

Budget Committee DRAFT Minutes April 29, 2013

TOWN OF NEWMARKET, NEW HAMPSHIRE
BUDGET COMMITTEE
APRIL 29, 2013
COUNCIL CHAMBERS 7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Ellen Snyder, Vice Chair Amy Thompson, Dana Glennon, Drew Kiefaber, Russ Simon, William "Blue" Foster, David Foltz, Town Council Rep Larry Pickering, School Board Rep Cliff Chase

EXCUSED: Judy Ryan

Welcome: Chair Ellen Snyder opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Glennon asked that they observe a moment of silence for the victims in Boston. Chair Snyder welcomed School Board Rep Cliff Chase to the Committee. Meg Louny-Moore will be his alternate. She announced that Judy Ryan was excused from the meeting.

March 25, 2013 Minutes: Mr. Glennon moved to approve the minutes of the March 25, 2013 meeting. Mr. Simon seconded. There was no discussion. Motion was approved 8 – 0 -1, with School Board Rep Chase abstaining as he had not attended the meeting.

Budget Committee Vacancy: Rose-Anne Kwaks and Michael Lang had applied for the one vacancy on the Committee.

Mr. Lang had no previous experience on town committees although he had run for School Board. He cited his belief in putting Newmarket at the forefront of decision making and his past work experience in financial and budgeting matters. Ms. Kwaks cited her 15 years of involvement on town boards, including Budget Committee, Town Council, ZBA and Planning, stating she wanted to continue serving.

Discussion: Board members individually thanked both applicants for volunteering. Mr. Kiefaber stated his support of Mr. Lane to encourage his interest in the town, as he felt Ms. Kwaks would continue to be involved. Mr. Glennon stated his support of Ms. Kwaks as he thought she would provide continuity as she was aware of what was happening fiscally in Newmarket. Mr. Foster stated he would support Mr. Lang as he showed initiative and could bring a fresh look to the Committee. Mr. Foltz stated he was on the fence in weighing experience against a fresh outlook on issues. Vice Chair Thompson stated that it had been a tough election year, adding that several hundred people had stood behind Ms. Kwaks. Town Council Rep Pickering encouraged Mr. Lang to continue his interest in the town if he was not elected. School Board Rep Chase stated his support of Mr. Lang as he would represent another constituency of the town, and said that Ms. Kwaks had added a lot to the town. Chair Snyder said this election was a new experience for the Committee, and Mr. Foster encouraged more people to volunteer as there were a number of vacancies for town boards.

Motion: Ms. Thompson moved to vote. Mr. Glennon seconded. Mr. Simon rephrased and moved to call the vote, which Mr. Glennon seconded. Those in favor of Mr. Lang: Mr. Kiefaber, Mr. Foster, Mr. Foltz, School Board Rep Chase, Chair Snyder. Those in favor of Ms. Kwaks: Town Council Rep Pickering, Mr. Simon, Mr. Glennon and Vice Chair Thompson. Mr. Lang was elected by a vote of 5 – 4, for the one-year position, and will be sworn in before the next meeting.

Meeting Attendance Protocol: Chair Snyder read from page 49 of the Budget Book which said that a committee member could be dismissed for missing 4 consecutive meetings unless excused. The book did not address a member missing numerous non-consecutive meetings, although some Committee members expressed concern about that happening. Chair Snyder will announce at the beginning of each meeting if an absent member is excused or not so that it may be documented in the minutes.

Budget Forum – discussion

Chair Snyder proposed the Committee consider holding an informational public forum to bring town and school budgeting issues together before the community. She thought the Town Council and School Board could each make a presentation, highlighting trends in expenses and revenues, future capital projects and other factors relating to each part of the budget. Each would also present its budget forecast, citing various factors involved. The two boards would then present a combined report of where they felt the town was headed, and then the forum could be open to questions from the community and discussion. She thought that they could ask a representative from LGC to provide an overall picture of budget issues and trends. She proposed that the forum take place in August when more information would be available.

The Committee discussed ways to interest and involve the community in the forum in light of the importance of the information. It was felt that, since the school was facing decisions that could make forecasting difficult, it could present the financial implications of each choice. It was stressed that the forum should be conducted in an objective manner. The Committee's responsibility is to make recommendations on the School and Town budgets, and the Committee would bring both groups together to outline how each can impact the overall tax rate in the future. There is a possibility that LGC and the NH SBA would be willing to conduct training sessions as part of the forum. The Committee expressed its inclination to move forward with a forum. The details of format and methods of publicizing the forum will be discussed at future meetings.

Budget-related Documents: All reports were distributed to update and inform the Committee, not necessarily for discussion at this point.

Town March Expense Report: The Budget Committee receives monthly reports from the Town Administrator, although it has no control over the existing budget. It was emphasized that as many parts of the budget are cyclical, a monthly report should not be looked at too deeply, but rather as an indication of trends. Quarterly reports give more accurate information for comparison and the bottom line can give an indication of where adjustments may be made to balance overspent with under spent items. The School Superintendent and Finance Director will be at the May 20th meeting to present similar information. However, any Committee member wanting more information about line items should direct questions through the Chair to the Town Administrator or School Superintendent.

Teacher and Police Union Contracts: The Police contract was not available for distribution at the time of the meeting. The school will have a fiscal analysis of the teachers' contract in August.

School and Town Employee 2012 Earnings: It was brought out that "earnings" figures were confusing as they were not defined. As the sum of all checks issued to employees, they could include retirement payouts to teachers, overtime, bonuses and police detail compensation, even though the latter earnings did not come from tax dollars. Those variables, along with length of service for teachers, were not mentioned in the report. It was thought that the Committee should recommend that clarifying details be added to the reports as they would be helpful to a complete understanding of the information.

School Insurance Premiums: School district contribution to insurance premiums varies by staff classification, and whether the employee was hired prior to or after 2007. Teachers and administrators hired before 2007 receive 89% district contribution, and those hired after 2007 receive 85% district contribution. This was compared to the town's insurance contribution rates with 51 employees receiving 80% town contribution and 2 long-time police officers receiving 90%. The general sense of the Committee was that the school and town work to bring their contribution rates closer together.

Budget Law Books: Chair Snyder will get current budget law books for Vice Chair Thompson, School Board Rep Chase, Mr. Glennon and Mr. Lang. The new edition will come out in September.

Information Requests for May 20, 2013 Budget Meeting:

School Superintendent Hayes and School Finance Director Blouin will attend the May 20th meeting. Some information will not be available until August, as the new teachers' contract takes effect on July 1 and the open insurance enrollment period begins on the same date. At that time, it would be helpful to know how many school employees fit into each insurance category. Chair Snyder synopsised Committee requests and will ask that they have up-to-date information on revenues and expenditures, where they expect to end the year, what they foresee for next year's budget, especially due

to the sequester and special education expenditures, and the status of big-ticket items. Much could be done in summary form at this time. It was also suggested that the Town Report use common definitions throughout, especially in the earnings categories, and that the School earning report have more detail.

Business: None

Next Meeting Date: May 20, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment: School Board Rep Chase moved to adjourn and Mr. Kiefaber seconded. Motion carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Adlington, Recording Secretary