Minutes December 6, 2023

A meeting of the Budget Committee was held on Wednesday, December 6, 2023, at the Hampstead Town Hall, 11 Main Street, Hampstead, NH. This meeting was broadcast live on HCTV 16.

**PRESENT:** Robert Weimar, Lewis Eaton (Ex-Officio), Lilli Walsh, and Steve Bates (arrived at 7:15 PM).

* 7:00 PM in the Town Hall Meeting Room
* Final Review of Document

Health & Welfare Donations

Weimar began review of the 2023 Budget Document and started with the Health & Welfare Donation section of the document. Weimar stated he added a preamble to the recommendations Walsh made and asked Walsh for any comments on the change. Weimar stated he also added a table summarizing the information Walsh provided regarding the health and human service agencies who have requested funding.

Walsh asked if each of the health and human service agencies should be asked to quantify the services provided to the residents of Hampstead. Weimar commented that he felt it was too late in the year to get more information.

S. Bates arrived at the meeting.

Weimar questioned why some of the agencies are on the warrant and others are not. Weimar suggested using a vetting process going forward. Walsh also had a document that was suggested be used for agencies requesting funding, this will be added to the document.

Weimar reviewed the overview section of the document and amended the section to indicate the Budget Committee is an advisory committee only, acting as a public information source with the ability to suggest research.

Library

Weimar is working with Kate Thomas, Library Director, on this section of the document. Weimar added that all departments mentioned in this report have seen what is contained within the document.

School Department and School Administrative Unit (SAU)

Weimar indicated that the School Board is taking exception to having any information in this report. Weimar stated as written this section explains the cost increases to the public. Weimar stated that all information in this section has been vetted by the School Administration. Weimar added that the Budget Committee is not trying to intercede with the school budget.

Eaton advised the committee that the BOS liaison to the School, Steve Morse, shared information with him regarding some history on the Budget Committee and School. In 2016 the Budget Committee challenged the School Board and were stifled due to the fact the Budget Committee is only advisory and is not an official Budget Committee. Per RSA 32:14 an ex-officio School Board member is needed to be a valid Budget Committee.

Weimar stated the objective of the Budget Committee is to inform the public and BOS, he feels this is a positive contribution to the process, explaining the increases beyond the control of the School. Weimar stated he will talk to the Chair of the SB.

Weimar personally feels it is a mistake to remove this section as he feels it is a positive contribution. Weimar added there has been collaboration this past year between the Town and School sharing resources. Eaton reiterated the majority of the increases to the School Budget are out of their control, Weimar agreed. Weimar thought it would be helpful to inform the public the concerns regarding Pre-K and K in town.

Fire Department

Weimar indicated he asked for the number of events responded to by the HFD and will add that information as a table in this section of the document. Weimar stated he would also add information regarding the need for a full-time fire fighter based on the increased need. Weimar added that Carrier is working out details regarding the ambulance service.

Department of Public Works (DPW)

Weimar stated his recommendation is the DPW continue to consolidate roles and become more efficient. Weimar feels the DPW Director modified the budget to get better value, Weimar commends J. Lavacchia, DPW Director on the changes he had made to date. Weimar added DPW has no control over Storm Water Management (SWM) costs as they are federally mandated.

Eaton asked about the NHDOT 10-year plan and referenced the intersection at Depot Road and Main Street. Weimar stated the SWM improvement for Ordway Park is on hold. The intersection is scheduled to be designed in 2024 and possibly constructed by 2027/2028.

Solid Waste & Recycling

Weimar stated he met with the Chair of this committee prior to the last Budget Committee meeting. Weimar stated the costs in this budget are driven by contracts. Weimar stated the suggestion is that DPW and SWR get together with NRRA to discuss concerns and ideas for the future. Weimar added in theory this has been agreed to.

Police Department

Walsh commented that the largest item in this budget is the new cruiser. Walsh stated Deputy Chief Kelley shared with her the long-term plan of action followed to replace vehicles, it is based on several factors including mileage, type of usage, etc. Walsh stated there are 8 cruisers being used by 15 officers, she added there is one vehicle specifically used for the K9 dog and his handler. Walsh stated the K9 officer and Reign have mandated training typically two times a month and the vehicle sees a lot of miles as the location of training may not be local.

Weimar suggested updating the document with the new information. Eaton stated he remembers the HPD talking about SUV’s versus cruisers. Walsh stated she believes going forward they are transitioning to SUV’s.

Other Departments

Weimar and Bates are working to finalize the table on page 23 of the document, these represent smaller numbers. Weimar stated he could always add a preamble to the section if more information is needed.

Weimar feels this “Annual Review Document” is meant to provide a template and start a process for future years and committee members.

Soucy suggested posting the document along with attachments to the Town webpage once presented to the BOS 12/11/2023.

* Minutes 11/30/2023

MOTION: L. Eaton made a motion to approve the 11/30/2023 minutes as presented.

SECOND: L. Walsh  
VOTE: 4-0

* Call for candidates – 2 members needed.

Weimar stated the Budget Committee is a 5-person board and can have up to 2 alternates. Weimar added he hopes folks see the value of the Budget Committee.

* Adjourn

MOTION: L. Walsh made a motion to adjourn at 7:50 P.M.

SECOND: L. Eaton  
VOTE: 4-0

The Budget Committee members will be in attendance at the 12/11/2023 BOS meeting to present their findings.

Minutes prepared by Debbie Soucy, Secretary