

Enfield Budget Committee MINUTES
Wednesday, September 6th, 2017
DPW Building 6:30PM

Members present: Dominic Albanese, Eric Crate, Shirley Green (Vice Chair), Nancy Smith, Holly West

Excused: James Buffington, Fred Cummmings, Sam Eaton (Chair), Mark Eisener

Absent: Mike Diehn

Others Present: Ryan Aylesworth, Town Manager; Annabelle Bamforth (minutes)

Administrative: Shirley called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m.

Approval of minutes:

Holly motioned to accept the minutes of the July 31 meeting, and Eric seconded.

Discussion:

Holly noted a number of errors in the draft minutes, as well as the existence of a second draft of minutes containing additional commentary, including comments about the TIF district and the sewage deficit.

Ryan noted that when Alisa receives draft minutes, she typically posts them quickly. It appeared that an initial draft was submitted, and then a second draft with additional content was submitted; the second draft appeared to have replaced the first on the town website.

There was a discussion among members about the issue of submitting changes to draft minutes prior to discussion among the committee.

The committee reviewed the second draft, seeking to determine what was said during the meeting and what was commentary. Shirley questioned whether explanations that hadn't been spoken during a meeting should be included, and Dominic responded that they should not.

Holly suggested that the committee could collectively revise the second draft.

Holly noted that one significant issue with the minutes was the frequent use of the word "we", which makes it hard to determine who said what.

Shirley asked if members should further review the minutes and submit changes at a later time. Ryan noted that there was a lot to correct on the fly.

Nancy motioned to delay the approval of the July 31 draft minutes, and Eric seconded; the motion was approved unanimously.

Dominic made another motion to request that version 2 of the draft minutes be removed from the town website and repost the original draft to the website; Eric seconded.

Discussion: Ryan said he could ask Alisa to remove version 2 and repost version 1 on the town website. Holly asked if a note should be attached to the first version illustrating that the second version was posted in error. She also expressed concern about confusing the public with varying drafts.

Ryan said that if the committee's intent is to have least amount of confusion, perhaps the second draft should be left as is on the town website and allow this meeting's draft minutes to illustrate that there are actions being taken to correct this situation.

Dominic said that the moment a draft is submitted to the town office, it should be the only acceptable version.

Following further discussion, Dominic withdrew his initial motion and made a motion instead that a copy with changes made by the committee will be furnished to Annabelle and voted on at the next meeting. Nancy seconded the motion; upon no further discussion, the committee voted unanimously in favor.

New Business

Budget process:

Ryan distributed copies of the 2018 budget requests. He also shared a memo addressed to town departments, commissions and committees that lays out a timeline for requests and includes a capital request form template. This memo outlines protocols and deadlines for purchase requests.

Dominic said one of the reasons the Town Manager Search Committee appreciated Ryan's candidacy was his ability to locate and secure grants. Ryan said that he will work with departments to submit applications; the applications may not bear fruit this year, but will signify the process moving forward.

Sewer:

Ryan shared with the committee a memo to the Board of Selectmen about suggested strategies to address the sewer deficit. Ryan noted that he has met with DPW Director Jim Taylor on multiple occasions and these drafted ideas are based on discussions during those meetings. During last night's Board of Selectmen meeting, Ryan explained to the Board that these are not recommendations but suggestions with estimates of revenue alongside each.

Suggestion #6 is related to transferring funds from the water surplus. Ryan clarified that Enfield's sewer/water relationship is different than other cities where water and sewer are separate; Enfield's water and sewer shares some pieces of equipment which might make this suggestion feasible.

Suggestion #3 compels sewer hookups. Ryan said a draft letter establishing a deadline has been created and that there are 19 properties on the Route 4 line that did not connect to the and took no action, and 7 properties received waivers. The deadline letter is scheduled to be mailed on Sep. 19 to properties that have not taken action. The letter provides the option to request a for owners under extenuating circumstances .

Dominic questioned the use of the word "unlimited" regarding waivers in a letter that former Town Manager Steve Schneider sent to the same property owners in 2013 when the sewer extension was taking place, and that "unlimited" sounded like forever. Ryan said he plans on reviewing meeting minutes to review the circumstances that led to the granting of earlier waivers, hoping that considerations in those waiver cases were documented. Some members of the committee agreed that the language of Mr. Schneider's 2013 letter could be interpreted various ways.

Dominic suggested sharing Ryan's drafted letter with town counsel to be sure the wording is concrete and doesn't provide various interpretations. Ryan said he would consider doing this. Nancy asked if there were commercial properties not hooked on. Ryan said he hadn't checked through the list thoroughly.

Ryan said the purpose of the letter was to address both the hookup situation and the deficit issue. He said there has been interest from homeowners in hooking onto the Route 4A line, but that line is a forced main which requires home clusters hooking on, as opposed to the gravity lines on Route 4 that can accept single homes.

Dominic observed that there is a 300' sewer hookup requirement on Route 4, and no requirement on Route 4A. Dominic questioned the existence of two different policies on either side of the lake. Ryan noted that the two sewers vary in type which results in different policies. Dominic asked how the town should address policies that appear to be inconsistent.

Ryan said the town's intent is to stem the tide and address the deficit within 5 years and that January is the proposed time frame to start implementing strategies.

Ryan told the committee about a construction mishap on Route 4A during the sewer extension work; there was blasting conducted near Fosters Circle that resulted in a large chunk of pavement damaging a transformer.

Ryan shared a list of numerous goals and objectives that he has prepared for the town and explained to the committee that he was committed to maintaining consistent communication and transparency.

Public comment: none

Next meeting: The committee discussed the need to establish meeting dates for the upcoming budget season, as well as scheduling quarterly meetings between the budget committee and the Board of Selectmen. Shirley explained that beginning in October, meetings become a weekly occurrence and there is also a Saturday meeting held each year. Tuesday, October 3rd was proposed as a date for the next meeting.

Other business:

Dominic suggested having the Board of Selectmen join the budget committee to coordinate the transition from the old budget process to Ryan's revised process. Ryan said in his previous town, all requests would go into a master document and any questions would be addressed to the proper department. He asked the committee how it handles budget requests.

Members of the committee explained to Ryan that department heads meet independently with an assigned budget committee member serving as a liaison to review the department's request. By the time the department head meets with an assigned budget committee liaison, the department head's meeting with the town manager has already occurred; the discussions are not concurrent. Shirley added that the dates of the departments' scheduled presentations to the full budget committee are published beforehand. Dominic noted that this process facilitates the committee in remaining neutral.

Ryan said that he believed it's virtually impossible to set a target tax rate because of many unforeseen circumstances, mostly related to estimated revenues vs actual revenues. Shirley said in past years, the budget committee has engaged in discussions about where they'd like the budget to be.

Dominic brought up zero-based budgeting and said he would like to discuss that more.

Members of the committee told Ryan that among multiple years, there were significant items missing from the budget on multiple occasions; last year overlay was missing from the budget, and one year \$300K in capital items were not included in the budget.

Ryan brought up the state of the undesignated fund (UDF). He said that in Massachusetts undesignated funds are not applied to plug budget holes. Dominic said that the selectmen don't hold a vote to apply the UDF to cover deficits, which has resulted in a lack of transparency regarding where the funds went, as well as the budget committee and residents not being alerted to festering budget problems.

Holly said she would like to review the full process of how the town makes expenditures.

Dominic told the committee that the school had a surplus this year and that Enfield's share is about about \$500K. He asked Ryan to find additional information before the October meeting.

Dominic moved to adjourn the meeting and Eric seconded; Shirley adjourned the meeting at 8:37.