

Nottingham Budget Committee Meeting

Date: Tuesday, January 9, 2024

Un-Official Minutes

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

5

6 **Members Absent:** Sandra Jones, Member;

7

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

11

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

13

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

15

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

26

27 **Town Budget**

28

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

35

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

38

39 **Executive - \$261,510 – 5.2% Reduction**

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

44

45 **Town Clerk - \$96,157 – 7.8% Increase**

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

48

49 **Elections - \$45,601 – 133.7% Increase**

50 This was also driven by more elections.

51

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

53

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

55

56 **Legal - \$30,001 – No change.**

57

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

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

61

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

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

65

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

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

68

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

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

72

73 **Cemeteries - \$6,500 – No Change**

74

75 **Insurance - \$122,725 – 9.1% Increase**

76

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

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

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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

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

166

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

168

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

183

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

188

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

195

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

199

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

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

206

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

211

212 **Warrant Articles**

213

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

220

221 Board Of Selectmen – 2 For 3 Years

222 Budget Committee – 3 For 3 Years

223 Cemetery Trustee

224 Library Trustee

225 Planning Board

226 Trustee Of the Trust Funds

227 Zoning Board

228

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

230

231 There were no zoning amendments presented.

232

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

234

235 1. Shall the town raise and appropriate the operating budget, not including warrant articles that
236 will be voted by the Budget Committee. They did not yet have the final figures for this. If it
237 does not pass, then the default budget will be used.

238

239 2. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate \$10,000 to be added to the Police
240 Technology Expendable Trust Fund. Tax impact estimated to be \$.01 per \$1,000 of property
241 valuation.

242

243 3. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$40,000 for the purchase of
244 purchasing the necessary fuel, supplies, equipment, and maintenance for the ambulance and
245 billing services and to authorize the withdrawal of \$40,000 from the Ambulance And Equipment
246 Replacement Special Revenue Fund to pay for that. Tax impact estimated to be \$.04 per \$1,000
247 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

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

297
298 11. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of \$500,000 for highway
299 reconstruction and maintenance on town roads to include _____. (Roads will be listed
300 on the ballot.)

301
302 12. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of \$100,000 to be added to the
303 Highway Truck Capital Reserve Fund previously established. Tax impact estimated to be \$.12
304 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

305
306 Mr. Welsh stated that he thinks the town will need to replace the grader in the upcoming years and
307 since it is the most expensive piece of equipment in the fleet, it make sense to start saving for it now.
308 Mr. Dabrieo stated that the balance in that fund is \$74,897.14 as of September 30th. Graders cost
309 \$450,000.

310
311 13. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$20,000 to be added to the
312 previously established Re-Evaluation Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of performing
313 property evaluations every five years. Tax impact estimated to be \$.02 per \$1,000 of property
314 valuation.

315
316 Mr. Dabrieo stated that fund had approximately \$57,000 in it.

317
318 14. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$24,375 for the following social
319 service programs provided to the residents of Nottingham. The list included Cornerstone VNA,
320 Lamprey Health Care, Seacoast Mental Health, Waypoint, Haven, and others. Tax impact
321 estimated to be \$.01 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

322
323 15. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$10,000 to be added to the
324 Invasive Species Prevention, Eradication, and Removal Trust Expendable Trust Fund previously
325 established. Tax impact estimated to be \$.01 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

326
327 16. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000 for the purpose of
328 conducting courtesy inspections of boats using the state boat ramps on Pawtuckaway Lake and
329 to educate the public on how to prevent the spread of exotic species from water body to water
330 body. Tax impact estimated to be \$.01 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

331
332 17. To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$7,500 to purchase a new voting
333 machine. The town will also be applying for aid to help purchase the machine. The final amount
334 used to purchase the machine is subject to any grant or aid. Tax impact estimated to be \$.01
335 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

336
337 18. To see if the town will vote to approve the re-adoption of the All Veterans Tax Credit RSA 72:28-
338 B. If approved, it will continue to offer a \$750 tax credit to all honorably discharged veterans
339 who qualify. The re-adoption would also offer the credit to active service members.

340
341 19. To see if the town will vote to change the purpose of the existing Tri-Centennial Fund created in
342 2013 to The Celebrate Nottingham Fund for the purpose of town-wide celebrations including

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

345
346 Ms. Sebasco stated that fund balance is \$2,747. Mr. Dabrieo added that there is also \$40,000 in a CD.

347
348 20. Harbor Street Limited Partnership, Joseph Falzone, manager, formally requested through this
349 petition per RSA 674:40-A the acceptance of the Town Of Nottingham's Maple Ridge Road of the
350 Maple Ridge Subdivision. With this acceptance, the ownership of this road would be transferred
351 to the Town Of Nottingham by citizen petition.

352
353 Mr. Butkiewicz suggested that the petitioners request to change the wording of that warrant article at
354 the Deliberative Session.

355
356 Doug Cummings thanked the Budget Committee and stated that he thought they did a pretty good job
357 on the budget. He wanted to recognize the hard work of the committee.

358
359 Robin Marshall, of 189 Old Turnpike Road, added the total amount of the warrant articles, which was
360 \$1.162 million. She asked what the total of last year's warrant articles was. She thought that was a
361 large amount to put to the taxpayers.

362
363 Mr. Decker stated that the estimated tax impacts on the articles were incorrectly calculated since some
364 of the figures were the same for articles of different amounts.

365
366 Mr. Tweed added up last year's warrant articles, which came to \$906,000.

367
368 Ms. Marshall warned people to be aware that although the figures such as \$.01 per \$1,000 of valuation
369 look small, it does add up. She also expressed her concern for the warrant articles on the Fire Chief, the
370 town roads, and the invasive species. Ms. Marshall asked how much was in the Invasive Species Fund.

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

373
374 Mr. Decker stated that the town is responsible for controlling the invasive species in Pawtuckaway. He
375 explained that even though the state covered the treatment this year, they will most likely not cover it
376 in the future and the total required was about \$68,000. So, the current fund balance would not cover
377 that.

378
379 Ms. Sebasco stated the net valuation of the homes was \$832,146,848. This figure was the tax base. She
380 stated that for every \$80,000, there would be an impact of \$.10 per \$1,000 of valuation.

381
382 Ms. Marshall asked whether the new ballot machine was for the next election. Mr. Decker stated that
383 he thought the current machine would be used for all of the 2024 elections. He stated that he thought
384 it was premature to ask for that. Mr. Welsh stated that they did not have a choice. Someone from the
385 audience stated that they thought the town could not use the current machine after April 1st. Mr.
386 Decker stated his opinion that he thought the state would be pushing that deadline out.

387

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