

**Town of Brentwood
Budget Committee Hearing
Minutes of September 26, 2011**

Present: Elyse Seeley (Chair), Bill Faria, Krista Steger, Malcolm Allison, Bob Mantegari, Diane Vosgien (School Board Representative), Jeff Bryan (Select Board Representative) .

Absent: Tracie May

Public present: Amy Wilson, Lisa Zack Swasey, Gela Wilcox (sp), Donna Benshemer, Crystal Buswell.

Chairperson Elyse Seeley called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

1. Motion to approve the draft minutes from March 17, 2011 Public Hearing. Malcolm/Bob 5-0, 1 abstention (Diane absent for vote)
2. Motion to approve second draft minutes from August 29, 2011 meeting, Elyse/Krista 4-0, 2 abstentions (Diane absent for vote)
3. Elyse advised us that the quarterly meeting between the Selectmen Board and the town Department Heads is tomorrow and all are invited. Elyse will attend and report back to us at our next meeting.

Budget Workshop Report

Malcolm, Krista, and Diane attended the LGC hosted budget workshop (September 20). They presented an overview for those of us that did not attend. The highlights included a review of the new law Chapter 234 of the 2011 New Hampshire Laws, RSA 49-C that outlines the procedure for requesting a spending/income cap. This can be requested by any legal entity or via citizen's petition and, if approved, would restrict or cap the amount of income that could be budgeted by the town (or other legal entity, ie school board) The effect would be to limit increases and limit spending for whatever the entity was, and this cap is perpetual unless revoked in a 2/3 town vote. The process was highlighted for us and if further information is needed we were advised to review the new Chapter 234.

State funding was also a large part of the workshop. It is clear that state funding has been severely cut, contributions to teacher, police and fire retirements, which are to be capped at 61 million dollars. Revenue sharing from the state is frozen and approximately 87 water/wastewater projects are delayed. Education aid would be approximately 2/3 of what was received in FY-11. Overall state funding to municipalities is expected to be severely limited in the coming fiscal year. The LGC presenters suggested that local municipalities look to increase fees if possible and look to neighboring towns to share services.

Jeff advised that Mark Hitz, (Chair of the Kingston Select Board) attended a Select Board meeting to inquire if Brentwood would be interested in exploring some shared emergency services.

It was also suggested to the attendees that the town should have a plan to address long term capital improvements. Jeff and Elyse reminded everyone that the town does have a 10 year plan to address these issues. Also, that we have been proactive in addressing potential shortfalls in state funding and reimbursements to the local municipalities in the past. Krista requested a copy of the plan for the committee.

Budget Status (Selectmen Board Rep)

- ◆ Jeff advised us that the library intends to advertise and fill the head librarian position, that will become vacant at the end of the year, with Marilyn's retirement. The expectation is that the position will be full time with benefits. The library will attend our next meeting and present this plan.
- ◆ The town budget has only been discussed in general. Selectmen have CPI estimates (draft by Howard Cadwell) and have had some preliminary discussions centering around the new evaluation process and how that will effect salaries and any increases. Jeff expects to have more information in the coming weeks and will keep us apprised of the status.
- ◆ Elyse asked both Jeff and Diane (School Board representative) to get whatever information they can about the potential impact of the state reductions on the expenses and budgets for the coming year.
- ◆ Elyse asked us all to comment on collecting information on real estate transactions in town, (i.e. sales, foreclosures, abatements, etc) to establish a baseline for economic status/ issues facing our property owners (taxpayers). Discussion about rationale, and decision to try it out for this quarter. Chair will pursue this data collection with the town offices.

Budget Status (School Board Rep)

- ◆ Diane clarified that the \$96,862, leaving \$16,979 surplus on the 2010-11 school budget is related to food services and is an in and out, self funding line item.
- ◆ Elyse noted from School Board minutes that in May the School Board voted to grant support staff (non-union) a .005% increase in this year's budget. There were two school contract retirements (school nurse and a media specialist) and the resulting high level vacancies provide for potential reduction in salaries. Elyse pointed out that this is the kind of information we need early in the process to be able to make informed decisions regarding budgets. We asked about this several times early in the cycle and once at the Public Hearing and were told no retirements by the school principal. Elyse asked Diane to check on the required dates of retirement decisions and to please bring this information to the Budget Committee as soon as it is known. Also from minutes, a Special Ed case manager left. Diane states that position is being advertised. The school principal contract is up this year and will be negotiated.
- ◆ School District meeting has been scheduled for March 10, 2012. We believe Town meeting would be March 17, 2012 and our last day to post the Budget will be February 22 but we will check on those dates for compliance with statutes.
- ◆ Diane believes contract talks will begin on Tuesday, September 27. Chair asked if she'd like this committee's input towards a contract more palatable to the

voters. With her assent there was discussion with ideas about including a shorter contract length (not more than two years), and higher employee contributions for retirement and health care as well as an 8-hour work day. Also some discussion of performance based evaluations tied to raises. Liz Bryan and Amy Mitchell are representing the School Board on the negotiating team.

- ◆ Finally, all the school building repairs were completed without using any of the Capital Reserve Maintenance fund funded in March. All the repairs were funded from this year's fund balance. Chair asked for itemized list of expenditures from fund balance and offered to contact the SAU16 Business office for this.

Budget Committee By-Laws

Most of us felt the handout of Pelham by-laws are useful to try to establish some guidelines for our committee's process. Malcolm put together some appropriate corrections. Basic procedures are all consistent with the RSA's. Elyse will use feedback to draft our own by-laws to consider at a future meeting, then run these by the Board of Selectmen.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Monday October 3, at 7 pm

Motion to adjourn at 9:05. Bob/Malcolm 6-0

Adjourned

Minutes respectfully submitted by

William C Faria