

Town of Eliot  
Budget Committee Meeting  
September 14, 2022

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**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order @ 5:00 PM by the Chair, Donna Murphy

**Budget Committee Members:** Donna Murphy, Ed Strong, Diane Holt, Jean Hardy, Reggie Fowler, Jeffrey Leathe, and Gene Wypyski.

**Public Comment:**

- Mr. Bill Widi, speaking as a citizen, addressed the Chair, Donna Murphy, and stated the Select Board had received the 2021 audit. Mr. Widi stated that the audit was “not pretty”. He encouraged the Budget Committee members to attend the upcoming Select Board meeting for more information. Mr Widi discussed various fees that are charged to residents. One example given was the boat launch fees. The Select Board are supporting an increase in fees. Mr. Widi explained that the fees are locked in through the ordinance. Donna asked if the ordinance was available. Mr. Widi stated that it was on the website. Discussion on the proposed change to allow the Select Board to have the authority to change the fees. Currently there are fees that do not cover costs. The proposed change would allow the Select Board to adjust fees to cover costs. Mr. Widi stated that the fee changes would have a thirty-day notice. Mr. Widi stated one example was that there were interviews done for the Land Use Administrator and that based on the people that came in they are not even close on the salary. Mr. Widi stated they had to do adjustments to stop the bleeding and that he knew that some here did not agree. They had one very qualified applicant and they weren’t even close. Donna questioned how this was connected to the fees. Mr. Widi stated that if you are losing money by sending out notices and they are paying for themselves then we are having an overall deficit of money. The Chair stated that this is not connected to the salaries. Donna stated that this committee (Budget Committee) does not set salaries. Donna stated this Committee did not support the salaries and this is inaccurate. What we have said historically is that the Committee will consider everything that comes before it. If there is some documentation that any position in this town is not being funded fairly, we will consider that if the documents are presented that show the position is underfunded. That was never presented to the Committee and this Committee was never able to consider that. Donna reiterated that we do not set salaries. Diane Holt stated that there was some discussion at the Summit she attended on Eliot residents having stickers for the Boat Basin and have a different fee. Donna referenced previous discussion on fees charged at the Boat Basin. The amount that was charged to the Eliot residents was connected to the amount charged to non-residents. It was something to do with the State. Donna questioned if Ed Strong recalled this. Donna stated that Eliot residents could be charged less but the amount affected what could be charged to non-residents. Ed asked Mr. Widi about the ordinance change for public assistance. Mr. Widi stated that it was a state law change that is updated yearly. Jeff Leathe, who is a member of the Planning Board, explained the background on what the Planning Board did in reviewing the fees. Jeff stated that about six months ago they took a look at the fees and noticed that they had not changed in a long time. Each planning board member was assigned three local communities to look at and create a comparable spreadsheet for their fees and our fees. They brought it back to Jeff (Planner) and Kearsten (Land Use Administrator). They consolidated it and a bunch of things came out. The local communities did not have fee

structures listed on the websites. It took them an extraordinary amount of time. They found one town with a consolidated fee schedule. The Planning Board is using this analysis to recommend fees going forward.

**Approval of Minutes of August 10, 2022<sup>h</sup>:**

- Minutes of the August 10, 2022, regular meeting were reviewed. Motion by Jeff, second by Ed to approve as amended. The motion carried by a 7-0 roll call vote.

**Murray Rowe e-mail and letter:**

- Donna stated this was not an actionable item as the Budget Committee has no purview over this. Donna stated she wanted to be sure that all received the email and letter. It appears that a citizen presented the letter to Richard Donhauser, Chair of the Select Board and herself as Chair of the Budget Committee stating concerns with the park. Donna stated it is informational and that the Budget Committee would address it, if it is in the budget. Diane stated she was glad someone said something as we would not know what was going on with the parks. Gene questioned when it would be addressed. Donna explained that if it were in the budget books that are provided in December then it would come before the Budget Committee. Gene questioned where in the budget it would be, what department. Donna stated it would be where the Town Manager placed it. Jeff asked if it would be in the Capital Improvements and do we have any purview over capital improvements. Donna stated that if it is the budget book it would come before the Budget Committee. Donna questioned if Jeff or Gene had an opportunity to look at a budget book. Donna stated there are some on the shelf and she had some if they were interested. Mr. Widi stated that the Town Manager is re-formatting and it might be a little different. Mr. Widi spoke about the condition of the field.

**Safety Net Community Conversation email**

- Initial information received was from Gene concerning he had been selected on the safety net committee. Donna stated Mr. Wypyski could not attend as a Budget Committee member as that would require a vote from the entire Budget Committee.
- Donna read a letter explaining what had happened, and stated Mr. Wypyski is free to attend as a private citizen but not as a Budget Committee member.

**Budget Committee Member Reports and Comments:**

- Jean asked Mr. Widi about the audit for FY 2021 is not complete and does not look complete. What does it mean? Jean also asked if the FY 20 audit had some of the same issues.
- Gene stated he was in the Town Manager's office and the Town Manager stated he would like to attend a budget Committee meeting. Donna stated the Town Manager can contact her anytime to be placed on the agenda.
- Diane stated she went to two summit meetings and the Assessor gave additional information on the property tax stabilization program.

**Adjournment:**

- Motion by Ed, second by Jean to adjourn. Motion carried by roll-call vote 7-0.
- The next meeting is scheduled for October 12, 2022 at 5:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Donna Murphy*, Chair  
*Jean Hardy*, Secretary

Date Approved: October 12, 2022