

Budget Committee

January 18, 2017

7:00 pm

Town Office/Police Station Conference Room

Present: Budget Committee members: Cybele Merrick, Erik Colberg, Eric Furstenberg, Greg Lange, Richard Jones (Acting Chair), Wilks McClave, and Susan MacKenzie (Select Board rep). Departments: Chief O'Keefe (Police). Steven Williams (Road Agent). Patty Hudson (Library Trustee). Jeff Valance (Principal), Mike Harris (Superintendent). Sam Levey (School Board member). C. Jay Smith (Select Board member) and Patty Jenks (Select Board member). Community members: Kevin Sahr, Sarah Glass, David & Barbara Roby and Rich Brown.

1. Acting Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.
2. There were no public comments at this time.
3. The minutes were discussed. Mr. Wilks had an addition to the public section. He did not have anything prepared in writing so it was decided the minutes would be deferred for approval at the next meeting.
4. Acting Chair Jones opened the Public Hearing:
5. Mr. Jones suggested a change to the agenda to move the school budget discussion first. Ms. MacKenzie and Mr. McClave felt there was no need to change this order. It was the sense of the Budget Committee to stay with the original agenda order.
6. Town Budget: Ms. MacKenzie reviewed the 1.4% increase in the proposed Select Board operating budget to an amount of \$2,189,332. The Budget Committee had increased this proposed budget to 1.8% increase or \$2,198,249 at a previous meeting. She reviewed the estimated tax impact to homeowners. Ms. MacKenzie noted the cut in the Town building maintenance employee wages. This is an important position. The recommendation of this part-time position came with the support of the Town Building Committee. The town Building Committee would like to Budget Committee to reconsider this cut. The town has numerous buildings to care for and it will be cost effective to have someone doing small fixes instead of hiring it out. The need for tracking on the buildings i.e. furnace cleaning, inspections, etc. maintenance saves money in the long run. The highway administrative support was reviewed and discussed again. Mr. Williams reviewed plowing schedules and encouraged the town to consider using an independent plowing contractor for all of the town parking lots. The feeling was this saved money and freed up the highway employees to concentrate on the roads. Followed was a discussion on the possibility of combining the building maintenance and parking lot plowing with the school's needs.
  - At this time Ms. MacKenzie moved to add back in the \$8,304 to line 97 General Government Payroll. There was no second.
  - The Budget Committee discussed the additional funding for the highway administrative position. After a brief discussion, Mr. Colberg moved to reduce the \$15,000 increase by \$7,000. Seconded by Mr. Lange. (This will leave \$8,000 for this

position.) Questions were asked and answered concerning what this person would be doing, the need for tracking invoices and invoiced amounts of materials according to jobs. The motion was voted 4 in favor (Furstenberg, Colberg, Lange and Jones), 3 against (MacKenzie, McClave & Merrick). This motion passed and the Highway payroll line 198 total will be \$100,068.

Given there were no other questions or clarifications for the Town budget at this time Mr. Jones asked for a motion.

Mr. Furstenberg moved to approve \$2,191,249 as the 2017 Budget Committee's recommended Town operating budget. Seconded by Mr. Lange. Motion voted 4 in favor (Furstenberg, Colberg, Lange and Jones), 3 against (MacKenzie, McClave & Merrick).

7. School budget discussion: Mr. Valance reviewed the proposed budget, controllable and non-controllable items. The School Board has been able to come back with a budget that is a 4.7% increase over the current year's budget. This includes further cuts and the inclusion of using \$15,000 from the High school Tuition fund. Mr. Valance and Mr. Levey reviewed the administrative changes, and noted the restructuring would have been recommended even if it did not save money in this budget. The following topics were reviewed and discussed:

- Teacher negotiations - bring total budget increase to 5.4%,
- Student populations,
- Per pupil costs,
- Trust Funds and concerns about using all the fund in the coming years,
- High school - encouraging students to go to the less expensive high schools
- The increase in taxes is not sustainable for residents,
- A high school student can go to all public high schools, no transportation for them provided,
- Concerns about not fixing the community room roof were noted, and
- All day Kindergarten will be a petitioned warrant article. If approved by the voters, this will be an additional \$80,000 to \$90,000.

Public comments:

- High school tuition costs, "holding the K-8 programs hostage",
- Concerns about not fixing the Community Room roof were expressed and the School Board was encouraged to put this on the warrant,
- Volunteers in the school and Lyme being a unique town with many talented and capable volunteers was noted,
- The Trust funds need to be funded more aggressively, and

Approved February 8, 2017

- The School Board and staff are dedicated and appreciated by the community, noting that there are many challenges. The Administration and staff have done an excellent job in making the Lyme school a great school but the reality of this is the taxpayers cannot afford these continued increases. At this rate in 8-9 years the taxes will double, making Lyme unaffordable to many of its present citizens.

Mr. Jones went around the Budget Committee and there were no further questions or comments.

At this time Mr. McClave moved to recommend a budget of \$6,774,007 (as noted by Mr. Harris) for the proposed 2017-2018 school operating budget. Seconded by Ms. Merrick. The motion was voted 5 in favor (Merrick, Lange, Furstenberg, Colberg and McClave and 1 against (MacKenzie).

8. Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Reminder: Public Hearing to recommend or not recommend warrant articles involving money for both the Town and School will be held on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017 @ 7:00PM in the Town office conference room.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Dina Cutting