

Minutes
Nottingham Budget Committee Meeting
January 25, 2018

Members Present: Jennifer Biron, Miska Hadik, Michael Koester, Carrie Lee, Karyl Martin, Erin Maskwa, Les Thompson, Peter White, Anthony Dumas – BOS Rep, Susan Levenson – School Board Rep

Excused Absences: Karyl Martin

Other in Attendance: Secretary Dawn Calley-Murdough, Police Chief Gunnar Foss, Cara Marsh, Chris Thompson

Chair Hadik called the meeting to order and introductions were completed.

2nd Draft Town 2018 Budget/Department Heads: Mr. Sterndale provided an overview of the 2nd Draft town 2018 budget. There aren't a significant number of changes between the 1st and 2nd draft presentations. There is an approximate 1.1% proposed increase for 2018, however there are some additional things that could change that amount. Some of the bigger changes are a consolidation of the majority of town telephone lines in the Community Center Building, with the expectation for overall savings. The rate of pay for the Election Workers and Supervisors of the Checklist has been increased.

Mr. Koester asked if a change for the Town Moderator salary has been discussed, which was asked for a couple of years ago. Mr. Sterndale reported it hasn't been discussed or requested. Mr. Dumas stated the Moderator has declined to ask for an increase.

Mr. Sterndale reported he has adjusted some of the proposed amounts to match an amount closer to the actual 2017 expenditures.

Mr. Thompson asked if the health insurance premiums were lower. Mr. Sterndale reported they are lower, according to the insurance company this is primarily caused by adjustments to sections of the offered services. However, this is not usual and isn't necessarily expected for the future, and has historically been a 8% or 9% increase.

Mr. Sterndale reported he has removed the expenditure for the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's Office safety renovations, by encumbering 2017 funds and will be applied in the 2017 budget.

The Police Cruiser proposed amount has been adjusted by including the trade-in value of the oldest cruiser. Chief Foss stated the trade-in value is \$7,000.00. Mr. White asked why the amount was so low and the Chief responded that the vehicle has been in two accidents.

Mr. Sterndale reported the dry hydrant on McCrillis must be repaired and is included in the operating budget and is not listed as a separate warrant article.

Chair Hadik asked how often the dry hydrants are replaced and if a reserve fund should be created. Mr. Sterndale reported part of the replacement is needed because of the initial installation material, a lighter weight metal or PVC, and they are being replaced with a heavier cast iron. A reserve fund isn't needed for the dry hydrants, but possibly the cisterns. Additional information regarding dry hydrants and cisterns could be provided and discussed with the Fire Chief at the meeting next week.

Chair Hadik asked for a definition of Town Clerk Fees. Mr. Sterndale reported this account is offset by the revenue received by citizens paying the fee when they register their vehicle.

Mr. Thompson asked about the increase for the Town Clerk Salary account. Mr. Sterndale reported elected officials have their salary amounts approved by voters at town meeting, they are not

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40 employees of the town, and the salary isn't set by the Selectmen. They also don't receive any
41 additional benefits from the town, such as vacation time or insurance.

42 Chair Hadik asked about the Valuation Update account with a zero budget amount. Mr. Sterndale
43 reported this is an account used once every five years and is offset with the funded Revaluation
44 reserve fund. \$25,000.00 is requested annually for the five year state valuation update requirement.

45 General discussion took place about the use of year end 2017 surplus funds. Mr. Sterndale reported
46 the town will occasionally try to find items proposed in the next year budget that could be
47 purchased at the end of the current year in an effort to bring forward a lower proposed budget.

48 Mr. Koester asked if the Historical Society receives internet service. Mr. Sterndale reported it was
49 provided to them in 2017 and internet now reaches the Dame Building.

50 Chair Hadik asked about the differences in salary amounts with the changes in the Building
51 Inspector and the Planner position for the Planning Board. Mr. Sterndale reported overall the town
52 expects to spend less in 2018 than they did in prior years, as it went from a full time position to at
53 least one part time position, and either another part time position or a hired contractor. Funds are
54 provided to the Planning Board for plan review/assistance.

55 Mr. Sterndale reported there is a slight transition in the town benefit amounts by removing a full
56 time Building Inspector position but adding a new full time Highway Department position.

57 Chair Hadik asked if there are available funds in the Highway Vehicle reserve fund to pay for the
58 proposed new 1-ton truck and plow included in the Highway Misc. account. Mr. Sterndale reported
59 there may be enough funds in the reserve account, but the amounts previously added to the reserve
60 fund were not enough to meet all the planned vehicle purchases. The account was depleted with a
61 large purchase in 2016 and there are large purchases planned for the future.

62 Mr. White stated it didn't make sense to treat capital purchases differently, if there is a CIP for
63 trucks, all trucks should be included in the plan in an effort to budget accordingly. Mr. Sterndale
64 stated the overall 2018 budget is relatively low, and previously the reserve fund has been used to
65 keep the tax rate stable. The town is proposing to add funds to the reserve account in 2018, in an
66 effort to continue keeping the funding level. The town can deplete the fund now to pay for the
67 truck, but it could mean increasing the amount for future purchases.

68 Mr. Sterndale reviewed the proposed warrant articles, stating the majority of the warrant articles are
69 repeat items of what has been seen in the past. A Road Bond article is being considered by the
70 Selectmen in the amount of \$650,000.00 for road paving. The Select Board determined the amount
71 being proposed is too high to consider adding the amount into the operating budget. The town has
72 fewer and fewer smaller projects that need completion, with the remaining projects being larger
73 dollar amounts. The Selectmen are considering repairs to Ledge Farm, giving the results received
74 from traffic counts, and the amount of time and money the Highway Department currently spends to
75 maintain the road. The number of people who travel that road is a significant number, too
76 significant for a dirt road, and this is the highest priority road. The next road to also be considered
77 is Cooper Hill, which will be done from the regular road construction warrant article.

78 Mr. Thompson asked how much the town would save if the road were paved and if citizens have
79 expressed their desire to pave the road. Mr. Sterndale reported it isn't fully a dollar impact, but a
80 town material savings and time savings for employees, giving them time to spend on other roads.

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81 There are a number of people who have requested the road to be paved, but there have also been
82 others who would prefer it to remain a dirt road. This is expected to be a big topic of discussion at
83 Town Meeting.

84 Mr. Thompson asked how much the opinion of the Budget Committee matters in regards to
85 recommending the work; because if the committee doesn't recommend the work the voters could
86 still vote to complete it. Mr. Sterndale stated support could matter, but the voters can do what they
87 desire at Town Meeting, and he expects all arguments to be presented during the discussion.

88 Mr. Dumas stated the biggest concern is the safety aspects for the people who live on the road, such
89 as will this benefit the people who live on that road, and not necessarily those who just travel the
90 road. The Selectmen will hear both sides of the issue during the upcoming public hearing.

91 Ms. Levenson stated the School Board has also heard concerns from families because the bus can't
92 travel the entire length of that road, especially in bad weather.

93 Mr. White asked if the work on Ledge Farm would be completed with in-house staff. Mr. Sterndale
94 reported staff will help on the project, but this work will include significant engineering assistance
95 and will be bid out.

96 Mr. Sterndale reviewed previously seen articles, such as reserve funds for the Highway Vehicle,
97 Fire Vehicle, Revaluation fund, Tri-Centennial fund, HVAC fund, and Invasive Species fund. The
98 list also includes the Special Ambulance fund, the purchase of a new fire truck, and a couple of
99 citizen petition warrant articles. A decision was made to change the language for the Fire Vehicle
100 reserve fund to allow for the purchase of breathing apparatus at the Fire Department, rather than
101 create a new fund. Breathing apparatus for the department has been on the CIP for several years.
102 The HVAC reserve fund increased from \$5,000.00 to \$10,000.00 to help for the known future repair
103 of the library elevator/lift.

104 Chair Hadik asked about the Road Acceptance for Strawberry Lane. Mr. Sterndale stated this is a
105 citizen petition and acceptance would make this a town road, at an approximate length of .10th of a
106 mile. The road is finished but the town must accept it.

107 Chief Foss answered questions regarding the Police Department budget. Chief Foss stated there are
108 few things to report for his budget, and it does include the regular request for a new cruiser. The
109 department needs to purchase new radar units; two were purchase in 2017 and two additional radios
110 are included in the proposed 2018 budget at an approximate cost of \$1,400.00 each.

111 Chair Hadik asked if the department was fully staffed. Chief Foss stated the department is fully
112 staff. Department staff is spending more time at the elementary school with the DARE program and
113 the new LEAD program. This new program is to help the 8th grade students with their transition
114 from a small town school to much larger high schools, and it is always a positive thing to have an
115 officer in the school. The department is also working on training a new investigator, with proposed
116 changes by the legislature for hiring part-time staff.

117 Chief Foss stated he expects faster drivers on newly paved roads, he currently hears from many of
118 the people who have concerns about speeders all over town, and the department continues to work
119 on improving the problem. However, there are some of the issues that can't be solved with the
120 traffic coming through Nottingham to and from other towns.

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121 Chair Hadik thanked Chief Foss for the police presence at the school and hears positive things with
122 the police presence and programs. Other agreed they see a positive response to the presence of the
123 Police Department at the school.

124 Ms. Levenson stated the Chief volunteered his time at the school to improve school building safety.

125 Chief Foss stated he continues to look at the DARE program to make sure it is working, and hopes
126 to see positive results with the LEAD program.

127 The committee thanked Chief Foss for attending.

128 Mr. Thompson asked if Nottingham has a desired rate of population growth. Mr. Sterndale reported
129 the town has a Master Plan, which may be better answered by the Planning Board. However, the
130 general consensus of the town is that there is a desire for select commercial/industrial properties,
131 but overall the town would remain very similar to where it is now. Paving gravel roads continue to
132 become a big question for the town and if more paving is requested it will become a bigger town
133 discussion.

134 Mr. Koester asked if the CIP report is finished. Mr. Sterndale stated it would be available for the
135 meeting next week.

136 Ms. Cara Marsh introduced herself as the new Library Director. Mr. Christopher Thompson is a
137 Library Trustee. Ms. Marsh reviewed the breakdown of the library budget. The library increased
138 their proposed budget in the areas of the alarm system and library cleaning.

139 Ms. Cara Marsh and Mr. Chris Thompson provided the committee an explanation of the library
140 budget worksheet. Ms. Marsh explained the proposed library budget is an approximate 9%
141 increase, with the increases seen for the alarm system and cleaning staff, who hasn't seen a raise in
142 many years. Mr. Thompson stated the key points is to provide the committee with a better
143 understanding of how the library is being operated. In the past few years, the Library Trustees have
144 made an attempt to utilize some of the fine and revenue sources to help offset the proposed budget
145 request.

146 Chair Hadik asked if the town would replace the lift for the library. Ms. Marsh stated it is part of
147 the Capital Improvement plan; typically the library maintains the interior of the building and the
148 town maintains the exterior, but given the legal need for the lift the town is taking care of the large
149 expense to prevent wiping out the library budget on one expense item.

150 Ms. Marsh stated she has been working on updating some of the library spaces and technology.
151 These changes include the purchased a newer TV for presentations and updates to the outdated
152 spaces. The library has made an attempt to increase the amount of programming for all ages.

153 There has been a lot of discussion about how to provide additional resources, beyond books. Such
154 as movies, electronic books, audio books, and additional e-sources, which are typically a little more
155 expensive. The library is able to work with the state in providing e-materials to citizens and can
156 purchase items that are available to only Nottingham residents.

157 General discussion took place about the future plan to pave the library parking lot, and
158 consideration of providing a safe walking area for the library.

159 Ms. Lee stated she really appreciate all the activities the library is offering, her children really enjoy
160 what they are offering. Mr. Thompson stated he believes the library is a jewel, and appreciates the

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161 amount of new material that is provided to residents. Mr. White stated he appreciates the newsletter
162 to see what new material comes in.

163 Ms. Marsh stated the library is working on collection development and increase the amount of new
164 materials being received. They also spend a lot of time on marketing and social media. The library
165 is competing with many other outside sources and is making sure it is easy to see what activities are
166 taking place at the library; this includes collaboration with the Recreation Department.

167 The committee thanked them from coming.

168 **General Town Updates:** Mr. Dumas reported the board has spent a lot of time discussing the roads
169 issue. A public hearing will be specifically held for the proposed road bond and a lot of
170 participation is expected.

171 Mr. Koester asked if the recent federal tariffs would impact the solar installation. Mr. Dumas stated
172 work continues to take place and he will check with the Town Administrator for a current update.

173 **General School Updates:** Ms. Levenson distributed the MS27 for committee member signatures,
174 stating there were some technical difficulties in getting the form correct. Ms. Calley-Murdough
175 stated this is a known issue with the online state database.

176 Ms. Levenson stated registrations continue to be received by students for their choice of high
177 school. Recently received figures indicate a shift in the anticipated attendance numbers, decreasing
178 at Coe Brown and increasing Dover, fairly drastically. Coe Brown had an initial estimate of 170
179 students and now anticipates 148. Dover had an initial estimate of 58 students and now anticipates
180 79 students. This attendance shift will change the proposed budget by a possible amount of
181 \$62,944.00 and given continuing attendance changes, a proposal will be made at the deliberative
182 session to reduce the budget by an approximate \$30,000.00 to \$40,000.00.

183 Ms. Biron asked if this would impact the transportation contract. Ms. Levenson stated the
184 transportation contract provides the school with some flexibility in the number of buses and routes,
185 but she anticipates the routes to remain the same at this time.

186 Mr. Koester asked if additional student high school selection decision changes are expected to come
187 throughout the spring. Ms. Levenson stated additional changes can continue to be made, even up
188 through the school year.

189 Mr. Thompson asked about the differences between the two High Schools. Ms. Levenson stated
190 Coe Brown is tuition driven and has no public funding mechanism. Dover is a public school,
191 operating in a town with a tax cap. Nottingham has within the Dover contract a proposed rate Cap,
192 although the set rate is typically higher.

193 Mr. Thompson asked for a general description of the different educational offerings at each school.

194 Ms. Levenson reviewed what each school offers educationally. Coe Brown is a Division 2 athletic
195 league, offers a classical education format – heavy in math and science. Dover is a larger school,
196 have a local Technical/Vocational Training Center , Division 1 athletic league, while further away
197 provides different options. The School Board has received positive response from the parents of
198 children who attend both schools. It is seen as a positive to be able to offer two school experiences.

199 General discussion took place about the educational differences between the two schools.

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200 Discussion took place about the high school tuition budget accounts, and if there should only be one
201 tuition line, a possible preference with a feeling of better transparency by having two separate
202 account lines, how the budgeted line items would be adjusted for the change in attendance during
203 the deliberative session.

204 Mr. Koester asked if the school budget should continue to reflect two separate accounts for the two
205 high schools, or if they should be merged into one line. Support was given to leave two lines in the
206 budget.

207 Ms. Levenson left the meeting at approximately 8:50 pm.

208 **Approval of Minutes:** Ms. Calley-Murdough presented an online option for making recommended
209 corrections to the minutes to try and reduce the amount of time spent on minutes during a meeting.
210 Mr. Dumas stated this is the method the Select Board uses and is a nice option, speeding up
211 meetings.

212 **Motion:** by Mr. Dumas, second by Mr. Koester to approve the December 21, 2017 minutes as
213 amended.

214 **Vote:** 6 in favor; 1 abstained.

215 **Motion:** by Mr. Koester, second by Mr. Dumas to approve the January 9, 2018 minutes as
216 amended.

217 **Vote:** 8 in favor.

218 **OTHER BUSINESS:** Chair Hadik reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule. February 1, 2018 to
219 continue review of the 2nd Draft Town Budget. February 8, 2018 for the public hearing on the 2018
220 proposed budget.

221 Mr. Thompson asked the roles and responsibilities for the Budget Committee at the Deliberative
222 Session. Chair Hadik reported he would present the budget, giving the SAU and School Board the
223 opportunity to comment and provide details.

224 **ROUNDTABLE:** Mr. Koester reminded members that it is open period for vacant board/committee
225 sign ups. Chair Hadik encouraged existing members to sign up again.

226 **ACTION ITEMS:** None

227 **ADJOURN:** Having no further business,

228 **9:11 PM Motion:** by Ms. Lee, second by Mr. Dumas.

229 **Vote:** 8 – 0 in favor.

230 Respectfully Submitted,

231 Dawn Calley-Murdough