

**TOWN OF ENFIELD  
ENFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MEETING MINUTES FEBRUARY 2, 2022**

**TIME:** 7:00 PM  
**LOCATION:** DPW Facility

**PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING— 7:00 PM**

*Hearings may start later, but not earlier than the posted time.*

**PRESENT**

**Board of Selectmen:** Katherine D.P. Stewart, John W. Kluge

**Budget Committee:** Erik Russell, Nancy Smith, Jean Patten, Shirley Green, , John Kluge (BOS), Nancy Smith, Dimitri Deserranno, Mike Diehn

**ABSENT:** Sam Eaton, Wendy Piper

**ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF:** Alisa Bonnette, Assistant Town Manager; Ed Morris, Town Manager

**OTHERS:** Emily Curtis, recording secretary; David Beaufait, Kurt Gotthardt

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Russell called the Budget Committee meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Mr. Kluge called the Selectboard meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

**PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING— 7:00 PM**

Mr. Russell opened the Public Budget Hearing regarding the proposed 2022 Budget.

Mr. Russell presented a Power Point presentation regarding the proposed budget by the Budget Committee for 2022. Mr. Deserranno arrived during the Power Point presentation. After the presentation, Mr. Russell opened the floor for public comments and questions.

Mr. Gotthardt stated that the City of Lebanon recently had a meeting regarding their proposed budget, and it included information for current positions and pay ranges, which may be helpful to look at. He stated that, at the most recent Budget Committee meeting, there was discussion regarding the reconsideration of pay raises for employees and he researched economic data over the course of the last twenty years and found that Enfield consistently had a lower or equal full value tax rate and a higher household income than Canaan and Lebanon. He stated that, according to the data, residents in this Enfield make more money than surrounding towns on average and noted that there is a difference between what you want to pay for and what you can pay for.

Mr. Gotthardt added that in 2019 he petitioned a warrant article regarding the decommissioning of streetlights in town which was passed by voters. He stated that decommissioning the streetlights could be a large cost savings and acting on it would assist with reductions to the budget.

Mr. Russell stated that the Town Manager made reductions to the proposed 2022 budget to accommodate the raises which were approved by the Budget Committee in the last meeting.

Mr. Kluge stated that the Selectboard did act on the decommissioning of some streetlights with the assistance of a site study completed by the Chief of Police.

Mr. Russell requested any further comments or questions regarding the information presented. With no further comments, Mr. Russell moved on to review the 2022 Warrant Articles.

#### **2022 Warrant Articles – Review Articles 7 – 14**

Mr. Russell stated that the articles would be reviewed in the public hearing, and once the public hearing was closed the Budget Committee would vote on each article.

#### **Article 7 – Whitney Hall Expansion & Renovation (\$5,802,150)**

Ms. Stewart noted that the borrowed amount is lower than the raise and appropriate amount as listed because it is anticipated that there will be a withdrawal from the Library Capital Reserve Fund, and therefore a lower amount will be borrowed.

Ms. Green stated that the library has \$400,000 in private fundraising money, and they expect to raise more funds which will help lower the amount necessary to borrow.

Ms. Stewart stated that the wording in the article needs to reflect the full amount of the project costs to be raised and appropriated, even if other means of financial support which have been discussed, such as private fundraising or grants, are used.

Mr. Morris confirmed and added that the article would state the bond to be raised and appropriated ‘up to’ the maximum amount which still allows for the bond to be set lower should other funding be received. He stated that he has been collecting data regarding a 30-year bond and how that would affect the tax valuation and plans to bring the information to be presented at Town Meeting.

Mr. Deserranno stated that the timing will never be right and added that economic changes will continue over the life of the bond note, which is 30 years, but the reality is that there are holes in the roof of Whitney Hall and the time for action is now.

Mr. Kiley stated that the project has gone from \$4.5 million to \$5.8 million in 15 months. He added that the project includes improvements which would lower operating costs, such as heat efficiency. He stated that it is possible that the bond would need to be higher than the amount presented because if the cost of the project goes higher between now and when construction begins then items will need to be cut, as has happened with other projects such as the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Morris stated that it will take well over a year to begin construction and there is a bridge article in the warrant to ask for the difference, if necessary, in 2023. A similar request for additional funding could be made for this project.

Dr. Beaufait stated that trying to sell a lower number than is necessary to build was not ideal. He stated that there should be a rationale for the construction amount and how it will be paid for before it is brought before the voters.

Mr. Young inquired how the fundraising from the Library Trustees could be reflected in the article if the amount for the bond was not going to be adjusted.

Mr. Morris stated that up until the time the bond is taken out the amount of the bond can be lowered, which will lower the tax impact. He added that the funding could be used to supplement the bond payments which would also lower the effect to taxpayers should funding be provided after the bond is taken out. He stated that once the bond was taken out the tax impact is locked in, but bond payments can be used to lower the tax rate in the future if it is not all used in the project.

Mr. Russell requested any further comments or questions regarding Article 7. With no further inquiries, he moved on to the next article for discussion.

**Article 8 – Public Safety Facility (\$7,259,066)**

Mr. Russell stated that Article 8 pertained to the proposed public safety facility.

Mr. Kluge stated that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) made the recommendation to separate the articles to bring forward to voters.

Mr. Gotthardt stated that it may be more than a year before ground would be broken to construct the facility and inquired about when the interest rate would be locked in.

Mr. Morris stated that the interest rate is set when the bond is taken out.

Mr. Young stated that the disposal of property such as Shedd Street and Union Street could also be presented as an opportunity for revenue at Town Meeting.

Ms. Stewart stated that she would support the lots being sold as taxable parcels so that there would be income from the sale of the property as well as ongoing tax income.

Mr. Morris stated that he has prepared information to present to the voters regarding the current valuations. He stated that the Whitney Hall project would cost around \$48 per \$100,000 valuation and the public safety facility would be about \$62 per \$100,000 valuation. He stated that together, it would cost taxpayers around \$110 per \$100,000 valuation. He stated that the information would be presented at Town Meeting, and he was also working with Bread Loaf to gather information regarding the cost savings in operational costs for the improvements being made.

Dr. Beaufait stated that with needing to acquire the land and a two or more-year delay, he anticipated it would cost more than what is presented, and it may be premature to bond. He inquired if it would make sense to amend the article and bond for negotiations to purchase the land. He stated that the costs would continue to rise and inquired if a higher cost could be covered by the bond.

Mr. Morris stated that he has looked at the project and has had discussions with the fire chief and he believed there were places where money could be saved in the facility and that the \$7.25 million was appropriate to move forward.

Mr. Deserranno inquired if the bonds for Whitney Hall and the public safety facility were passed if the projects would run concurrently.

Mr. Russell stated that there would be a longer process for the public safety facility due to the land acquisition requirements and added that the projects were not required to be completed within the same timeline. He stated that there would need to be an exchange of votes between the Board of Selectmen and the School Board regarding the sale and purchase of the land.

Mr. Gotthardt inquired if the purchase of the land would be separate from the cost of the project as proposed.

Mr. Morris stated that the purchase of the land is not included in Bread Loaf's current projected costs but he believed there were cost savings which could help with making room for the land purchase within the current estimated costs.

Members of the Budget Committee and BOS discussed the potential land costs associated with the recommended site location.

Mr. Russell stated that an estimate for the purchase of land should be completed and noted that the costs included in the article are related to the site preparations and construction costs as presented by Bread Loaf. He stated he did not recommend amending the article to include items that did not have an estimated cost.

Mr. Morris agreed with Mr. Russell and stated that he did not recommend including the land purchase in the article and added that there would be a separate article for voters to approve the purchase of land in the future.

Mr. Gotthardt stated that there is a Land Acquisition Trust Fund and inquired if it could be used.

Ms. Bonnette stated the Land Acquisition Trust Fund was established for recreation, conservation, and other municipal purposes.

Mr. Deserranno inquired why the proposal was being presented this year if it would take up to two years to make further progress on the project.

Mr. Morris stated that the first phase of the project, which involves designing the facility, takes a significant amount of time. He stated that if the voters were to approve the project now it gives the opportunity to lock the bond in at a lower interest rate while that work is being done.

Ms. Stewart stated that presenting the information and allowing voters to make an informed choice is a necessary measure. She added that when the school project was presented at \$13 million and it was voted down, federal funding was lost in the process and the project ended up costing \$23 million.

Ms. Bonnette noted that the amount of money in the Land Acquisition Trust Fund, as presented in the 2021 Annual Town Report, does not directly represent what is available to spend.

Mr. Kluge stated his agreement with Ms. Stewart and the necessity to bring the information to the voters to get their feedback.

Mr. Russell requested any further comments or questions regarding Article 8. With no further inquiries, he moved on to the next article for discussion.

#### **Article 9 – Oak Hill Road Bridge Funding (\$130,000)**

Mr. Russell stated that the undesignated fund has reached the goal balance and the use of undesignated funds regarding \$280,000 of recommended purchases for Article 9, Article 10, and Article 13, will assist in maintaining the appropriate balance.

Mr. Russell requested any comments or questions regarding Article 9. With no further inquiries, he moved on to the next article for discussion.

**Article 10 – Roadside Mowing Unit \$120,000)**

Mr. Morris stated that he and Mr. J. Taylor have identified another piece of equipment that is not a full-size tractor, but it is a roadside mowing unit that would hook up to a loader, which would cost about \$80,000. He stated that they are trying to establish a sales agreement to put a hold on the equipment until the purchase is approved at Town Meeting. He added that if the sales agreement is finalized, the article is planned to be amended on the floor at Town Meeting for the lower amount of \$80,000.

Mr. Russell requested any further comments or questions regarding Article 10. With no further inquiries, he moved on to the next article for discussion.

**Article 11 – Proposed Operating Budget (\$7,567,247)**

Mr. Russell stated that Article 11 is the general budget recommendation which has been discussed in previous meetings. With no further inquiries, he moved on to the next article for discussion.

**Article 12 – Deposit to Capital Improvement Program Capital Reserve Fund (\$500,768)**

Mr. Russell reviewed Article 12 and requested any further comments or questions. With no further inquiries, he moved on to the next article for discussion.

**Article 13 – Deposit to Employee and Retiree Benefits Trust Fund (\$30,000)**

Mr. Russell reviewed Article 13 and requested any comments or questions.

Mr. Deserranno inquired if the article should state that it has no tax impact.

Ms. Bonnette stated that notes regarding no tax impact are included in the warrant narrative.

With no further inquiries, Mr. Russell moved on to the next article for discussion.

**Article 14 – Whitney Hall Repairs (\$150,000)**

Mr. Russell reviewed Article 14 and stated that the article is intended to support necessary repairs to Whitney Hall in the event Article 7 fails.

Ms. Stewart stated that Article 14 was moved down in the warrant to allow time for Article 7 to close and confirm if it passed or not. She added that, if Article 7 passes, Article 14 will be tabled. She added that it would also be possible to amend Article 14 on the floor to a higher amount.

Mr. Gotthardt inquired if it would be possible to get quotes from local contractors prior to Town Meeting which would help indicate if the \$150,000 was enough or not.

Mr. Kluge stated that if Article 7 did not pass this year it would be brought forward again next year, and while it may take more than \$150,000, he would be cautious with raising it too high. He agreed that if it was to be amended, it should be brought forward at Town Meeting.

Mr. Deserranno inquired as to the last proposal that was completed for maintenance or repair to Whitney Hall.

Mr. J. Taylor stated that Trumbull Nelson did a major overhaul in 1992 or 1993, which is also when the elevator shaft was installed. He added that other smaller projects have taken place such as fixing the front porch or painting it in sections.

Members of the Budget Committee discussed adding the wording for Article 14 to reflect the urgency for repairs to be made to Whitney Hall if Article 7 does not pass.

Dr. Beaufait stated that the wording 'if Article 7 does not pass' and 'for temporary emergency funding' may make it clear in the warrant what the goal is.

Mr. Russell stated that the wording is under the purview of the BOS and stated that if they wished to amend the wording it can be done after the public hearing is closed.

Mr. Russell requested any further comments or questions regarding Article 14 or any other article within the warrant. With no further inquiries, he moved on to closing the public hearing.

Mr. Russell closed the Public Budget Hearing at 8:38pm.

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE**

Mr. Russell stated that the approval of minutes was tabled until the next meeting and moved on to the next agenda item.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### **Discussion/Vote on 2022 Warrant Articles**

Mr. Russell stated that the BOS voted on the warrant articles in their February 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, and the Budget Committee would move forward with their vote for each article.

##### **Article 7**

The Board of Selectmen recommends this article by a vote of 3-0.

Mr. Diehn made a motion to recommend Article 7. Ms. Smith seconded. Vote passes in favor of the motion (6-3).

##### **Article 8**

The Board of Selectmen recommends this article by a vote of 3-0.

Ms. Smith made a motion to recommend Article 8. Mr. Diehn seconded. Vote passes in favor of the motion (5-4).

##### **Article 9**

The Board of Selectmen recommends this article by a vote of 3-0.

Mr. Kiley made a motion to recommend Article 9. Ms. Smith seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (9-0).

##### **Article 10**

The Board of Selectmen recommends this article by a vote of 3-0.

Mr. Deserranno made a motion to recommend Article 10. Mr. Kiley seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (9-0).

##### **Article 11**

The Board of Selectmen recommends this article by a vote of 3-0.

Mr. Kluge made a motion to recommend Article 11. Ms. Smith seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (9-0).

##### **Article 12**

The Board of Selectmen recommends this article by a vote of 3-0.

Mr. Kiley made a motion to recommend Article 12. Ms. Smith seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (8-1).

#### **Article 13**

The Board of Selectmen recommends this article by a vote of 3-0.

Ms. Green made a motion to recommend Article 13. Ms. Smith seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (9-0).

#### **Article 14**

The Board of Selectmen recommends this article by a vote of 3-0.

After brief discussion by the Selectboard members, Ms. Stewart made a motion to amend the Article 14 to begin with the words 'If Article 7 does not pass' and update the wording to state, 'emergency repairs.' Mr. Kluge seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (2-0).

Mr. Kluge made a motion to recommend Article 14 as amended by the Selectboard. Ms. Smith seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (9-0).

#### **OTHER BUSINESS/PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Russell stated the conclusion of the review of monied Warrant Articles and recommendations from the Budget Committee.

Mr. Russell requested any comments from the public. With no further comments or questions, the Budget Committee and BOS moved on to adjournment.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Kluge made a motion to adjourn the Budget Committee meeting at 8:46pm. Ms. Smith seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (9-0).

Ms. Stewart made a motion to adjourn the BOS meeting at 8:47pm. Mr. Kluge seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (2-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 pm.