

**TOWN OF ENFIELD
ENFIELD BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES DECEMBER 16, 2021**

TIME: 7:00 PM

LOCATION: Dept. of Public Works Building & Zoom Teleconference

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Erik Russell, Jean Patten, Shirley Green, Nancy Smith, Dan Kiley, Dimitri Deserranno, Mike Diehn, Sam Eaton, Wendy Piper (7:25), John Kluge (Board of Selectmen)

OTHERS: Jack Wozmak, Interim Town Manager; Alisa Bonnette, Assistant Town Manager; Emily Curtis, Recording Secretary; Roy Holland, Chief of Police; Scott Johnston, Highway Supervisor, and other members of the public

CALL TO ORDER

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

ADMINISTRATIVE

Approval of previous meeting minutes – November 18, 2021 & December 2, 2021

Ms. Patten made a motion to accept the November 18, 2021, minutes as printed. Mr. Diehn seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (7-0). Mr. Eaton abstained.

Mr. Diehn made a motion to accept the December 2, 2021, minutes as printed. Ms. Patten seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (7-0). Mr. Eaton abstained.

NEW BUSINESS

Committee Adjustments to the Proposed 2022 Budget

Mr. Russell stated that the Budget Committee has reviewed each department in the budget and there have been a number of substantial changes made to the proposed budget. He stated this is an opportunity to revisit the updated proposed budget for each department for 2022 and, if requests for changes are made, Mr. Wozmak can be requested to speak with those departments. He stated that the overall increase is about 3.1% from the previous year's budget, which is about \$196,000. He stated that CIP proposals can be discussed at the upcoming meeting in January.

Mr. Russell requested comments from the Committee regarding further discussion or recommendations regarding the budget.

Ms. Patten stated that everyone did a good job with their presentations, but she does not think there was a deep discussion regarding each of the departments and stated she would have liked to have seen an overall summary of increases for each department.

Mr. Russell stated it was reviewed with each department presentation, and most changes that remain are related to wages. He noted he is requesting any proposed changes to any department budget that do not have to do with wages.

Mr. Eaton inquired where the surplus is this year.

Ms. Bonnette stated that there is currently about \$1.1 million dollars unexpended. She noted that there are encumbrances, final bills, and final payroll that have not been finalized which would reduce the unexpended funds. She added that the Recreation Department and Library were the highest unexpended departments due

to vacancies. She noted that there have been more vacancies in the Town than any other year, and the vacancies have been empty for a significant period of time which would affect the overall expended payroll.

Mr. Wozmak stated that direct payroll, the retirement system, health insurance, workers compensation account for about \$500,000. He stated that with the vacancies, these ancillary elements contribute to a higher unexpended amount.

Mr. Eaton requested information regarding the total budgeted payroll versus the expended payroll for the last three years.

Mr. Deserranno noted that the Capital Reserve fund totaling over \$520,000 had not been expended yet from the general fund, which accounts for a sizable portion of the \$1.1 million unexpended.

Mr. Kiley inquired if the Board of Selectmen could make the request to change the timeline in which the Capital Reserve adjustments were made within the year so that the budget numbers can be finalized by November of each year instead of waiting until the last two weeks of the calendar year. He noted that finalizing the numbers earlier would make projections more accurate to utilize in the budget recommendation process.

Members of the Budget Committee discussed the current unexpended funds and what may affect the final total at the end of the year. Through discussion it was determined that there would be an estimated \$400,000 unexpended, which aligns more closely with what is usually seen at this time in the budget year.

Mr. Russell requested any further discussion regarding individual department budgets. With no further comments or questions, the Budget Committee moved on to the next agenda item.

Discussion And Decisions of Proposed Rate Adjustments

Mr. Russell stated that proposed rate adjustments for positions which will identify individuals will be held in nonpublic session.

Mr. Eaton made a motion to go into nonpublic session pursuant to 91-A; 32: a at 7:40pm. Ms. Green seconded. A roll call vote was held. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (9-0).

The Committee came out of nonpublic session at 8:50 PM

Mr. Wozmak stated that he wished to correct the record and noted that he misstated that any discrepancies in salaries were related to sexism, and he wished to be clear that the Town does not have a sexist policy. He noted that his intention was to identify that there appeared to be a disparity, and he thanked the Budget Committee for their conversation to clarify.

Mr. Diehn proceeded to read the votes held in non-public session.

Ms. Patten made a motion to set the general increase of COLA plus merit to 3%. Seconded. Motion tied (5-5). Motion died.

Mr. Kiley made a motion to set the general increase of COLA plus merit to 2%. Seconded. Motion did not pass (3-7).

Mr. Eaton made a motion to set the COLA plus merit at 3%. Reconsideration motion. Motion passed (7-3)

Mr. Diehn made a motion to set the number at 4%. Seconded. Motion failed (2-6).

Mr. Diehn stated the Budget Committee would be recommending a COLA plus merit raise for employees of 3%.

Mr. Diehn stated the Budget Committee discussed wages related to positions within the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Diehn made a motion to increase the wages of the seven positions in the DPW approximately \$4 per hour to bring them to the midpoint of the regional wage scale for those positions as presented by the Town Manager. The effect on the budget would be an increase of approximately \$58,000. Seconded. Motion passed (8-2)

Mr. Diehn stated the Budget Committee discussed to raise the Assistant Town Manager salary to match similar positions. The Assistant Town Manager left the discussion at 8:30pm.

Mr. Eaton made a motion to reduce lines 01-4311-01-1100 and 01-4210-01-110 by \$14,000 each to bring them in line with the Assistant Town Manager. No second. Motion died on the table.

In discussing support of the idea to increase the Assistant Town Manager salary, it was noted that a previous Town Manager, Mr. Steven Schneider, originally promoted the position to the Assistant to the Town Manager, with duties commensurate to the title. It was noted that Mr. Aylesworth, the former Town Manager, gave Ms. Bonnette duties that were related to day-to-day tasks of the Town Manager, and she became ex facto, the Assistant Town Manager.

Ms. Piper made a motion to increase the Assistant Town Manager's salary to be commensurate with the salary of the Chief of Police and the Director of the DPW. Seconded. The motion passed (7-2).

After Mr. Diehn read the results of the nonpublic session, Mr. Russell moved on to Public Comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT/ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Russell requested questions or comments from the public.

Ms. Curtis stated that she understood the RSA cited for nonpublic session was related to discussing specific employees and inquired why COLA and merit increase for all employees was discussed in nonpublic session and not in public session. She stated she understood the RSA as applying to an individual employee's compensation and not an overall wage discussion regarding all employees.

Mr. Wozmak stated that individual discussions were held in nonpublic.

Ms. Curtis agreed but asked about the vote and discussion related to the COLA and merit increase, which involved and affected all employees and not individuals.

Mr. Russell stated that the result was the total number and the discussion included discussion of specific individual positions which make the individuals identifiable.

Mr. Wozmak stated that the deliberations happened in nonpublic session, and the discussion between the 4% and ended up at 3% involved conversation regarding specific individuals, which consequently is a result of the other specific compensations. Mr. Wozmak stated that it was understood that individual compensation might be discussed, which is why the committee went into nonpublic session.

Chief Holland stated that reducing the COLA and merit increases is a continuing trend that will affect employee retention. He stated his budget proposal he stated he believed 4% was the minimum amount to try to remain competitive with area agencies. He inquired what the budget savings was to go from 3% to 4%.

Mr. Wozmak stated that the number was not available.

Chief Holland inquired how the committee arrived at choosing 3% and what the decision was based on. He inquired about the difference in cost between 3% and 4% as it could be marginal compared to how much it costs to retain quality employees. He added that the committee should also take into consideration how much it costs the town to train new employees. He stated that the biggest percentage of unspent funding at the end of the year is from open positions. By getting positions filled and getting people to stay here is how we correct the issue.

Scott Johnston, the Highway Supervisor, stated that the problem on the highway level is we train new employees and then, once they have the training, we lose them to higher paying employers in the area. He stated we essentially train them for everybody else and the cost of training costs more than the raises being discussed. He stated the current employees are also spending a lot of their time training the new hires, and it takes a significant amount of employee time to train new employees for the highway tasks.

Ms. Patten appreciates what Mr. Johnston is saying, but the Budget Committee has chosen to move forward with what the Interim Town Manager is recommending.

Mr. Johnston stated that the City of Lebanon has just done a wage study and they are at the top of the bracket, and they are still struggling to fill those positions. He stated that Enfield serves as a training ground for area employers, and he added that having untrained people running our equipment increases the likelihood of having damage or break downs due to inexperience as well.

Mr. Russell thanked Mr. Johnston for his input. Mr. Russell requested public comment or any other business to come before the Budget Committee.

MEETING SCHEDULE

Mr. Russell proposed the next meeting to take place at 7pm on Thursday, January 13th, 2022. Members of the Budget Committee agreed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kluge made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 PM. Ms. Smith seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (9-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 pm.