beta site will enable the SAU to test the features and recommend any changes. She noted the designers have committed to an October 1 launch, provided the district can train the personnel who will be maintaining the school web pages.

Mr. Miller asked about the Food Service Fund balance included in the finance report. He asked for clarification that the \$500,000 reported is projected revenue and the actual fund balance is \$109,000. Mr. Bourque affirmed that he was correct.

- **Town Business**
 - **General Updates**

Mr. Bourque reported that St. Gobain has given Pennichuck the opportunity to go to bid to connect the north end of town.

- **Budget Calendar**

Mrs. Couture commented the Board of Selectmen are reviewing their budget over three meetings. She noted the Budget Committee has set aside six meetings for review.

Mr. Cutter commented that the Budget Committee should get an overview on September 22 and can begin reviewing the town budgets on September 29.

Mrs. Couture commented the town has left the order of budget review to the Budget Committee. She asked members if they would like to review the larger budgets in one session or follow a similar format to last year.

Mrs. Bourque believes reviewing the larger budgets in one meeting sounds overwhelming.

Mr. Cutter commented there has been discussion of a \$2.5M fire station, which will be a long discussion. Mrs. Couture indicated that may be a warrant article. Mr. Cutter noted that a discussion by the Budget Committee is anticipated with regard to personnel, equipment and other articles that may be separate from the fire station.

Mrs. Couture commented she is hearing that the best option is not to review the larger budgets in one meeting.

Mrs. Douglas commented that the previous year budget review schedule went well.

Mr. Bourque asked when the town budget will be delivered to the Budget Committee. Mrs. Couture anticipates an overview will be provided on September 22.

Mr. Miller commented that, in terms of the fire station, he would prefer more than the presentation of a warrant article (i.e. schematics), which should be discussed if the town is going to bond.

Mr. Kevin Bourque commented that it is only an idea.

Mr. Miller observed, historically, the School Board had a difficult time when the new school was proposed.

Mrs. Couture mentioned that a budget review schedule will be provided for the Budget Committee.

o RSA 32:22; Review of Expenditures

7. MEMBER INPUT/NEW BUSINESS

• By-Laws

Mrs. Couture provided a draft of the bylaws that were crafted by Mr. Cutter. She commented that they were based from several towns' bylaws and consist of purpose, organization and some history. She indicated she reviewed them and added her comments. Mrs. Couture mentioned when she served on the School Board she was driven to implement a code of ethics, policies and official rules. She commented the Budget Committee prior to this point in time was not interested in bylaws. She indicated there was some controversy when a resignation occurred and bylaws were suggested. She noted this is being proactive and not reactive.

Mr. Cutter commented the bylaws are not to supersede anything in the RSA, but to clarify some points of order.

Mr. Miller observed that, with regard to Section I, prior legal advice was not to copy the language in RSA's in bylaws because if they change the bylaws have to be changed and the editing timeline does not coincide with the legislative year and could cause a conflict with legislative changes. Referring to Section II, he suggested changing the wording 'members-at-large' and 'at-large membership' to 'elected'.

Committee members discussed each section of the bylaws and suggested revisions to consider.

Section I: Purpose

There were no suggested changes.

Section II: Organization

Change wording “at-large membership” to “elected membership”; and “members-at-large” to “elected members”; change all wording “ Chairman and Vice Chairman” to “Chair and Vice Chair”.

Section III: Duties of Officers

Change in #2 to remove some redundant wording.

Section IV: Vacancies

With reference to the resignation of an elected member, Mr. Cutter felt that if the resignation occurred within the first 90 days of taking office it would be appropriate to offer the position to the candidate with the next highest votes who formally sought election to the Committee.

Mr. Bourque disagreed with Mr. Cutter’s methodology. He commented that if, for example, there were four vacant positions on the ballot that were filled, but there were five candidates who ran for the positions and a resignation occurred, the appointed member could be someone none of the Committee members prefer. He recommended opening the position up to the public, hold interviews and vote on the appointment.

Mr., Miller commented even if Mr. Cutter’s suggestion was implemented, the Committee would still have to vote on that candidate’s appointment and the Committee can vote not to appoint. He noted the suggested bylaws mention the Committee would “offer” the vacancy to the candidate with the next highest votes.

Mrs. Bourque commented the wording makes it seem as if that candidate is appointed regardless.

Mr. Pascucci commented that a rule should be set and the Committee should stick with the rule. He indicated that offering the position to the candidate with the next highest votes is fine because the person on the ballot went through the process. He was concerned with how the rule would impact write in candidates. He noted the timeframe should be for the whole year and not just for the first 90 days.

Mrs. Couture agreed that if the candidate went through the process it would be appropriate. She believes it would not be appropriate for write in candidates.

Mr. Miller commented the Budget Committee has to vote by law and it is not an automatic appointment.

Mr. Bourque commented the same situation can arise as did when Mr. Spencer resigned.

Mr. Pascucci commented if a member does not like the person that was on the ballot the burden is on that member to state his/her case when the Committee takes up the issue of appointment.

Mr. Miller suggested revising the wording “offer the vacancy to the candidate with the next highest votes” to “notify” that candidate of the vacancy.

Mr. Cutter suggested that the bylaws state vacancies do not apply to write in candidates.

Mr. Kevin Bourque indicated write in candidates are part of due process.

Committee members discussed assigning a certain number of votes write in candidates are required to have to apply for a vacant position.

Mr. Pascucci commented if someone resigns in the first three months and we offer the seat to the candidate with the next highest votes, that is where the process stops for us because the Town Clerk asks write in candidates if they are willing to serve.

Mr. Miller suggested stating write in candidates can apply for a vacant position if they receive 1% or more of the vote.

Section V: Responsibilities and Duties of the Budget Committee

Referring to the paragraph regarding unexcused absences, Mr. Pascucci asked for the definition of a unexcused absence.

Mrs. Couture explained an unexcused absence is when a member has no excuse for missing meetings, such not attending a meeting without calling to notify the Chair, or when that member never shows up for meetings.

Mr. Cutter clarified the key word is “consecutive” meetings.

Mr. Pascucci commented that the RSA mentions ‘the member is dismissed after three or more meetings’. He believes the Committee should be consistent with the RSA. He asked why the Committee needs responsibilities spelled out in the bylaws. He suggested referring to the RSA as it is simple to understand.

Mrs. Couture asked if the Committee prefers reaching out to a member who has missed three meetings to determine their interest in serving on the Committee.

Mr. Pascucci asked ‘what exactly is a bylaw’? Mrs. Couture responded it is the standing rule governing internal affairs. Mr. Cutter commented bylaws serve as operating procedures of the committee.

Mr. Miller commented on Mr. Pascucci’s point regarding the RSA and indicated this is not a complete list according to the RSA.

Mrs. Couture commented we wanted to list what was important to this Committee.

Mr. Pascucci indicated his idea was to have bylaws that pertain to issues that come up and cause conflict.

Mr. Cutter commented this is not meant to be a large document.

Mr. Miller commented that there is no place that states the Budget Committee prepares a budget as that is what this Committee does by law. He suggested adding wording to Section V that the responsibility of Committee members is to prepare the budget as provided in RSA 32:5, and that the Committee shall submit the budget to the Town Clerk.

Mr. Pascucci asked if this document was intended to be a helpful guide to people who intend to run for a position on the Budget Committee or to clarify some issues before they become volatile. He commented if it is intended to help guide members then the document should be longer and include more.

The Committee members reviewed the remaining sections of the draft bylaws, such as Conduct of Meetings, Special Meetings, Public Hearings, Annual and Special Town and School District Meetings, Quorum, Voting Procedure, Role of the Chair, and Adoption and Amendment. Committee members provided input and suggested revisions.

Mrs. Couture commented the Budget Committee is having a good discussion. She indicated that the revisions will be made and another draft will be distributed. She asked Committee members for feedback when they receive the draft.

Mr. Pascucci suggested adding wording to encourage department heads to attend budget meetings, and that the Committee does not discuss the budgets and vote on the same night. He expressed he does not believe that it needs to be in the document because Committee members always agree on that point; however, if we are making a document it should be stated. Mr. Pascucci indicated now that the mission is different, more time is needed to go through the RSA and come back with suggestions.

Mr. Miller asked if Budget Committee members can reconvene to vote on adjusted wording of warrant articles that are changed at Deliberative Session. Mr. Cutter indicated if it has a financial impact or if the wording changes the financial impact the Budget Committee needs to revote. Mrs. Couture indicated it would be according to the law, which would need to be reviewed.

Mr. Miller suggested adding a section entitled "Exceptions". He suggested wording for that section.

Mrs. Couture indicated the draft will be revised and sent to Committee members who will review the revisions and provide any feedback to the Chair.

Mr. Pascucci commented it is important for people to understand the RSA. Mr. Cutter indicated a link to the RSA will be included in the document.

Mr. Pascucci suggested that one of the requirements should be that to serve on the Committee one should have a general understanding of Municipal Budget Law. Mr. Miller agreed.

- **Budget Calendar**

Mrs. Couture commented there is an issue with the Budget Calendar. She noted that final votes are scheduled for January 3 and January 5, but by RSA the budget hearing has to be held by January 10. She indicated that tightens up the schedule. She asked members if they would agree to push back final votes to either Dec 20 and 22, or Dec 27 and 29.

Mrs. Douglas asked if the guidelines have changed.

Mrs. Couture indicated that the municipal calendar tells us the last date for the Budget Committee to hold the hearing. She explained with deliberative dates the first two Saturdays of February, counting back from the first deliberative date brings us to January 10.

Mr. Pascucci commented the Budget Committee does its best to complete the budgets in a timely manner. He suggested if the Committee finishes the budgets earlier we can push the final review dates forward.

Mrs. Couture commented that at this time January 3 and January 5 are not good dates for final reviews.

Referring to the School Board general updates, Mrs. Bourque commented it is commendable we are doing more to get information out to the public by using Twitter.

There was no public input.

8. ADJOURN

MOTION: by Mr. Cutter

Move to adjourn the meeting

SECOND: by Mrs. Douglas

VOTE: 8-0-0

The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm

Next Meeting: Thursday, September 22, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

Recorded by: Michele E. Flynn, Recording Secretary