

Nottingham Budget Committee Meeting

12-7-21

Official Minutes as of 12-14-21

1 Call to Order

2 Members Present: Michelle King (Chair), John Decker (Vice Chair), Tom Leveille, Sandra
3 Jones, Tom Butkiewicz, Jeffrey Morrison, Michael Kelly, Donna Danis (Select Board rep),
4 Karyl Martin (School Board rep)

5 Absent: Michael Koester (excused absence), Bob Kelly

6 Others: Lorraine Petrini, Chris Sterndale

7 The Vice Chair opened the meeting at 7pm.

8 Approve Minutes

9 They are holding off till next meeting.

10 Presentations

11 Town Budget

12 Ms. Danis said Mr. Sterndale will walk the BC go through the first draft of the town budget. The
13 BOS has not had a full discussion about this budget yet. This is not the number the BOS will put
14 forward.

15 Mr. Sterndale said this is the compilation of the departments and the number is too large. The
16 town will finish the year under budget and there are some projects that will involve the surplus.
17 The surplus will be about \$185k.

18 Mr. Sterndale went section by section of the budget. Line 4 proposes a COLA for employees of
19 4% which takes effect in the 2nd quarter. The merit pool will consist of 2% of payroll. Mr.
20 Leveille asked who is eligible to receive part of the merit pool. Mr. Sterndale said everyone
21 merits something. There is no across the board merit typically for the town.

22 Ms. King arrived at 7:09pm.

23 Dr. Butkiewicz asked about the line items for raises. Mr. Sterndale said they lump it in the
24 Compensation Pool line but it will come out of the actual department. New positions will be
25 reflected in department payroll lines. Ms. Danis said the town has good employees and they want
26 to retain them. It's hard to find good people right now. She continued to say we don't want to
27 lose the good people we have. Mr. Decker said he likes the methodology of putting the increases
28 in one place and that it's merit based. Mr. Sterndale said the merit range would be 0-3%.

29 Line 21 is the Lake Host program which prevents invasive species in the lake. They have asked
30 the BOS to put the program in the budget. Ms. Danis said there are multiple locations in the lake
31 where there is milfoil. They didn't anticipate it to be there. There is a dedicated group who are
32 divers to pull milfoil safely but they are having trouble keeping up with it. It continues to spread
33 quickly. They want to increase coverage of hours without dipping into the fund to mitigate the
34 bigger disasters. It falls to the town, not the state, to remediate this problem. Mr. Decker said the

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35 group is trying to get money from the state as well. It used to be funded 1/3 of the town, grant
36 money and PLIA but now with the grant being less, it's now PLIA and town splitting
37 the majority of the costs. Dr. Butkiewicz asked if the milfoil is inevitable. Mr. Decker said it's
38 going to be there forever but the idea is keep it under control or if it's out of control, it will
39 technically destroy the lake for all recreational activities. It's at the town beach now. Mr. Decker
40 continued to say that if that whole section became infested, it would be like going through a wet
41 lawn. Mr. Leveille asked what percentage of the lake is in Raymond. Mr. Decker said it is all in
42 Nottingham. Mr. Kelly said you can go to the boat ramp and there is nowhere to park and it's
43 likely non-residents that bring in the milfoil. Mr. Decker said part of the boat registrations help
44 fund the invasive mitigation but it's a small percentage. The kayaks and non-motorized boats pay
45 zero into that. Ms. Danis said there are private boat launches where there are no inspections. The
46 folks who are running PLIA and lake host program are working very hard. The state park doesn't
47 contribute anything towards it. Mr. Decker said the park manager has helped out quite a bit. Mr.
48 Sterndale said it requires legislative power at some point. Mr. Decker asked if they want to create
49 a new name for that budget line. Mr. Sterndale said they would. Dr. Butkiewicz asked if that
50 money can come out of the conservation fund. Mr. Sterndale said that fund would be for land not
51 water. He will double check.

52 Line 23 said they had to pay the legal fees as the court case that the tow was involved with lost.
53 Dr. Butkiewicz asked if they can come out of conservation fund. Mr. Sterndale said that cannot.

54 There is a deputy town clerk now. Dr. Butkiewicz asked what the fees are. Mr. Sterndale said the
55 clerks get paid a salary and some of the fees that residents pay.

56 There will be 3 elections in 2022. The moderator has requested a replacement ballot counter. Dr.
57 Butkiewicz asked about ballot counting going back to counting each ballot manually. He thinks
58 that would be a terrible idea. Mr. Sterndale said that this will not be happening as far he knows.

59 The new tax collector would like more training and to get certified.

60 Mr. Leveille asked about Line 82. Mr. Sterndale said that is a guess for the town attorney.

61 Mr. Sterndale said it's hard to predict what employees will pick for health insurance. This line
62 reflects the new positions in the budget as well.

63 Mr. Sterndale said that for Planning Board, they have had a busy year with developments, etc.
64 The secretary is working more hours, there is a new secretary, and the wage went up this year.

65 Mr. Sterndale said he found someone who wants to do some maintenance work for the town.
66 There is a lot of work to be done in the community center. The old town hall will likely become
67 the SAU office. The new heating system in the community center is much more efficient. Dr.
68 Butkiewicz asked why recycling maintenance has doubled. Mr. Sterndale said a door was drove
69 into and the waste oil furnace needs more maintenance.

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Mr. Sterndale said Line 166 is for dues for the Regional Planning Association. The Planning Board would like to go back to being a dues paying member. It will allow us to vote. Mapping and traffic count will be included in the dues. Mr. Decker said they have not used the association for the past few years. Mr. Sterndale said some projects that would have been completed were postponed for now due to COVID. Mr. Decker asked why the PB is asking for this now. Mr. Sterndale said he will look into that. Ms. Jones said it jumps out that we haven't used the planners for the past few years. Ms. Danis said people in town aren't experts and it's a benefit to have experts.

Mr. Sterndale said the police dept. have had 3 officers retire in the past year. They expect to be fully staffed early next year. There is anticipated overtime for 300th Celebration. There may be times that additional help will be needed from other towns. The 300th Celebration fund will pay for that. There are 7 full-time officers. There may be a part-time officer in the works. There will be 1 additional officer next year. The requirement for training is increasing by the state.

Mr. Leveille asked if the postage can get under control. Mr. Sterndale said the rates have gone up. He doesn't know of any ways to reduce costs. There isn't a lot of shipping. The machine is rented and there is a service contract.

Mr. Sterndale said the police is still handwriting tickets; the police is asking for printers in their cars. The police chief is working on getting Rte. 152 in front of the school to be designated as a school zone. The line item for uniforms for police is higher; one new ballistic vest (one ballistic vest will be refreshed each following year), and new ergonomic gear-carriers for each officer. There will be leftover money for officers to get new uniforms as needed.

Mr. Sterndale said the fire chief has been working towards full-time coverage. The fire chief has been using part-time people instead of the call force (who are volunteers). Mr. Leveille said he would expect to see an offset in the part-time line if they are going to be full-time. Mr. Sterndale said it's doubling the workforce from three to six people. Eventually the part-time salary and the stipend will shrink dramatically. The stipend is shared with the volunteers. Dr. Butkiewicz asked if this is driven by the insurance companies. Mr. Sterndale said it's driven by call volume. The fire dept. handles the ambulance services. Dr. Butkiewicz asked if they can hire dedicated ambulance people. Mr. Sterndale said you can contract out all ambulance services and they would bill for their services. The response times will go up by quite a bit. You still will need to send a police officer before the ambulance arrives. All of our fire personnel are EMT's. Dr. Butkiewicz asked if they can get a paramedic. Mr. Sterndale said they have access to paramedics from Exeter Hospital. There has to be two licensed people on the ambulance. Mr. Leveille asked if the fire chief can reduce costs within the budget. Ms. King suggested increasing the volunteer stipend. Mr. Sterndale said the money isn't the driving factor for the people who get up in the middle of the night; they are motivated by something else. Dr. Butkiewicz asked about radio maintenance. Mr. Sterndale said he will find out more information. The phone lines are moving to VOIP.

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108 Mr. Sterndale said the highway dept. is proposing a new position that will work for public works,
109 parks and rec and recycling. Mr. Leveille said you should be reducing overtime or part-time
110 hours if you are hiring a full-time employee. Mr. Sterndale said they can't find people who want
111 to plow in their own trucks. Ms. Danis said you need to remember how large the town is; one
112 person isn't going to plow the whole town.

113 Mr. Sterndale said there were several ash trees that had to be taken down due to emerald ash
114 borer infestation, and they have also been removing Japanese knotweed.

115 There are higher costs for gravel and salt costs. Dr. Butkiewicz asked how much is due to new
116 roads. Mr. Sterndale said he is not sure. Shawn McLean can give a more specific answer. Dr.
117 Butkiewicz said that the newly acquired roads were not supposed to have additional costs, but
118 they are costing more. Mr. Sterndale said there is a big jump in engineering particularly around
119 the lake. The drainage is tricky and the environmental decisions are important. Mr. Sterndale
120 detailed out the work on Highland Ave.

121 Dr. Butkiewicz asked why they can't pick at the dump. Mr. Sterndale said it's for safety reasons.
122 There was discussion on the recycling shed. Mr. Leveille asked if the town has considered trash
123 pickup. Dr. Butkiewicz said people pay for that if they want it.

124 Mr. Sterndale said Marston Property is coming online. The rest of the buildout will be done by
125 spring. It needs to be mowed regularly. An automated gate is requested for the town beach.

126 Mr. Sterndale said the library is proposing moving a part-time person to full-time.

127 Ms. Martin asked if the after school and summer programs are fully self-sustaining. Mr.
128 Sterndale said they are not subsidizing the programs. The revolving fund took a hit during
129 COVID but it's fine now. They are having trouble finding after school staff. Likely there will be
130 only Nottingham kids in the summer program.

131 The operating budget increase is 9.7%. Ms. Danis said the BOS has some big decisions to make.

132 Mr. Kelly asked how they get more income in the town instead of the taxes continuing to
133 increase. There was discussion about impact fees. Dr. Butkiewicz said the town is incredibly
134 well run and they haven't had a big increase in years; the problem is the big increases in school
135 spending, which is 78% of the town's property tax burden. Dr. Butkiewicz suggested the library
136 could ask for donations through a GoFundMe as well as the school could ask for tuition costs
137 from parents. Mr. Leveille asked if the BOS can reduce costs in other areas of this budget. Ms.
138 Danis said they have not decided but agree that 9% is too much.

139 Ms. Danis asked the BC what they are looking for for the next steps. Mr. Sterndale said the
140 department heads are coming to the BC meeting next week.

141 Committee Reports

142 *School Facilities*

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143 There is no update.

144 *SAU Transition*

145 Mr. Decker said they met recently. They discussed software.

146 *Capital Improvement Plan*

147 There is no update.

148 *Transportation Committee*

149 There is a meeting on Thursday.

150 **Other**

151 *Parting Thoughts*

152 *Next Meeting: 12/14*

153 **Adjourn**

154 **Mr. Decker made a motion to adjourn at 9:04pm. Mr. Leveille seconded. Unanimously**
155 **approved by a vote of 9-0.**

156