

**Town of Brentwood
Budget Committee Public Hearing
Minutes of
February 12, 2015**

Budcom Members Present: Elyse Seeley (Chair), Malcolm Allison, Krista Steger, Jeff Bryan (Selectmen), Dianne Vosgien (School Board Representative)

Absent and excused: Barb Zvodar, John Lyon

Unexcused: William Faria

Budget Committee Chairperson Elyse Seeley called the hearing to order at 7:30 pm.

Elyse advised the public present that this hearing was postponed from Monday, February 9th due to a snow emergency (as posted). The hearing is informational only, no votes will be taken, a civil process expected, rules of order followed. A sign-up sheet was passed out for the comment period. Handouts on all budgets were provided. The informational PowerPoint is up on the town's website for those who can't be here.

Presentation Summary and Powerpoint:

The Hearing is for the 2015 Town Budget and the 2015-16 Swasey School Budget.

Our tax bills are composed of the Town Operating budget, Town Warrant Articles, Swasey School Operating budget, and Warrant Articles, and Exeter District Cooperative School Operating budget and Warrant Articles for the high school and middle school. Our Budget Committee works on the Town and Swasey School budgets only.

The Town Operating budget is proposed as \$3,128,180.00. The operating budget alone is a 2.7% increase but because there is a decrease in proposed Warrant Articles over last year's, there is a net 24% decrease in expenditures.

The BudCom recommended town Warrant Articles represent a 73% decrease in costs. BudCom voted to NOT Recommend the four-year lease-purchase contract for Fire Apparatus, a Fire Department Warrant Article with no appropriation this year. The first payment would be \$90,121 in 2016. BudCom also recommended a Capital Reserve Warrant Article for Bridge Repair that asked voters to refund the CR \$204,471 from surplus dollars due to an NHDOT Grant refund. No amount to be raised from taxation.

Swasey School's Operating budget is recommended at \$4,718,627.00, a decrease of 13.5%. This is for support of Swasey School, the current salaries and benefits and any statutory obligations. Enrollment continues to decline in the local school, and the Budget Committee voted to reduce the School Board's proposed budget to address the staffing overages. Though specific reductions can be discussed, Budcom is only allowed to address the bottom line.

There is a Warrant Article to approve the costs associated with a new Collective Bargaining agreement (teacher contract) which calls for an increase of \$330,374.00 over three years, with an estimated \$46,260 for the first year. The contract represents a 2.25% increase in salaries for years 1 and 2, a 2.0% increase in year 3 in addition to steps and retirement stipends. The Budget Committee does not recommend this contract.

In addition there are two Petition Warrant Articles to expand the current ½ day Kindergarten: one for full day and one for extended day, representing \$120,000 each. Both the School Board and the Budget Committee voted to NOT Recommend these Warrant Articles.

For informational purposes, the tax impact of our portion of the Exeter Region Cooperative School Budget was highlighted.

A chart was provided to outline the proposed Brentwood Tax Impacts, and the changes from last year's tax impact. The chart includes Town, Swasey School and the ERCSD Coop School budgets. Cost impacts for Recommended and Not Recommended Warrant Articles were outlined.

The Swasey School District meeting will be held on Friday March 6th, 2015 at 6pm at Swasey School to vote on these proposed expenses.

Town Meeting is scheduled for March 14th, 2014, at Swasey School at 9am. Town Meeting is a continuation of the Town Elections to be held on March 10th, 2015.

All the information reviewed at the Public Hearing is also posted on the Budget Committee page of the Town of Brentwood website.

7:55 pm Chair opened for Public Comments

Eric Turer thinks BudCom is miscalculating the costs per pupil. Favors increasing the school operating budget.

John Sheppeldo thinks BudCom's vote has taken away the right of people to vote for 5.3 million on the school OB.

Jessie Hollister, School Board member, believes BudCom should have specified their reductions.

Kim Woods, Swasey School teacher, would like BudCom to reopen the budget.

Christa Corsalt wants BudCom to reopen the budget and thinks we should change the town's governance.

Amy Brown read an excerpt from the newspaper regarding Brentwood homes sold and relationship to property values.

Lisa Swasey, Swasey School teacher, thinks BudCom reduced the school operating budget because the School Board did not cut the teacher as agreed to last year.

Keith Levitsky urged Budcom to reopen the school budget due to potential of declining home values.

Ron Kew, Swasey School Principal, supported the teacher contract and thinks it should be recommended.

Dan Hanlon, Exeter district teacher, says Swasey School is the key reason he moved to Brentwood.

Melissa Hanlon talked about raising the recommendation 10% so voters can approve the School Board's 5.3 million dollar budget.

Allison Yeagle read a note from neighbor Chad Goodrich, supporting Swasey School.

Bridget Zacher purchased property in Brentwood because of Swasey School.

Jessica Paul was concerned about loss of teachers and increased class sizes if budget is cut, and asked the BudCom to reconsider.

Amy Mitchell, School Board member, supported the teacher contract and asked BudCom to change their recommendation.

Liz Faria, School Board member said there was a \$211,500 shortfall even if the School Board proposed budget is favored – the process is flawed.

Joellen Gargaly feels as though voters don't want this cut,

Liz McConnell feels there is discord between School Board and Budget Committee.

Rick Hollister wonders if this process is constitutional.

Melissa Litchfield, School Board member said BudCom doesn't look favorable because they didn't tell the School Board where to cut.

Michael Morgan, SAU 16 Superintendent, said his son moved to Brentwood because of Swasey, the BudCom has a responsibility to reopen the budget and he will file a legal injunction against the Budget Committee due to a violation of NH RSA 32.5.

Emily Stucki moved here four years ago because of Swasey School, daughter has special needs and is now a grade-level reader. She thanked the teachers.

Rachael Heard asked that the school operating budget be reopened.

Lindsay Dixon asked if we were sure about this.

Valerie Rogers wanted BudCom to revote the school OB right now.

Ned Matson wants to support the teacher contract.

Tina Dennehy asked that the operating budget be decided by the voters.

The Chair thanked all for their comments.

The Official Budget hearing was adjourned at 9:16 pm.

Official budget forms offered to Committee for signatures by Chair.