

Nottingham Budget Committee Meeting

Date: Tuesday, January 9, 2024

Un-Official Minutes

Members Present: Michael Kelly, Chairman; Owen Friend-Gray, Vice Chairman; John Decker, Member; Sandra Jones, Member; Jeffrey Morrison, Member; Brent Tweed, Member; Thomas Butkiewicz, Member; Charlotte Fyfe, Member; Robert Kelly, Member; Megan Sebasco, School Board Representative; Steve Welsh, BOS Representative

Members Absent: Sandra Jones, Member;

Others Present: Ellen White, Town Administrator; John Morin, Selectmen; Tim Dabrieo, Selectman; Linda Przychodny; Jill Aldredge; Christopher Doiron; Bonnie Winona MacKinnon; Doug Cummings; Robin Marshall

Call To Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval Of Minutes: There were no minutes to be approved.

Mr. Michael Kelly started out by stating the role of the Budget Committee, which is to assist voters in the prudent appropriation of public funds. He explained that the town is under a 4% tax cap, which guides their spending. He also explained that warrant articles are not under that requirement. So, although they will show up on a tax bill, they are not included in the 4% tax cap. He explained that the school is not legally bound to the 4% tax cap although they are trying to come close to it. The school makes up 70-75% of the tax bill. But, the hearing was not on the school. It was on the town budget. The school budget would be discussed on Thursday, January 11th. Mr. Michael Kelly stated that the Budget Committee did make some recommendations to the Board Of Selectmen. But, their meeting was the previous night so they did not hear back yet. Mr. Welsh said that the BOS did their best to accommodate the recommendations. He stated that the 4% tax cap is hard to meet.

Town Budget

Ms. White explained the budget process and how it starts with the department heads. Then, those department heads bring their proposed budgets to the Board of Selectmen. Those budgets are compiled to get a bottom line number. Then, the BOS starts trimming the budget. She said there were some significant salary increases, which makes up much of the budget increase, along with aggregate supply, cost of materials, and cost of subcontracted services. The BOS, after fine-tuning their budget, was proposing an operating budget of \$5,143,955. The previous year's budget was \$4,850,866.

Mr. Michael Kelly summarized the proposed budget by reading off the department totals and the percent changes.

Executive - \$261,510 – 5.2% Reduction

Mr. Welsh stated that the reduction was mostly due to cutting the Selectmen's salary and cutting the merit pool. Mr. Butkiewicz explained that this does not put a limit on raises to 3% since sometimes they receive increases in other ways and sometimes it can be more than 3% such as the increases in the Police Department.

Town Clerk - \$96,157 – 7.8% Increase

Ms. White stated that this increase is due to having (4) four elections in 2024 where there was only (1) one election in 2023.

Elections - \$45,601 – 133.7% Increase

This was also driven by more elections.

Financial Administration - \$110,977 – 2.9% Increase

Assessing Department - \$37,850 – 2.4% Increase

Legal - \$30,001 – No change.

Personnel / Admin - \$949,018 – 15.9% Increase

Ms. White stated the large driver for the increase was due to salary increases, payroll taxes, health insurance, and retirement.

Planning Board - \$43,406 – 27.4% Decrease

Mr. Michael Kelly said the decrease was due to cutting the dues that the town pays to the Strafford Regional Planning Commission.

Zoning Board - \$1,003 – 73.6% Reduction

Ms. White stated the Zoning Board secretary's salary was added to the Planning Board budget.

Town Hall / Other Building - \$179,305 – 7.5% Reduction

Ms. White explained that they removed the old part-time maintenance person position since there was a warrant article to contract someone.

Cemeteries - \$6,500 – No Change

Insurance - \$122,725 – 9.1% Increase

Police Department - \$932,429 – 32% Increase

Mr. Michael Kelly stated the main driver for the increase was salaries (which were already given earlier in 2023.)

Fire / Rescue - \$611,220 – 10.9% Increase

Mr. Michael Kelly stated the driver for the increase was salaries.

Building Inspector - \$61,350 – 2.(?) % Increase

Emergency Management - \$4,211 – No Change

Highway Department - \$740,261 – 13.5% Decrease

Mr. Michael Kelly stated the decrease was due to less highway salt and the cost of diesel fuel. Mr. Butkiewicz also said they reduced the budget for maintenance and equipment parts since the fleet is mostly new.

Seal Coat - \$100,000 – 100% Decrease

Mr. Butkiewicz stated that this was an easy way to get around the tax cap by moving the road maintenance out to a warrant article. Mr. Michael Kelly explained that if this is moved to the warrant article as proposed, and the voters do not vote to approve it, then it would be a difficult situation for the town since the roads would not be kept up. He explained that the committee worked very hard to make it possible not to have to move this to a warrant article.

Mr. Doug Cummings of Stage Road asked if there was a back-up plan if the warrant article does not pass. Mr. Butkiewicz answered that it would only have a \$100,000 budget. Mr. Michael Kelly stated that the committee was trying to avoid this although not all members agreed. He suggested that this would need to be brought up to the BOS at their meeting on January 22nd.

Ms. White stated that it does not mean that the roads wouldn't be repaired and maintained since there is still is a separate Highway Department budget.

Ms. Sebasco joined the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

Mr. Michael Kelly reiterated that the Board Of Selectmen has now turned their proposed budget to the Budget Committee, who can make amendments and changes, and then everything gets revisited at the town Deliberative Session. Mr. Tweed stated the Budget Committee cannot amend warrant articles; they can only recommend or not recommend them. They can be amended by individuals at the town Deliberative Session.

Recycling Center - \$380,300 – 12.4% Increase

Mr. Butkiewicz stated that the increase was due to salaries and fees. Ms. White stated they just signed a 5-year contract with Waste Management. The Town takes most of the increase in that contract in year one.

Animal Control - \$6,000 – 33% Increase

123 Mr. Michael Kelly explained this increase was due to a new Animal Control Officer.

124

125 **General Assistance - \$6,706 – 45% Reduction**

126 Mr. Butkiewicz asked if the reduction was because they moved the utilities, fuel, and food into
127 miscellaneous so they could disperse as necessary. Mr. Decker confirmed. Mr. Tweed stated that the
128 actual spent was \$2,000 last year so this was still three times that amount.

129

130 **Social Services – (Inaudible)**

131

132 **Recreation Department - \$161,743 – 5.7% Decrease**

133 Ms. White stated the difference was driven by salaries and supplies. Ms. White confirmed that the fees
134 charged for the programming is what makes up the recreation revolving fund. She stated the BOS chose
135 to keep the salaries in the operating budget instead of moving them to the revolving fund.

136

137 **Library - \$249,069(?) – 23% Increase**

138 Mr. Michael Kelly stated that the driver for the increase was mostly due to hourly staff rates and a full-
139 time Library Director position.

140

141 **Historical Society - \$500 – No Change**

142

143 **Conservation Commission - \$2,360(?) – 11.2% Reduction**

144

145 **Debt Service - \$13,333**

146

147 **Operating Budget Total = \$5,143,955**

148

149 **Public Comments**

150

151 Linda Przychodny, of 16 Camelot Court, stepped to the table. (Her comments were mostly inaudible due
152 to not speaking into the microphone and interference.)

153

154 Mr. Butkiewicz stated that the largest driver of the tax increase over the past 15 years was the school.

155

156 There was discussion about the Recreation Department. Mr. Friend-Gray stated a point that Mr. Morin
157 (in the audience) said regarding the recreation fees and how they are set and that the generation of the
158 revenue is based on the number of people who use the program.

159

160 Ms. Fyfe, referring to paying recreation director's salaries out of the revolving fund, stated that it is very
161 unusual to have to raise money to pay for your own salary.

162

Ms. White stated that the town has approximately 44 full and part-time department employees that are not stipend. The only stipend positions (that are not elected) are the Animal Control Officer, the Emergency Management Director, and the Fire Chief.

Mr. Robert Kelly left the meeting at 8:02.

Jill Aldredge, of Gile Road, stated that she is a mother of two who frequently uses the Recreation Department services. She stated that she is also a professional with over 10 years of experience in non-profit leadership and management experience, budget experience, HR, program management, and a master's degree from Harvard University where she focused mostly on rural and community based education like what the Recreation Department offers the town. She wanted to state her strong support in keeping the Recreation Director's salary in the general operating fund and moving the entirety of the Assistant Director's position in to the operating fund. Ms. Aldredge stated that she felt that if these salaries are continued to be taken from the revolving fund, the Town is sending a clear message about how their work is valued. She said that they are the only department in town that is not paid out of the general operating fund, they are the only department that is required to raise money to pay their own salaries, and that because of how their positions are funded, they are subject to job instability. She stated that this will eventually cause low morale in the department leading to turnover, transition, and vacancy. This will also reduce program quality as well as engagement; eventually affecting revenue.

Christopher Doiron, of 63 Deerfield Road, stated he has lived here for five years. When they first moved here, they were happy with the tax rate. But, the large increase in last year's tax bill was a great burden to his family and others in the area. He asked that the Budget Committee please consider the families in the area.

Bonnie Winona MacKinnon, of 26 Garland Road, corrected the date of the meeting from January 10th to the 9th. She asked if there was anything in the budget for the new voting machine. The committee stated it was in a warrant article and it was only one being recommended by the Board Of Selectmen. She wanted to state that she felt the town should have two voting machines instead of one. She stated that the only reason why the town had one machine before was that there were not enough machines left.

Doug Cummings, of 348 Stage Rd, wanted to know if there was any ballpark figure of how much our taxes would be raised after the current proposed budget. The committee stated that it was too early and they would have to wait until the Deliberative Session to find out an approximate figure.

Linda Przychodny, of 16 Camelot Court, asked if the \$30,000 budget for legal would cover the upcoming trial in June of 2024. Mr. Michael Kelly stated that the committee did ask the BOS this same question and that the BOS felt comfortable with that amount. Mr. Przychodny asked the committee to reconsider this amount since she felt that \$30,000 will not cover the legal expenses for a lawsuit. She

mentioned that some of the Town's liability insurance can cover a payout if needed but it depends on the coverage and if it is more than the coverage, the town will be liable to pay.

Mr. Michael Kelly stated that the grand total of expected revenues is \$2,567,970. Mr. Butkiewicz questioned the estimated increase in revenue and whether or not they could count on getting another large donation to the Police Department or not. The committee decided they had more questions and needed to ask Ms. White for more answers.

Warrant Articles

Mr. Michael Kelly invited the townspeople to the first session of the town meeting, which is the Deliberative Session, at the Nottingham School on Saturday, February 3rd, 2024. At this session, there will be explanation, discussion, and deliberation of the warrant articles. These may be amended at that time with certain restrictions. These amended warrant articles will be voted on at the second session which will be on Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at the Nottingham School where voting will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. He read off Article I, which states the officials to be voted on as follows ...

Board Of Selectmen – 2 For 3 Years

Budget Committee – 3 For 3 Years

Cemetery Trustee

Library Trustee

Planning Board

Trustee Of the Trust Funds

Zoning Board

The committee did not know how many of the other positions there will be and the length of the terms.

There were no zoning amendments presented.

Mr. Friend-Gray and Mr. Kelly read the warrant articles. (*Wording not exact*).

1. Shall the town raise and appropriate the operating budget, not including warrant articles that will be voted by the Budget Committee. They did not yet have the final figures for this. If it does not pass, then the default budget will be used.
2. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate \$10,000 to be added to the Police Technology Expendable Trust Fund. Tax impact estimated to be \$.01 per \$1,000 of property valuation.
3. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$40,000 for the purchase of purchasing the necessary fuel, supplies, equipment, and maintenance for the ambulance and billing services and to authorize the withdrawal of \$40,000 from the Ambulance And Equipment Replacement Special Revenue Fund to pay for that. Tax impact estimated to be \$.04 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

248 4. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$100,000 to be added to the Fire
249 Vehicle / SCBA Capital Reserve Fund. Tax impact estimated to be \$.12 per \$1,000 of property
250 valuation.

251
252 5. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate \$60,000 for the purpose of increasing the
253 Fire Chief's stipend based on the increased minimum mandated requirements of the Fire Chief
254 set forth by the Fire Department By-Laws. Tax impact estimated to be \$.07 per \$1,000 of
255 property valuation.
256

257 Mr. Butkiewicz asked if this includes overtime. Mr. Welsh said there is no overtime for that position
258 since it is a stipend. Mr. Butkiewicz also asked if the Fire Chief is supposed to be a licensed EMT since 70
259 percent of the calls are emergencies that are not fire. Mr. Welsh explained that is up to the Fire
260 Department since they vote on the Chief.
261

262 6. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000 for the purpose of
263 replacing the flooring in the community center gymnasium. Tax impact estimated to be \$.03 per
264 \$1,000 of property valuation.
265

266 7. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$40,000 for the purpose of
267 exploratory options and design for the relocation of the Police Department. Tax impact
268 estimated to be \$.05 per \$1,000 of property valuation.
269

270 8. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$50,000 to begin clean-up and
271 renovations needed for the rear portions of the community center building. Tax impact
272 estimated to be \$.06 per \$1,000 of property valuation.
273

274 Mr. Butkiewicz asked where the \$50,000 came from. Mr. Welsh stated that it was just a number to get
275 it started. Mr. Decker also asked about the \$40,000 for the exploratory options for the Police
276 Department and stated that he felt that was a lot just to figure out a good spot. Ms. Fyfe stated that
277 Fire Station plans originally included options for adding on the Police Department. Someone from the
278 audience asked if anyone has ever seen those plans. Ms. Sebasco stated that part of the \$40,000
279 probably includes looking into that option.
280

281 9. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$20,000 to be used for
282 engineering and design of the library parking lot project. Tax impact estimated to be \$.02 per
283 \$1,000 of property valuation.
284

285 There was discussion of this warrant article being on last year's ballot. Tim Dabrieo, of 75 Freeman Hall
286 Road, stated that the warrant article was not written correctly. The library had just finished the
287 engineering and design and this \$20,000 is supplemental to the original warrant article and includes
288 implementation. He also stated that the original plans for the Fire Department did not include detailed
289 design for a Police Station and the \$40,000 warrant for that would include that as an option.
290

291 10. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$150,000 to be added to the
292 Town Maintenance And Repair Expendable Trust Fund previously established. Tax impact
293 estimated to be \$.18 per \$1,000 of property valuation.
294

Mr. Dabrieo provided the figure for this Trust Fund, which was \$128,794 as of September 30, 2023. He did not have a balance as of 12/31/23.

11. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of \$500,000 for highway reconstruction and maintenance on town roads to include _____. (Roads will be listed on the ballot.)

12. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of \$100,000 to be added to the Highway Truck Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Tax impact estimated to be \$.12 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

Mr. Welsh stated that he thinks the town will need to replace the grader in the upcoming years and since it is the most expensive piece of equipment in the fleet, it make sense to start saving for it now. Mr. Dabrieo stated that the balance in that fund is \$74,897.14 as of September 30th. Graders cost \$450,000.

13. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$20,000 to be added to the previously established Re-Evaluation Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of performing property evaluations every five years. Tax impact estimated to be \$.02 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

Mr. Dabrieo stated that fund had approximately \$57,000 in it.

14. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$24,375 for the following social service programs provided to the residents of Nottingham. The list included Cornerstone VNA, Lamprey Health Care, Seacoast Mental Health, Waypoint, Haven, and others. Tax impact estimated to be \$.01 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

15. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 to be added to the Invasive Species Prevention, Eradication, and Removal Trust Expendable Trust Fund previously established. Tax impact estimated to be \$.01 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

16. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000 for the purpose of conducting courtesy inspections of boats using the state boat ramps on Pawtuckaway Lake and to educate the public on how to prevent the spread of exotic species from water body to water body. Tax impact estimated to be \$.01 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

17. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$7,500 to purchase a new voting machine. The town will also be applying for aid to help purchase the machine. The final amount used to purchase the machine is subject to any grant or aid. Tax impact estimated to be \$.01 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

18. To see if the town will vote to approve the re-adoption of the All Veterans Tax Credit RSA 72:28-B. If approved, it will continue to offer a \$750 tax credit to all honorably discharged veterans who qualify. The re-adoption would also offer the credit to active service members.

19. To see if the town will vote to change the purpose of the existing Tri-Centennial Fund created in 2013 to The Celebrate Nottingham Fund for the purpose of town-wide celebrations including

but not limited to future anniversary celebrations, and to authorize the Select Board to expend the money.

Ms. Sebasco stated that fund balance is \$2,747. Mr. Dabrieo added that there is also \$40,000 in a CD.

20. Harbor Street Limited Partnership, Joseph Falzone, manager, formally requested through this petition per RSA 674:40-A the acceptance of the Town Of Nottingham's Maple Ridge Road of the Maple Ridge Subdivision. With this acceptance, the ownership of this road would be transferred to the Town Of Nottingham by citizen petition.

Mr. Butkiewicz suggested that the petitioners request to change the wording of that warrant article at the Deliberative Session.

Doug Cummings thanked the Budget Committee and stated that he thought they did a pretty good job on the budget. He wanted to recognize the hard work of the committee.

Robin Marshall, of 189 Old Turnpike Road, added the total amount of the warrant articles, which was \$1.162 million. She asked what the total of last year's warrant articles was. She thought that was a large amount to put to the taxpayers.

Mr. Decker stated that the estimated tax impacts on the articles were incorrectly calculated since some of the figures were the same for articles of different amounts.

Mr. Tweed added up last year's warrant articles, which came to \$906,000.

Ms. Marshall warned people to be aware that although the figures such as \$.01 per \$1,000 of valuation look small, it does add up. She also expressed her concern for the warrant articles on the Fire Chief, the town roads, and the invasive species. Ms. Marshall asked how much was in the Invasive Species Fund.

Mr. Michael Kelly stated there was \$62,000. Ms. Marshall said she thought they should stop funding that.

Mr. Decker stated that the town is responsible for controlling the invasive species in Pawtuckaway. He explained that even though the state covered the treatment this year, they will most likely not cover it in the future and the total required was about \$68,000. So, the current fund balance would not cover that.

Ms. Sebasco stated the net valuation of the homes was \$832,146,848. This figure was the tax base. She stated that for every \$80,000, there would be an impact of \$.10 per \$1,000 of valuation.

Ms. Marshall asked whether the new ballot machine was for the next election. Mr. Decker stated that he thought the current machine would be used for all of the 2024 elections. He stated that he thought it was premature to ask for that. Mr. Welsh stated that they did not have a choice. Someone from the audience stated that they thought the town could not use the current machine after April 1st. Mr. Decker stated his opinion that he thought the state would be pushing that deadline out.

388 Ms. Marshall asked where Maple Ridge Road was. She stated that she thought there should be a cost
389 associated with this warrant article.

390
391 Ms. Cummings, of 348 Stage Road, asked the committee to revisit the \$40,000 warrant article to
392 investigate where the Police Department should go. She asked that they figure out if there were more
393 detailed plans to add it to the Fire Department or not instead of spending money on re-doing them.

394
395 She also stated that she disagreed with the \$60,000 for a stipend for the Fire Chief. Mr. Welsh stated
396 that the increase was because there was only a part-time Fire Chief before who was supposed to be
397 managing six full-time employees. And now, they want to make the Fire Chief a full-time position. Mr.
398 Welsh stated that it was for wages. Ms. Cummings stated that she thought the warrant article was too
399 vague and wanted to know exactly what the \$60,000 was for.

400
401 There was discussion about whether the new, second ambulance was in service yet. It was not but the
402 materials to stock it were already purchased.

403
404 Ms. Przychodny asked if the town owns any additional undeveloped land that could be used for the
405 Police Station. Mr. Butkiewicz stated that there is more undeveloped land that the town could use.

406
407 She also asked about the social services and if those are charitable donations that the town makes. Mr.
408 Butkiewicz said that yes, they are donations. The organizations send a letter to the town every year
409 requesting money. Some state how many people from the town have used their services in the past
410 year and some do not. She thought it should be listed as charitable donations in the warrant article.
411 Ms. Sebasco suggested changing it at the Deliberative Session.

412
413 Ms. Asked how much of the unused money from warrant articles from the previous year was passed on
414 to this year. Someone from the audience answered that \$147,000 was left over from warrant articles
415 last year.

416
417 The public hearing was closed at 10:26 p.m.

418
419 Mr. Michael Kelly asked the board what items they needed more information on. Mr. Butkiewicz stated
420 they needed to know how much of the pistol permit line was due to the donation and what made up the
421 16% increase in the budget for that. Once they had that they could get the adjusted revenue figure,
422 which could be added to the tax cap worksheet. Ms. Sebasco added that they should have a more
423 accurate figure on the recyclables. Mr. Decker stated they needed the default budget on the proper
424 form. He thought the committee should get a copy of the MS-1. They needed verification on the tax
425 cap numbers.

426
427 Mr. Michael Kelly asked if the warrant articles were in final format. The committee agreed they should
428 ask Ellen if changes could be made.

429

430 The committee went through the warrant articles to see what wording they wanted changed. They
431 wanted the library warrant article wording corrected. They wanted to add the word “donations or
432 donate” to the social services article. They wanted to change the name and purpose of the Tri-
433 Centennial article.

434

435 The next Budget Committee meeting was on January 11th with the school.

436

437 ***The motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Decker. The motion was seconded by Mr. Morrison. The***
438 ***motion passed by a vote of 9-0-0.***

439

440 The meeting was adjourned at 10:26 p.m.

441

442 Transcribed per video.

443 Respectfully Submitted,

444 Alana J. Kenney