

Town of Eliot

Budget Committee Meeting

April 13, 2022

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order @ 5:00 PM by the Chair.

Budget Committee Members: Donna Murphy, Brad Hughes, Denny Lentz, Diane Holt, Jean Hardy, and Reggie Fowler. Jean Hardy attended via Zoom. Ed previously notified the Chair that he would not be able to attend this meeting.

Public Comment: No members of the public were in attendance at the beginning of the meeting; no one joined via Zoom during the meeting nor did anyone call in during the meeting.

Approval of Minutes:

- The minutes of the March 23, 2022 regular meeting were reviewed. Brad noted two items that needed correction. The first was on Line 12, where “not” should be “no”. The second correction was that lines 114-116 should be removed as they were a duplication of the previous paragraph. Donna moved to accept the minutes as amended, and Denny seconded the motion. The motion was approved, by roll-call vote, 6-0.

Letter to Citizens of Eliot for Town Mailing:

- Brad had composed a cover letter to our budget report, termed “Addendum”. The budget report had been approved by the Committee at our last meeting, however the Committee wanted certain facts concerning the overall budget process communicated to the citizens, hence the addendum to the report.
- The Committee spent approximately 40 minutes of this meeting discussing changes to the cover letter that were made to ensure the letter was factual in its entirety. Discussions also focused on proper wording of statements made, and in some cases the discussion were lengthy, but necessary.
- Topics up for discussion included:
 1. Timing of receipt of the budget from the Town Manager;
 2. Exclusion of department heads from meetings with the Budget Committee;
 3. Timing and method of receipt of responses to our budget questions from the Town Manager;
 4. Discussion of the impact on our ability to provide informed recommendations to the voters when details behind budget items were not provided by the Town Manager; and
 5. Exclusion of the Union Negotiations Committee from negotiations of the Police Union contract.
- There being no further comments, Jean motioned to approve the Addendum to the Budget Committee Report as amended and to approve the Budget Committee Budget Report as written. Reggie seconded the motion. The motion was approved, by roll-call vote, 6-0.
- Brad will combine the Addendum with the Budget Report and send that file to Donna to forward to the Administrative Secretary. This will then be a five-page document for mailing to the citizens. There is \$1,200 in our budget for this mailing.

Comments on Citizen’s Option Meeting:

- In general, the Committee was disappointed at the turn out for the meeting. Brad opined that maybe the timing of the meeting was a reason. In years past the meeting was held at 7:00 PM, while this year it was at 6:00 PM.
- Brad also noted that the meeting is not available on Town Hall Streams – purportedly because of technical difficulties. Donna noted that she observed a Town Office employee recording the meeting on her cell phone. Brad said he had heard that there was a transcript of the meeting available on the Town web site, but he could not locate it.
- Diane was not able to attend the meeting, and asked if there were any changes to the budget made at the meeting. This was followed by some discussion of the number of citizens in attendance and the fact that this was not a formal meeting since not enough people attended. One percent of voters is required to be a quorum, and far less than that attended the meeting.

Budget Committee Member Reports and Comments:

- Donna encouraged all Committee members to watch the Select Board meeting when they discussed the budget. Brad commented that he did watch the meeting stream, and noted that several times the Board pondered the Budget Committee actions on certain budget items. In his opinion, this only reinforces the need for a joint meeting of the Board and the Committee to openly discuss budget items, as has been done in the past. This is just not the correct approach to approval of budgets.
- Donna also noted that our next meeting is scheduled for May 11th, but she really has no items for the agenda. After some discussion, Brad motioned that we not hold a meeting in May, and Denny seconded the motion. The motion was approved by roll-call vote, 6-0.

Adjournment:

- Motioned by Brad, seconded by Denny, to adjourn at 5:48PM.
- Jean asked to be heard before voting on the adjournment. She felt that this Committee needs to invite the Town Manager to our August or September meeting to air out our differences. Brad said that we still have an outstanding agenda item put forward by Denny to discuss and delineate the problems encountered this year, and he felt inviting the Town Manager to a meeting after that would probably be discussed then. Jean agreed.
- The motion to adjourn was approved at 5:52 PM, by roll-call vote, 6-0.
- Our next meeting is scheduled for July 8, 2022 at 5:00 PM. This will be a hybrid meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Murphy, Chair
Brad Hughes, Secretary

Date Approved: July 8, 2022