

TOWN OF ALLENSTOWN
Budget Committee
16 School Street
Allenstown, New Hampshire 03275

Minutes of Budget Committee Public Hearing held on April 21, 2011

Present at the meeting: David Coolidge, Don Chaput, Jon Richardson, Jerry McKenney, Larry Anderson, Penny Touchette, and Carol Merrill; Mike Frascinella was a late arrival.

Others present: Joyce Welch, Fern Bissonnette, and Lynn Bissonnette

Ms. Touchette opened the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

Appointment of New Members.

Ms. Touchette began by stating Mr. Bissonnette's interest in remaining on the Budget Committee and asking if anyone had any questions or comments for him. Mr. Chaput spoke up in support of Mr. Bissonnette, and made a Motion to appoint Mr. Bissonnette's as a member of the Budget Committee. Mr. McKenney seconded the Motion, and all were in favor. Mr. Bissonnette accepted the appointment, and Ms. Touchette reminded him that he needed to see Diane Demers in order to be sworn in before he would be eligible to cast his vote on any issues to be decided as such. He said he would sit as an observer for the remainder of this meeting then go see Ms. Demers the following morning to swear his Oath.

Ms. Touchette then addressed Ms. Welch to inform her that unfortunately, she was ineligible to serve on the Budget Committee due to the fact that she is a Department Head. Part-time employees of the town may serve on a town committee, however if they are the Head of their Department, they may not. Further, Ms. Touchette said she had called the Local Government Center to inquire about this and learned that Department Heads, whether full-time or part-time, may in fact not serve on the Budget Committee. She offered copies of the RSAs that pertain to this rule to Ms. Welch. At that point, Ms. Welch decided to leave the meeting, dismayed.

This turn of events left one open seat on the committee, and Ms. Touchette implored of members to reach out to anyone that they thought might have an interest in getting involved and filling it.

Approval of Minutes.

Ms. Touchette had the transcribed minutes of the last Budget Committee meeting available for the committee's approval; however it was decided to not address the topic at that time due to the large number of committee members not in attendance.

Election of Officers.

Ms. Touchette asked committee members if they wanted to proceed now with the election of their officers or wait until the next meeting, when more members would likely be in attendance. She pointed out that they did in fact have more than half of the committee present; therefore they could go ahead if they felt comfortable doing so.

Budget Committee members indeed decided to go forth with the election of their officers despite the meeting's low attendance.

Mr. Anderson began the elections by making a Motion to appoint Ms. Touchette as the Committee's Chair. Mr. Chaput seconded the Motion. After ensuring that there were no other nominations for the Chair position, a vote was taken, and all were in favor. Ms. Touchette accepted the position, saying she did in fact feel prepared to assume the Chair's duties following her years as a committee member.

Mr. Chaput spoke up, issuing his Motion to nominate Mr. Richardson for the Vice Chair position. Mr. McKenney seconded the Motion. After ensuring that there were no other nominations for the Vice Chair position, a vote was taken, and all were in favor. Mr. Richardson accepted and offered his thanks.

Ms. Touchette raised the issue of the final position to be filled, that being the Secretary. All eyes turned to Mr. Anderson, who said he would be fine with taking on the duties of this position. Mr. McKenney made a Motion to nominate Mr. Anderson as Secretary of the Budget Committee. Ms. Merrill seconded the Motion. A vote was taken and all were in favor.

Note: At this point, Mike Frascinella arrived at the meeting.

The new Committee Chair took a few minutes to speak to her fellow officers. She said she was aware that the previous Budget Committee Chair, Sandy McKenney, had taken on the brunt of the officers duties herself; but that she would much rather have this be a "board effort". Addressing Mr. Richardson, she let him know that even when she is at a meeting, she wanted him to preside occasionally, citing that she had never even assisted with the running of a meeting when she was the Vice Chair. She suggested the possibility of having a workshop or two for the new officers so that they might come up with some ideas, and reach an agreement as to the best way to approach the work at hand. She said she felt it would be best to make these decisions before beginning work on the new budget in order to streamline the process.

Further, she shared her idea that it might be best to speak with the Select Board to talk about what the Budget Committee wants to see beforehand, thus avoiding the need to be talking about cutting a department's budget when that department is there, trying to present their budget needs to the committee.

Discussion ensued and lots of ideas were mentioned, most having to do with what committee members wanted to avoid after last year's at times acrimonious confrontations due to the tight restrictions placed on the budget. One thing everyone agreed upon was that it would be a huge help to have a

preview of each department's proposed budget prior to their scheduled presentations.

Additionally, they wanted to see a listing of each presenting department's employees so that they might better keep track of the people taking part in that department's presentation. The main thing that everyone felt would best help them to serve their purpose on the Budget Committee was the setting of goals, both for themselves and for each department.

Ms. Touchette mentioned that as a part of their goal setting, she wanted to strive to maintain some semblance of order when the presentations are being made. She said that could best be achieved if committee members were to prepare their questions ahead of time, (another good reason for the aforementioned previews) then ask them one at a time, and wait until a topic is completely covered and all answers clearly given before moving on to the next. This, she pointed out, would not only benefit everyone in attendance who is trying to hear what is being said, but also the Minutes Clerk when she is trying to sort it all out and record it. Everyone agreed that they all needed to police themselves, but when things get out of hand, the Chair should break in and regain order.

The talk carried on for quite a while, venturing from one topic to another, most prominently covering the new Solid Waste Ordinance and proposed Recycling Policy. Committee members had many unanswered questions with regard to this topic.

Jason Tardiff, the Select Board Chair, dropped in to the meeting and helped to clear up some items. One of these was a question Ms. Touchette had regarding her role in documenting the events of each meeting. Mr. Tardiff pointed out that whereas the Minutes Clerk does not attend the meetings, it would behoove her to record the details of each vote, i.e. who made a Motion, who seconded, etc. Most importantly, he said, would be the recording of how each member voted in Roll Call Votes.

Talks turned to further education for members of various committees. Mr. Tardiff asked Board members if they were familiar with the CIP (Capital Improvement Plan) and the Master Plan, and then took a moment to explain that these are meant to dictate what the needs and wants of the town are, as well as where we want to be by a certain time. Essentially, it is the goals of the town based upon its wants and needs. He recommended that everyone take a look at these documents in order to see the big picture, to look ahead, citing that if we keep taking the budget year-by-year, Allenstown will be so deep in a hole, there will be no fixing it.

Schedule Next Budget Committee Meeting.

After discussing how many weeks away the next meeting should be and what time would best enable everyone to make it, a decision was made to meet again on Thursday, May 19, 2011 at 6:15 p.m.

Adjournment.

Mr. McKenney made a Motion to close the meeting. Mr. Coolidge seconded the Motion. All were in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Date approved: _____

Penny Touchette, Chair
Allenstown Municipal Budget Committee