

Town of Eliot  
Budget Committee Meeting  
November 9, 2022

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**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:10 PM by the Chair, Donna Murphy. All members were in attendance, in person: Donna Murphy, Jean Hardy, Reggie Fowler, Diane Holt, Ed Strong, Gene Wypyski, and Jeff Leathe.

**2. Town Manager FY23/24 budget**

The Town Manager Mike Sullivan presented to the Budget Committee a PowerPoint presentation on things that will come in the budget. He had made the same presentation to the Select Board on October 27, 2022.

Mike explained changes to the format of the budget, stating that “the changes are intended to bring a greater ease of understanding to the public.” He said the public may request a copy of the budget from the Town Manager and find the budget on the town website, [eliotme.org](http://eliotme.org). Changes to the organization of the budget have included deleting unused titles and updating categories so costs and expenditures are accurately assigned. Some costs were being assigned to outdated categories as there was no other category available; these outdated categories have been eliminated and replaced with accurate ones. Mike spoke about the budget process and ensuring that all responsible parties, including some responsible parties who have never participated before, were called in to meet with the Town Manager and the Finance Director to discuss needs and costs. He discussed expectations of “sufficient funding to deliver the services expected” and doing so “in the most cost-effective way.” The Town Manager spoke about specific adjustments and changes, including centralized employee benefits and related expenses, the Sewer Enterprise Fund, and CSD for seasonal staff. He added that “all technology costs are segregated into a new category in Administration” and that there are exceptions to this concerning Land Use and the Police Department.

Discussion among committee members focused on how the budget is being presented with some categories eliminated or combined and how the budget will be read by the Budget Committee and Select Board who are best familiar with prior budget formats. For the Budget Committee members, questions were asked as to how they would receive information about new expenditures and explanations for those new or increased expenditures. Mike said that the budget includes full information to ensure full understanding, specifically the 2021 expenditures, 2021/22 actuals, and the FY23 voted-on budget, and where the Town is at this point in December. Ed asked if the Committee would receive information about why a department’s budget is increasing, and Mike said he would supply that information. He discussed efforts to make the Community Service Department self-sustaining as the Budget Committee urged last year. He said that the Town is looking into ways to develop the Boat Basin without impacting taxpayers. Review of user fees for permits, licenses, etc. are being reviewed. He added that other Town costs are being reviewed “to improve service to the public equitably and economically.” The Town Manager then presented

“cost drivers” that will impact the Town budget, including rising costs in fuel sources, health insurance premiums, and material costs. He concluded his presentation with a list of the Capital Planning Projects that residents inquire about and request most consistently, including Town Hall expansion, Murray Rowe Park improvements, sidewalk expansion, and improvements to the Boat Basin, Hammond Park, and Frost Tufts Park. The members thanked the Town Manager for his presentation.

### **3. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

### **4. Approval of Minutes**

The Committee reviewed the October 27, 2022, Minutes. [I did not hear who motioned and seconded approval of the Minutes as amended.] The October 27, 2022, Minutes were approved as amended unanimously with a roll call vote of 7-0.

Donna asked Jeff to talk about the recording secretary position, the role, and its importance, and hiring one for the Budget Committee. Jeff shared his discussion with Ellen Lemire, the Town’s longstanding expert on Robert’s Rules and meeting procedures. Jeff talked about Ann Lukejord’s candidacy for the position.

Jean moved that the Budget Committee respectfully request a recording secretary through the Select Board (unclear), Reggie seconded the motion.

Discussion followed. Ed asked how much money was budgeted for the committee next year. Donna explained the situation over the past year. Ed asked how much money was left and was there enough to pay for a recording secretary. The committee further discussed the process of hiring a recording secretary and the role’s importance particularly during upcoming January and February budget discussions. The committee reviewed its budget for covering the cost of a recording secretary and looked at the budgeted costs of the Planning Board and the Board of Appeals for a recording secretary. Committee members discussed whether they should approach the Town Manager before the Select Board. Reggie asked if the request for a recording secretary should be just for a few months during the budget process, other members thought it best to have one year-round. Members talked about the importance of having a non-member take meeting notes so all members can focus on the issue at hand and participate fully in discussion.

Following discussion, the original motion and second were rescinded and a new motion was made by Jean that the Budget Committee respectfully request a recording secretary through the Town Manager, Reggie seconded the motion. Donna took the roll call and the motion passed unanimously with a roll call vote of 7-0.

### **5. FY23/24 Budget Committee budget request**

Concerning the Budget Committee budget request for FY23/24, Donna told members that an exact number was not needed tonight but an estimated number that members agree would cover all

costs. Jeff asked about unused funds carrying over to the following year. Diane asked about what costs the committee has had in past years. Donna said two flyers and the recording secretary. Gene asked if in the past the committee has had to ask for outside legal opinions for which they should budget. Ed said such a request would go through the Town Manager and that the Charter is clear on that. Donna motioned that the Budget Committee requests funds for the costs of two mailers and a recording secretary, and it was seconded by (unclear). The motion passed unanimously with a roll call vote of 7-0.

#### **6. Budget Committee meeting dates for budget review 23/24**

Concerning the budget review, Donna informed members that scheduled dates for the budget review are in January and February, scheduled time and meeting room space are reserved for the committee to do that, and if the committee does not need to meet at a scheduled time, then they can cancel that time and space. She added that if the committee does not pre-schedule the time and secure the meeting room, they may run into a situation where someone else has reserved it and the committee cannot meet. Donna reviewed the possible dates for the meetings with the first January meeting being the first Thursday of the month and the others being the following Wednesdays. This was open to discussion. For the most part meetings will be on Wednesdays unless there is a conflict with another committee. Other discussion concerning weekly meetings followed.

Gene asked on what the January and February meetings will focus, Donna said it would be discussing the budget as it is presented to the committee. Ed shared one week would be one part of the budget, the next might be, for instance, the Police Department.

#### **7. Budget Committee member reports/comments**

Gene commented that he sent information to members about costs. He spoke about Census Bureau data which he had also sent to members and how it might inform the committee. Members discussed this. The members appreciated Gene sending the information.

Jean asked about topics for the December agenda. Donna asked if the committee wanted to get monthly updates. Jeff asked about areas of deficiencies in the audit and if that is part of the committee's budget work. Donna and Ed said that was the point of the Town Manager coming to the meeting to present the proposed budget. Ed explained that it is the Town Manager's job to take orders from the Town Auditor to change things that have to be changed. Donna explained that the Budget Committee is given recommendations. Jeff spoke (unclear). Jean said having the Town Manager come back to speak about the audit and actions being taken might be valuable. She added that she is hearing that he is addressing issues. Jeff spoke (unclear). Jean shared about the history of working on the budget and moving forward in a better way. Donna spoke (unclear) about Select Board meeting and a second meeting. Donna and Jeff (unclear).

#### **8. Adjournment**

Motion by Ed, seconded by Reggie to adjourn. Motion carried by roll call vote 7-0. The meeting was adjourned at 5:52pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Murphy, Chair

Date Approved: January 5, 2023

Jean Hardy, Secretary