

Town of Brentwood
Budget Committee Meeting at Brentwood Town Office
Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2022

Present: Jack Mitchell, Michelle Siudut, Lois DeYoung, Alina Arida, Anthony Phillips, Andy Artimovich (selectboard rep), Letty Bedard (Swasey rep)

Guests: Karen Clement, Tamera Peek, Daphne Woss, Heather Haggett, Joyce Keegal, Liz Faria, Steve Dawson, Wayne Robinson

Jack called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Motion by Lois, seconded by Anthony to approve the minutes of the October 24, 2022 meeting, as amended; passed unanimously.

BOS Report

Andy said the tax rate has been set to \$22.15. This is a 9¢ decrease, as a result of unspent monies from last year.

Swasey Report

Swasey budget will see an increase over last year, but the numbers have not been finalized. SAU offered position of Superintendent to Esther Asbell. Letty will share the link of the interview.

Discussion on Employee Compensation and COLA adjustments

The Selectmen approved 5% COLA and up to 2.5% merit increase. They also approved use of ARPA funds to keep payroll amount neutral for next year. Anthony questioned if it was appropriate to use ARPA funds for wage increases, as it is a one time use and future years will be paid by residents. He also asked if other uses of ARPA funds were considered? Andy said initially it was going to be used for wages of new firemen. Lois suggested using it for health insurance instead. Andy said some ARPA funds were used for health insurance. Alina felt the wage increase was justified, as we were so behind in salaries. Alina feels we need to review other options for tax relief, rather than not giving raises. Merit increases will vary, but total COLA increase would cost \$86,000 which is \$.12 per \$1000.

Selectmen went to a merit based system a couple of years ago. There is no standard pay matrix, as that can be determined by each BOS, which changes annually.

The town received a total of \$472,000 in ARPA funds, and has about \$400,000 remaining. These funds must be committed by 2024 and spent by 2026. The goal is to spread the ARPA funds through a couple of years.

Our final payment on SAU bond will be made Aug 2023, which will be a financial relief.

Budgets

Executive Office/Town Meeting. This budget is an \$800 or 22% reduction, due to 2 less elections. Motion by Lois, seconded Andy to approve \$2,801; approved unanimously.

Election, Registration, Vitals. This budget is a \$3075 or 29.56% reduction, due to 2 less elections. Motion by Lois, seconded by Andy to approve \$7,326; approved unanimously.

Tax Collector. Tax collector salary is 10.4% increase; deputy salary is 17.85% increase; clerk salary is 7.26% increase. Motion by Alina, seconded by Anthony to approve \$71,720 a 10.08% increase; approved 5-2-0.

Town Clerk. Tax collector salary is 10.4% increase; deputy salary is 17.86% increase; clerk salary is 7.26% increase. Motion by Alina, seconded by Andy to approve \$74,530, a 9.74% increase; approved 5-2-0.

Financial, Tax and Assessing. There is a 3.73% increase in salary for treasurer; the majority of this increase is for the reconciliations which are now performed by an outside company (this is \$18,000 under the bookkeeper/clerk line). Last year those reconciliations were covered by impact fees. Motion by Andy, seconded by Alina, to approve \$107,483, which is a 27.93% increase; approved unanimously.

Town Administrator. The majority of this budget increase is 10.18% salary increase. Motion by Andy, seconded by Alina to approve \$122,289, a 9.9% increase; approved 5-2-0.

Letty asked the members who voted against the increases as to why. Michelle responded that she had had several people speak to her about the increases, feeling they were unfair after such high increases last year; she was voting on behalf of those residents.

Old Business

At a previous meeting, Letty had inquired about changing our fiscal year. Input from Town Administrator that it is necessary only for communities that need to get bonds tax anticipation notes; Brentwood is not one of those towns. Daphne surveyed 5 towns who have an actual fiscal year; Daphne said it wouldn't impact her. Right now our unassigned fund balance is not returned to the town at year end, which allows us to have money to cover the first 3 months of bills until budget is approved.

There was discussion about the December 5 meeting date; it was moved to December 9 and will begin at 5 pm.

Public Comment

Liz Faria pointed out that although the bond for the SAU would be paid off, there is talk of other large projects that are likely to arise to replace it.

Liz also commented that pay raises aren't the only reason people leave - it's the work environment.

Steve Dawson spoke up in support of wage increases. He suggested we look at ways we can provide more support for those on fixed income. He also said that decreases in state taxes result in higher local property taxes, and we need more support from the state.

Liz asked if there is an opportunity for compensation from the county for all the services that they have here.

Future Meetings/Dates of Importance

(Schedule of budgets to discuss is tentative and subject to change)

November 21 at 6 pm - Planning Board & ZBA, Budget Committee, Code Enforcement, Debt Service, Recreation, JLMC

November 28 at 6 pm - Highway, General Government, Government Buildings

December 9 at 5 pm - Fire, Library

December 12 at 6 pm - Police, Animal Control, Insurance

December 19 at 6 pm - Swasey

February 9 or 13 (snow) at 6 pm - Public Hearing

March 10 - School District (Swasey) meeting

March 14 - Town Elections

March 18 - Town Meeting

Motion by Lois, seconded by Alina to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 7:19 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Siudut