

**TOWN OF ENFIELD
ENFIELD BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES DECEMBER 28, 2023**

TIME: 6:30 PM

LOCATION: Dept. of Public Works Building & Teams Videoconference

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Jane Plumley, Dan Kiley, Nancy Smith, Mike Diehn, Jim Fickett, John Kluge (ex-officio), Shirley Green, Dimitri Deserranno

EXCUSED: Tina Stearns

OTHERS: Ed Morris, Town Manager; Alisa Bonnette, Assistant Town Manager

Members of the Public: Kate Minshall, Library Director; Kevin Marker, Recreation Director; Brad Rich, Roy Holland,

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Deserranno called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

MINUTES- December 14, 2023

Mr. Diehn made a motion to approve of the minutes as presented/amended. Mr. Kluge seconded.

Members of the Budget Committee (BC) discussed the minutes on the table.

Ms. Plumley requested that the sentence on page 2 be completed.

Mr. Morris stated that the sentence was with reference to salaries and will be completed to state: "Mr. Morris stated that.... slated increase in salaries."

Ms. Green requested to correct the spelling for the word 'eaves' on page 3.

Ms. Smith made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. Ms. Plumley seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (9-0)

Mr. Diehn requested that the line numbers be added to the minutes for easier reference.

Members of the committee agreed with his recommendation.

With no further discussion, the BC moved on to review the Library budget.

BUSINESS

Library Budget Review

Ms. Minshall stated that the only increase was the special projects being increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000 due to being in a new space.

Mr. Morris stated that other increases are related to the compensation study, which he will address later in the evening.

Mr. Diehn inquired about metrics related to library usage that can be brought forward to the Budget Committee.

Ms. Minshall stated that statistics are posted online each month, and she did not bring them forward but can do so in the future.

Ms. Plumley stated that knowing about the usage of online and digital data is helpful as well.

Mr. Diehn inquired if the number of people were tracked for usage of the public internet services.

Ms. Minshall stated that it is tricky with privacy, but there is a sign in sheet that can be used to anonymously collect data.

Mr. Morris stated that it may be possible to look at the hours of Wi-Fi utilized based on people using it from the parking lot.

Mr. Kiley inquired how many out-of-town users are using library resources such as subscription-based items like Hoopla.

Ms. Minshall stated that she has reviewed the policy for subscription-based items with the Library Trustees and it has been updated to only allow Enfield residents to access digital services.

Ms. Green stated that the number of adults and children that come to the library and attend the programs, such as the story time.

Mr. Morris stated that numbers may be down this year as the library is in its temporary location on Route 4A.

Ms. Minshall stated that she plans to continue to engage with students at the Enfield Village School, such as meeting classes at the Mascoma Lakeside Park pavilion or on the rail trail. She noted that, with the change in location, it can be anticipated that there will be an increase in the use of digital services, which influenced the change in policy as well.

Mr. Young inquired about why there are lawyer fees budgeted for the library.

Ms. Minshall stated that as the policies are revised, they need to go through the lawyer to ensure they are legal. She stated that it is possible that there may be a book that could be challenged, which would require her to seek legal counsel as well.

Mr. Young inquired about the breakout of the \$25,000 allocated for books and digital media.

Ms. Minshall stated that it breaks down to about \$15,000 books, and \$10,000 in digital media. She noted that there are trends with the age of residents as younger people moving into town use digital media but people with children tend to come to the library.

With no further comments or questions, Mr. Deserranno moved on to the next agenda item.

Recreation Budget Review

Kevin Marker stated that what was previously 'recreation programming' in the budget he broke down into summer programming and winter programming. He stated that there are increases in summer programming because buses are becoming more expensive, especially utilizing them out of season. He noted that some buses needed to be canceled in 2023 due to lack of lifeguards, or the trips were rained out. He noted that \$1,300 has been added for maintenance as much of the sand put on the baseball fields in June of 2022 has been washed away and the fields are overgrown with weeds. He stated that the infield was not tampered down, which leads to the sand washing away easily.

105 Mr. Diehn inquired how long the \$1,300 jock sand might last.
106
107 Mr. Marker stated that it is the first time it is being tried on that field so it will need to be assessed. He stated
108 that there is a steel drum at the DPW that can be utilized to tamp it down.
109
110 It was noted that Recreation Directors in the past have been part time and had other jobs which made it hard
111 for them to coordinate with the DPW work schedule and plan for those types of efforts.
112
113 Mr. Deserranno inquired who owns the building on Shaker Field.
114
115 Mr. Marker stated that the town does.
116
117 Ms. Plumley stated that the Lions Club helped pour the slab and move the building that is currently standing
118 on the property. She inquired about the bases that are still out on the baseball field.
119
120 Mr. Marker stated that the old bases are left out year-round, but the new bases are stored inside. He stated
121 that there is a 6 x 6 hole that is left when the bases are removed, and kids fill the holes with sand which
122 makes it hard to put them in, so the old ones are now left out during the off season.
123
124 Mr. Morris stated that we are looking at taking charge of organizing youth sports in coordination with the
125 Mascoma Youth Sports League (MYSL). He stated that there will be a revenue offset income for that
126 expense, with the hope of dividing the costs with other towns that participate with the sports league. He has
127 reached out to Canaan, Orange, Grafton, and Dorchester to discuss that possibility. He stated that that the
128 estimated Enfield residents make up about 50% of the participants in MYSL, and he used participation
129 percentages to break out proposed town contributions. He stated that the work related to MYSL will use
130 about 15 hours per week of the Recreation Directors time. He stated that the goal is to offset the costs and
131 support the management of MYSL with permanent staff instead of solely relying on volunteers.
132
133 Mr. Diehn inquired about what the source of income is for MYSL.
134
135 Mr. Morris stated that registration fees and grants are the main income for MYSL, and the registration fees
136 will come to the town instead of through MYSL. He noted that the registration fees will come into the town,
137 and there is an expense line to expend to have a revenue line.
138
139 Ms. Plumley inquired about the availability of the program to everyone, and inquired if business
140 sponsorships would be pursued.
141
142 Mr. Morris stated that there will be a similar scholarship program to ensure opportunities for youth
143 participation, and confirmed sponsorships will be accepted by the town. He noted that he encouraged MYSL
144 to maintain a board and operate as a parent organization and participate in a way that helps the engagement
145 for the kids, like hosting pizza parties, instead of running the business aspects of the organization.
146
147 Mr. Diehn inquired if there would be institutional memory and engagement.
148
149 Mr. Morris confirmed and stated that MYSL and the current Recreation Commission will also be a part of
150 the conversation. He stated that he proposed to the Select Board to start a reserve fund for recreation instead
151 of having the money run through the general fund.
152
153 Mr. Deserranno inquired about the financial support of MYSL from other towns and if it will affect current
154 registration fees.
155

Mr. Morris stated that registration fees will remain the same in the immediate future as they will help cover the cost difference in adding a full-time staff member to support youth sports.

Mr. Young inquired if the expenses for recreation personnel budget includes paying for expenses such as referees for youth sports.

Mr. Morris stated that referees have not been paid in the past so that is not included in the current budget. He noted that the increase in the personnel compensation is based on an increase in pay for personnel such as lifeguards.

Mr. Young inquired about whether the cost to takeover MYSL is estimated to cost \$38,000, which could be recovered by increased revenue and by adjusted fees.

Mr. Young inquired about the soccer nets which have been left out.

Mr. Marker stated that MYSL has a grant for new nets to be purchased which are stored in the sheds, and what is currently outside is no longer going to be used.

Mr. Rich inquired if MYSL is staying intact or if the town is taking control.

Mr. Morris stated that the MYSL board will be staying intact to maintain other tasks, while having the recreation director serve as administrative support for the organization.

Mr. Rich inquired if the current MYSL organization was working, what is the reason for the change.

Members of the BC and the public stated that MYSL has faced a lot of challenges, including high turnover in volunteers and board members, which makes it hard to remain consistently operated. It was noted that there are a limited number of parent volunteers who are supporting the organization, and they have supported the process of having the town involved in administering the program.

Mr. Morris stated that the goal is to add consistency and support to the youth sports in town.

Mr. Plumley stated that there is a history of having volunteer referees, and inquired if we can anticipate that to continue or consider that we may need to pay for those services in the future.

Mr. Morris stated that there has been trouble with finding volunteer coaches and referees, and it may be necessary to set a limit to the number of children able to play if there aren't enough coaches. He stated that umpires and referee volunteers are a little different, but it will be asked for parents to help with that as well.

Ms. Plumley stated that it was a considerable amount of work and is there a position and commission that can support making that happen, in addition to MYSL members participating.

Mr. Marker noted that he also has other resources available, such as local recreation departments, which will help support the needs of youth programming as well.

Mr. Morris stated that the town insurance company has also offered help with policies associated with youth sports, which will be extremely helpful. He noted that volunteers are already included in the town insurance and programming, as it is within the normal functioning of the town.

With no further comments or questions, Mr. Deserranno moved on to the next agenda item.

Regional Organization Budget Review

Ms. Green stated that members of the Regional Organization Subcommittee met with Shantelle Delworth, the head of Human Services, to review the regional organization requests submitted to the town. She noted that the total amount to budget is lower than last year as there were two organizations that did not have complete applications, and there was more than one organization that did not submit an application.

Mr. Kluge inquired if groups that have applied in the past were reached out to.

Mr. Morris stated that a letter is typically sent with the application that includes the deadline for applications.

Mr. Rich inquired if it was known why Advanced Transit didn't submit a request. He stated that when Advanced Transit met with the Master Planning Committee it seemed as if they would be asking for more money.

Mr. Kiley stated that Advanced Transit has a new Executive Director, and Mascoma Community Health is in the midst of a merger, and communications may have been lost in turnover.

Mr. Morris stated that a date was set for an annual application deadline and confirmed that Ms. Delworth did reach out to each organization prior to the deadline.

With no further discussion, Mr. Deserranno moved on to the next agenda item.

Budget Review

Mr. Morris stated that \$80,000 is being budgeted to offset funding that is anticipated to be received in 2024. He noted that the town received \$422,000 for the meals and rooms tax, which is an increase from the previous year, when \$350,000 was budgeted. He stated that motor vehicle permits were down by \$125,000, which may have been affected by the higher interest rates.

Mr. Kiley stated that he doesn't see that the revenue for the ambulance services.

Mr. Morris stated that he believes the revenue numbers are off, but the number of Enfield responses is down overall. He noted that the number of calls for service are consistent with last year, but Lebanon has been responding to more calls. He stated that the calls for service are close to where they were last year, but Lebanon has been picking up more of the calls. He stated that the ambulance lines for the upcoming budget have been adjusted to allocate more to the contracting with Lebanon for response than to the ambulance wages.

Mr. Morris stated that the \$10,000 which was budgeted to replace the backstop at Huse Park is going to be reallocated to the refinishing of the Community Building floors. He noted that \$11,500 has been added to the culvert budget, which is being requested to be offset by FEMA funding for stormwater mitigation which has been received and noted that the offset will be revisited in the next budget year. He added that the town has replaced a lot of culverts - including 26 so far this year, and the funding will support the stormwater mitigation work that is necessary to maintain the current culvert replacement cycle.

Mr. Deserranno inquired about the undesignated balance, and he anticipated it to be lower this year than it has been in prior years.

Mr. Morris stated that the undesignated funds have not been totaled yet and noted that there is \$59,000 in FEMA money that will be included in the balance because it was not budgeted to spend in the year it was received. He stated that the expenditures for the 2023 budget year have not been finalized yet, which is why the information is not available yet, but information should be available mid-January. He noted that there is a

bonus program which was put in place, which will be funded by the lack of expenditure from the personnel line from not being fully staffed.

Members of the BC and Ms. Bonnette discussed the finalization of financials that do not occur until the close of the calendar year.

Members of the BC discussed trends of revenues and expenditures related to vehicle registrations and the ambulance department.

Mr. Deserranno inquired what percentage of the budget increase is due to the two building projects.

Mr. Morris stated that the increase in last year's general fund budget was 8.27%, which does not include debt services. Including debt service, the general fund increase is 11.04%. He stated that the current total municipal increase for the upcoming year would be 18.9% including CIP, debt service, and general fund, but that is not acceptable and will be reduced. It was noted that last year's increase was 15.9%.

Mr. Rich stated that double digit increases multiple years in a row is difficult for people on a fixed income.

Mr. Morris stated that the buildings are having an impact on those increases, and the goal is to balance the budget and the revenues to try to offset costs. He stated that the general fund increase is currently at 8.2%, and it is the buildings and CIP that is added to the tax rate that contributes to the overall increase.

Members of the BC discussed the tax increases to include the school tax rate and how that impacts Enfield residents.

Mr. Deserranno stated that he would like to be cognizant that the undesignated fund balance should not be used to try to lower the tax impact. He noted that services need to be maintained, and we cannot erode the undesignated fund in the process.

Roy Holland stated that the increases associated with buildings were approved by voters at Town Meeting, and the focus should be on the general fund and the services that residents want. He noted that the cost of inflation affects those services, and there is no cutting out the approved projects, so the only way to save money is to cut services.

Mr. Deserranno stated that both building projects were approved by voters and are outside of the purview of the Budget Committee and acknowledged that reducing the budget may involve reducing the service offered. He stated that the Select Board decides what the staffing level is, but if staffing was reduced it would also reduce the services fulfilled by the town. He noted that the committee can make recommendations for changes, but the ultimate decision is made by the Select Board and Town Manager. He added that there also seems to be some miscommunication or misunderstanding surrounding the loans as well.

Mr. Young stated that the assessment of town owned property and buildings was a multi-year project that started in 2019, and the recommendations brought forward by the committee were made to improve the town and services associated with it, and to attract people to the town.

With no further discussion, Mr. Morris moved on to review compensation with members of the committee.

Compensation Review

Mr. Morris stated that, in reviewing the compensation study, there were a couple of people who were around 30% underpaid, but most staff were within 2% of what their compensation should be. He noted that a placeholder has been put in as a 5% increase in compensation, which includes COLA and merit. He stated that he plans to update the compensation for anyone who was 20% under market over the course of two

years, and a four-year program for those who are in the 30% range. He stated that the COLA was based on the Boston metric of 2.8%.

Mr. Diehn inquired about the total if no one was caught up with the compensation study and only got the COLA, and what the total would be to catch everyone up according to the compensation study, to include the salary and benefit increase. He stated that comparing the worst-case and best-case scenarios can be helpful for the overall conversation.

Members of the BC and Mr. Morris discussed the compensation study and implementation within the proposed budget.

Mr. Young stated that there was a great classification of the positions included in the compensation study. He stated that the information presented will help align the positions and pay with demand.

Mr. Deserranno inquired what problem was being solved by moving to a step program when it hasn't been used in the past.

Mr. Morris stated that there were many years where employees were only getting COLA raises and we fell behind in the market, which leads to losing people and having difficulty with recruitment.

Mr. Holland stated that he has been an employee of the town for over 20 years, and up until 2005 there was a step program in place. He stated that the pay had remained competitive, but when the practice was discontinued the merit and COLA raises barely met the COLA minimum increase. He noted that there is a history of raises being inconsistent and then having a jump to try to keep up with the market, which is what the compensation study reflects.

Members of the Budget Committee discussed how a step plan would be implemented.

Ms. Green inquired if a step raise would work in the current wage climate where things such as bonuses are being offered.

Mr. Kluge stated that he came onto the board during a recession in which some towns in New Hampshire declared bankruptcy. He stated that there was a freeze on raises during that time, with a noted commitment to maintaining jobs and positions for the employees. He noted that we are at the mercy of a national economy as well as our local economy and he likes the step program, but it is a tool.

Mr. Young stated that we may not need a written policy for the implementation of step raises, but there should be a clear philosophy and objective. He stated that economic conditions change and there needs to be flexibility.

Consideration of appointment to fill vacancy on the Committee (Rich)

Mr. Deserranno welcomed Mr. Rich to speak to the BC regarding his application for appointment.

Mr. Rich stated that he has run a company and worked with budgets in that capacity, but this is his first introduction to municipal finance, and he will be happy to ask questions and learn more about it.

Ms. Plumley made a motion to accept Bradley Rich to the Budget Committee. Mr. Kluge seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (8-0).

Ms. Bonnette informed Mr. Rich that his appointment will need to be renewed in 2024.

OTHER BUSINESS**Public Comment**

Mr. Deserranno requested comments or questions from the public.

Ms. Plumley stated that she received information regarding updated standards for firefighter turnout gear and she will pass the information to Mr. Morris to share with the fire chief as it will be pertinent to the purchase of new gear.

With no further comments for questions, members of the BC moved on to adjournment.

NEXT MEETING

January 18th @ 6:30pm, @ Public Works; Budget Review

January 25th @ 6:30pm @ Public Works; Budget Review & Presentation Preparation

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kluge made a motion to adjourn at 8:51pm. Mr. Kiley seconded. A roll call vote was cast. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (8-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 pm.