

Town of Brentwood
Budget Committee Public Hearing at Brentwood Recreation Center
Hearing Minutes - February 9, 2023

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

Visitors: Jim Michaud, Don Miller, Joyce Miller, Sue Mitchell, Joseph Bird, John Ventura, Karen Clement, Daphne Woss, Joyce Keegal, Heather Haggett, Antoine Allahore, Wayne Robinson, David Menter, Carole Belliveau, Laura Galvin, Bob Radlinski, Betsy Ibbitson, Liz McConnell, Janice Wiers, Tom Walker, Fran Doucette, Liz Faria, Bill Faria, Steven Dawson, Chris Carmody, Russ Kelly, Jillian Benediz, Allison Higgins, Kim Leo

Jack called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and all were asked to rise for the pledge of allegiance. Jack welcomed the audience and introduced the Committee members.

Jack then began a slide presentation. There are a total of 40 budgets which make the total proposed Town Operating Budget of \$5,525,898. This is an increase of \$599,449 or 12% over last year. This would result in a tax impact of \$.82/\$1000 tax valuation, or \$328 on a \$400,000 property.

Budget increases were reviewed

Fire	\$1,011,455	\$206,461 / 26% increase	\$113 on \$400,000 property
Benefits	\$436,654	\$104,523 / 32% increase	\$57 on \$400,000 property
Police	\$1,106,672	\$92,234 / 9% increase	\$50 on \$400,000 property
Library	\$317,992	\$53,112 / 20% increase	\$29 on \$400,000 property
Highway	\$437,326	\$37,285 / 9% increase	\$20 on \$400,000 property
Snow & Ice	\$222,933	\$27,566 / 14% increase	\$15 on \$400,000 property
Finance	\$107,483	\$23,467 / 28% increase	\$13 on \$400,000 property
Recreation	\$95,040	\$16,420 / 21% increase	\$9 on \$400,000 property
Code Enforcement	\$81,291	\$12,823 / 19% increase	\$7 on \$400,000 property
Town Administrator	\$122,289	\$11,016 / 10% increase	\$6 on \$400,000 property
Rubbish Collection	\$252,750	\$9,723 / 4% increase	\$5 on \$400,000 property
Legal	\$37,127	\$8,500 / 30% increase	\$5 on \$400,000 property
Town Clerk	\$74,530	\$6,615 / 10% increase	\$4 on \$400,000 property
Tax Collector	\$71,720	\$6,565 / 10% increase	\$4 on \$400,000 property
General Government	\$39,978	\$6,562 / 20% increase	\$4 on \$400,000 property
Insurance	\$139,131	\$5,416 / 4% increase	\$3 on \$400,000 property
Information Systems	\$72,470	\$4,082 / 6% increase	\$2 on \$400,000 property
Assessing	\$47,781	\$3,800 / 9% increase	\$2 on \$400,000 property
Recycling	\$67,725	\$1,630 / 3% increase	\$1 on \$400,000 property
Govt Buildings	\$84,860	\$1,075 / 1% increase	\$1 on \$400,000 property
Planning Board	\$109,393	\$711 / 1% increase	\$0 on \$400,000 property
Cemetery	\$13,670	\$657 / 5% increase	\$0 on \$400,000 property

Level funded budgets included Mosquito Control, Debt Service-TAN, Regional Associations, Emergency Management, Conservation, Welfare, Zoning Board, BudCom, Joint Loss Management, Street lighting and Health Officer.

Budgets with a decrease were Executive Office, Town Meeting, Election, Debt Service-Principal, Animal Control Officer, Waste Disposal and Debt Service-interest.

Jack explained the Selectmen voted to use \$221,000 in ARPA funds for Fire Department salary increases (\$100,000), town employee salary increases/COLA (\$86,000) and medical insurance increases (\$35,000). This will show a decrease in the total town budget amount to \$5,304,898 and reduce the town budget tax impact by \$121 on a \$400,000 property. ARPA funds are used for a one time decrease, those amounts will be added to the tax impact for 2024.

Warrant Articles were reviewed totaling \$1,141,717. That is an increase of \$462,936, which is a 67% increase, with a total tax impact of \$253 on a \$400,000 property.

Road Repair	\$350,000	\$192 on \$400,000 property
Amphitheatre	\$200,000	\$109 on \$400,000 property
Fire Dept Radios	\$168,000	\$92 on \$400,000 property
Highway Building	\$150,000	\$82 on \$400,000 property
FT Police Officer	\$73,717	\$40 on \$400,000 property
Highway Vehicle CR	\$50,000	\$27 on \$400,000 property
Fire Vehicle CR	\$50,000	\$27 on \$400,000 property
Building Maint CR	\$25,000	\$14 on \$400,000 property
IT Hardware CR	\$25,000	\$14 on \$400,000 property
Revaluation CR	\$25,000	\$14 on \$400,000 property
Police Facility CR	\$25,000	\$14 on \$400,000 property

Swasey Operating Budget is \$6,460,080 which is a \$383,966 / 6.5% increase. There is one warrant article with a tax impact, \$181,602 for paraprofessionals contract; this is \$103 tax impact on a \$400,000 property. The other two warrant articles are requests to add to the trust funds, using unspent funds. The Swasey budget and warrant articles together are a \$565,568 / 9% increase with a \$321 tax impact on a \$400,000 property.

Proposed Co-op budget is \$69,224,030 of which Brentwood is responsible for 15.4%. The budget includes collective bargaining agreement increases for Administrators (\$65,996), Paraprofessionals (\$134,260) and Teachers (\$1,197,238). The tax impact for Brentwood properties is \$.58/\$1000. There are two warrant articles requesting funds out of the end-of-year fund balance (no additional tax impact): \$150,000 for construction, reconstruction of school buildings/grounds capital reserve; and \$50,000 for turf replacement.

Combining the town budget and warrants, Swasey budget and warrants, and co-op budget is a total of \$23,728,307. This is a total increase of \$1,830,775, or 8%, with a tax impact of \$2.53 per \$1000, or \$1013 on a \$400,000 property.

Jack emphasized only expenses have been addressed. The state will assess revenue, credit and other changes which may alter the tax rate.

The Budget Committee is concerned about the large number of increases that occurred this year and will be looking into long range spending techniques to better prepare for the future.

Comment

Liz Faria noted the Co-op Deliberative session had only 103 attendees out of a 26,119 total voters - for a \$69 million budget. Student population has gone down 711, while the budget has gone up \$20 million. She also highlighted large town salary increases: Rec director 11.87%, Deputy tax collector 17.86%, Town Administrator 10.81%, Library Director 26%, Library Director Assistant 41.4%, Library assistants 30%.

Kim Leo commented library salary increases were to make their salaries fair/equitable. She thanked all committee members for their efforts.

Bill Faria asked when we would know the true tax rate. Karen Clement said not until November. She also stated re-evaluations will happen in 2025.

Lois DeYoung said this is her last night on the committee, and stated the proposed budgets/warrants will result in \$1013 tax impact on a \$400K property.

Antoine Allahore referenced an article in the Brentwood Newsletter regarding ARPA funds. He questioned if there were other ways to use the ARPA funds rather than for long term items. He also felt the requested increases reflect the current economy.

Liz McConnell thanked the committee for their review and support of the library budget.

Liz Faria questioned the count of attendance. There appeared to be 33 total people in the room, but all may not be eligible voters.

Janice Weirs explained the program at the library tonight, which conflicted with this hearing, was sponsored by Daughters of the American Revolution and the Historical Society, it was not a library event.

Chris Carmody was offended by the question about the number of attendees. He said those not present would be able to get information from the Brentwood Newsletter or online.

Steve Dawson thanked the committee for their work; encouraged support for the elderly/veteran/disabled tax credit adjustments to be voted at Town Meeting. He addressed the tension between those

who support tax increases and those who do not. He said property taxes are straining residents and suggested reaching out to those in Concord to let them know defunding the towns is hurting residents.

Liz Faria commented that the 1/30/23 Budget Committee meeting was erased, so not everyone can get the info.

Hearing adjourned at 6:33 pm.

Upcoming Meetings

March 10 at 6 pm, Swasey School - Swasey School District meeting

March 14, 7 am - 7 pm, Swasey School - Town Elections

March 18 at 9 am, Swasey School - Town Meeting

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Siudut, Secretary