

**Town of Eliot
Budget Committee Meeting
Thursday, February 2, 2023**

1. Call to Order

Chair Donna Murphy called the meeting to order at 5:05pm. In attendance in person were Reggie Fowler, Jeff Leathe, Denny Lentz, Donna Murphy, and Gene Wypyski, and remotely were Jean Hardy and Diane Holt. Ann Lukegard, recording secretary, was also in attendance.

2. Public Comment

No members of the public were in attendance in person or remotely.

3. Approval of Minutes

Members reviewed the minutes and provided edits to the recording secretary. Gene moved and Reggie seconded that the January 25, 2023, minutes be approved as amended. The motion passed with a roll-call vote of 5-0 with an abstain from Denny who was not yet a member of the Committee at that time.

4. Meeting with Trustees of the William Fogg Library

Donna reported that the Library trustees could not attend as scheduled and were looking at doing so at the Committee meeting on February 15. Donna told them they could come to the meeting at 5:30pm if that would be better for their schedules.

5. Budget review (Administrative, Fire, Police, Fixed Assessments)

Donna handed out to members present worksheets of her work pulling out numbers from the Town Manager's proposed budget so that members might better understand and discuss the numbers. The worksheets were also emailed to members. Donna explained the worksheet columns left to right: Accounts last year, Amounts requested, Amount voters approved at the polls in June 2022, and Amounts currently being requested. Denny asked if the account names on the worksheet came from last year's budget, and Donna said yes. Donna said that the Town Manager received more than he needed in Workers' Compensation funding after a special July 2022 town meeting where those residents in attendance voted for it. Donna added at that special meeting those in attendance also voted for increases in salaries for Town employees but that the Budget Committee does not have that information yet as the Town Manager has not sent them the Town's Salaries and Wages data.

Denny asked how the Committee can compare items if they are collapsed under headings. Donna said she is working to pull out as much detail as she can through her own work comparing last year's budget with the proposed budget on the weekends, and that the Committee continues to ask the Town Manager for breakdowns and other information to help the Committee fill in holes and understand the budget so the Committee may make recommendations. Jeff will work on the numbers for the Community Services Department.

Donna pointed out that the numbers in her worksheet are the 2022-2023 actual numbers that voters voted for and does not include what was voted on in July 2022 which included funds for Workers' Compensation and salary increases. Gene asked why the 2022-2023 actual numbers were relevant. Donna answered him saying because they are what the voters voted for last year and that is what the Committee is looking at to see what the increases and decreases are in the proposed budget. Gene asked why are the 2022-2023 actual numbers that the voters voted for relevant to the

2024 budget. Donna answered because that is what the Committee is comparing to increases and decreases in the proposed budget. Gene asked shouldn't the Committee be comparing it to the actual 2023 results. Donna used the Health Insurance budget line as an example on how to compare numbers and see increases or decreases. Gene asked if the Committee knew the actual cost for 2023 and added that the Committee does not know that. Donna asked Gene why the Committee would need that information. Gene answered, "Because we are basing our budget in fiscal year '24 on our experience in '23."

Donna answered, saying the Committee reviews the differences from the previous year's budget to the current proposed budget to see the increases and decreases and to understand what the justification is for that shift. She cited Advertising, where last year the Town Manager asked for \$5300, and this year is asking for \$4900. She noted that the decrease is \$400 and not significant, if it were significant, the Committee would ask the Town Manager for specifics on that change. Gene responded that he did not know why that is relevant as the chartered accounts that the fiscal year '24 budget is based upon (interrupted). Donna said we're comparing to last year. Reggie said, "The only thing we get to do here, as the Budget Committee, is make recommendations on the numbers we are given."

Gene said, "I understand."

Reggie continued, "So, what the Town does and how they spend their money after it's been voted on, we have no control over. Whether they spent less or more, all we have are the numbers from last year and what people voted on. So, we have to have these numbers because what they've done and the choices they made with those funds, we have zero control over. It's not our thing, so what you're asking is outside our scope. It's just that simple. We're looking at what the budget was, we're recommending what the budget should be, and that's all we're doing."

Gene responded, "Yes, but if I can't base that recommendation on actual numbers (pause)."

Reggie said, "We are basing it on actual votes. You're over-reaching for the numbers. That's not in our purview. That's outside our scope. We're just here to make sure the voting public understands what they are voting on. That's all we get to do."

Denny asked Reggie about what he was saying concerning the process.

Reggie responded, "We go through the budget. We make our recommendations. And whether they spend all the money or spend more or spend less, really doesn't have anything to do with us until next year."

Denny said, and Donna repeated, that it is what the voters agree to. Reggie said it is really that simple and the Committee should not expand its responsibility beyond that.

Gene said, "Well, I guess my concern is we're trying to compare apples to oranges." Reggie said that there are no oranges, it is all apples to apples. Donna showed the Committee's process by example of the Postage line item where last year the budgeted amount was \$15,500, and this year, it is \$16,500. She asked what is the difference for the \$1000 increase and answered it could be an increase in postage cost or growth in households. Denny asked if the other question could be what was spent on what was approved. Gene said that that was his question as well. Reggie answered

Denny and Gene, stating, "And that's where they are supposed to give us the numbers, but they refuse to give us the numbers." Denny agreed. Donna said the Committee couldn't possibly get the end of year numbers because the fiscal year just ended, and she reiterated why the Committee compares the '23 voted-on amounts with the '24 proposed amounts. Denny asked if everyone was okay with that so they could move on.

Donna pointed out to members that on the worksheet at the end there are numbers that she could not match up and did not know where they belong. Gene said that that proves his point that the accounts from the past are not congruent with the accounts for fiscal year '24. Donna responded that that is because the Town Manager moved items around without providing an explanation of where they were and that the Committee will ask questions to get more information. Gene responded, saying okay.

Donna directed members to Hearings and Elections. Donna said the Committee will have to hold off on discussing Salaries until which time the Town Manager sends the Committee the requested breakdown of Salaries. Donna also asked members to note that the Town Manager had lumped all OASDI and Medicare and all of that category into Administration.

Reviewing line items under Hearings and Election, Donna noted the following: a \$500 decrease in ballots; inserts in The Sentinel and equipment lease stayed the same; and election supplies had decreased by \$250. She said that Equipment Repair and Maintenance was at \$4500 but in the proposed budget the Town Manager is requesting \$4000 for Tabulation, she did not know if the Town Manager had just renamed that category.

Jean asked why Salaries had decreased under Hearings and Elections. Donna said Salaries had been moved to Administration. She suggested that the Committee table discussion on Salaries until it receives that requested data on Town Salaries and Wages from the Town Manager. Jean asked when the Committee had asked for that data, and Donna said two weeks ago, and at that time, she was told the Committee would have to wait for employee W2s which did not make sense to her as the Town had all that information and did not know why they would not share it with the Committee.

Denny said Tabulations has a note with it and read the a portion of the note: "A new category labeled Tabulations has been created in the 'Service Fee' expense category and the old object labeled Equipment found under the Repair/Maintenance." The Chair said, okay, so we have that answer.

Donna asked if anyone had any more questions under Hearings and Elections. Reggie asked if the only question was under Tabulations. Donna said the Committee had found the answer to that. Reggie agreed. Donna asked if the Committee wanted to ask about the \$500 decrease in ballots and no one answered in the affirmative.

The Chair granted Jeff time to discuss a procedural issue. He noted that an ongoing discussion for the Committee has been receiving information and data from the Town Manager, particularly about what the Town Manager needs to provide the Committee. He directed members to Section 6.2 in the Charter and read a portion of it: "In organizing the budget the Town Manager shall utilize the most feasible combination of expenditure classification by fund, organization unit, program purpose or activity, and object. It shall begin with a clear general summary of its contents; shall show in

detail all estimated revenue, and all proposed expenditures, including debt service, for the ensuing fiscal year; and be so arranged as to show comparative figures for actual and estimated revenue and expenditures of the current fiscal year; and actual revenue and expenditures of the preceding fiscal year.”

Jean asked what Jeff’s point was in presenting Section 6.2. Jeff said he had two points: one being the Town Manager is specifically required to give the Budget Committee all of this information, and two being sending the Committee actual expenditures for the current year and the prior year, referring back to Gene’s point about actual costs. Donna said they had sent them some of the expenditures. Jeff said the key point was that it is required of the Town Manager to give the Budget Committee all of the details, including revenues, expenditures, and actuals, and that it is required as it is in the Town Charter. Donna agreed with Jeff, stating that the Town Manager has denied much of what is in the Charter.

Gene said he disagreed, stating, “You use that word deny. When I have conversations with the Town Manager, he quite frankly says the information is out there and it is public information.”

Donna asked Gene if he was talking about conversations he has had with the Town Manager regarding the budget. Gene answered that when he is at a Select Board meeting and he stands up, yes. Donna said the information is not in there.

Gene said, “Well, for example, we want the salary data. Every Select Board meeting has the printout of everybody’s salary for that period.”

Donna asked if the information is at the Select Board meeting why wouldn’t the Town Manager send it to her when we requested it for the Budget Committee.

Gene answered, “Maybe he expects us to go get it.”

Donna said, “That is not our job, we ask him for it and it is his job to get it to us.”

Reggie said, “See, if we go get it then he can come back if there are any issues or anyone else can, and say you got the wrong numbers, you didn’t do the right thing. There’s protocol here. They are supposed to give us the information, so that we know it is the right information. So, what you’re suggesting (interrupted).”

Gene said, “The fact is time’s a-wasting. If we don’t go get the information, what’s going to happen.”

Donna asked, “Well, why don’t we hold the Town Manager responsible for his job and his need to give us that information? You’re defending the Town Manager.”

Gene said, “I am not defending him. I’m communicating things he said to me when I asked him these questions. And he says the information’s out there.”

Donna said, “Okay, if the information’s out there, you show me in that book the list of all the employees in this Town and their salaries they had last year and the salaries he is proposing for this year. Can you show me in this book where it is?”

Gene answered, "No, it's not here."

Donna responded, "Correct."

Gene said, "But when I went to the last Town Meeting, the information was in a warrant, that information was there."

Donna said, "You're looking at a lump sum."

Gene said, "As far as the current employees."

Donna said, "It's not there. Does anybody here, in this Committee, have that information from the last Town Meeting?" Donna asked members if they had that information. Jean, Diane, and Jeff said no.

Gene said, "Well, it is there because I was at the Town Meeting, and I had it." Donna asked Gene to show the information to her, and he said he did not have it with him.

Donna asked Gene, "So, you have a list of every employee in this Town and their current salaries?"

Gene said, "Yes, it's part of the packet, the Select Board packet prior to every Select Board meeting. Haven't you seen it?"

Reggie asked, "So, are you saying the Town Manager will cooperate with the Select Board but not with the Budget Committee?"

Gene answered, "No, what I'm saying is that every Select Board meeting has the warrants that list every employee and their salary to be paid during that two-week pay period."

Reggie said, "That might be beneficial for them but (interrupted)."

Donna said, "No, what he is talking about is not the information we are looking for. There is a format we have had year after year after year that exists that shows all that information. I'm going to pull it up right now and I can promise you that information is not in there. And even if it was in there, we want a master sheet. I don't need what they pay out every single week. There is a master sheet that shows what they were approved for last year through the voters, and then we should have what their proposal is for this year. But I will pull up the Select Board."

Jeff said, "There's been no salary budget information at the Select Board that I've seen."

Donna said, "So, when you look at the warrant articles here, what it does is it lists what they paid Heatwave Oil, Maine Association of Police, those are the actual checks that they write out. So, I'm looking at the one they just sent out and I'm not seeing a list of all the employees of this Town and their current salaries and what their proposed salaries for the upcoming year."

Gene said, "No, there were no proposed salaries, but the current salaries."

Donna said, "But you just told us that all that information (interrupted)."

Gene said, "Current salaries, yes, the current salaries are in there."

Donna said, "Okay, could you, they just send it out, I do not see a listing of all the employees of this Town with the salaries in here. Because it's not here."

Gene said, "Well, I will send the copy that I have."

Jean said, "Excuse me, Madame Chair."

Donna said, "Yes, Jean."

Jean said, "I don't think we should accept that. I'm sorry, Gene, I know you want to be friendly with the Town Manager (interrupted)."

Gene said, "I don't want to be friendly with the Town Manager."

The Chair asked Gene to let Jean finish and he said he would.

Jean continued, "We have an obligation. We cannot go third hand. And the fact that you have the information, great, but that's not the way it works. Everything goes to the Chair of this Committee who then provides that information to the rest of the members. It has to be that way otherwise we've got numbers from ten different sources. And Jeff read right in the Charter the word 'shall' – 'shall' is huge, especially in my world as a pilot. We have regulations that we must follow, notice the word 'must.' 'Shall' and 'must' are basically the same words. It doesn't mean that it's voluntary. It doesn't mean that the Town Manager [can say] 'well, gee, I really don't want to give them that information so I'm not going to give it to them.' No, that's not the way it works. The word 'shall' is he has to do that. That, as Donna said, is his job. And frankly, I'm getting annoyed that you keep defending him instead of doing your job as a Budget Committee member (interrupted)."

Gene said, "Let me tell you something about doing my job."

The Chair said, "Please, Gene, let her finish, and then you'll get a turn to respond."

Gene said, "Thank you."

Jean continued, "Your responsibility is to the residents in this Town, not to the Town Manager, not to the Select Board, but to the residents of the Town. They elected you to do that job. And there are times when there is conflict between the Select Board and the Town Manager, and conflict is healthy, and that's good. Remember the, well you probably wouldn't because you're younger, but there used to be a bumper sticker that said, 'Question Authority.' We question the numbers because once the numbers do up, there's no going back. I don't want to see property taxes go up, and neither does anyone in this Town, but if they have to go up because we need to give salary increases or we have to increase the cost of fuel, that's understandable. I have no other comments, Madame Chair."

The Chair said, "Thank you."

She asked Gene if he wanted to respond. He did.

Gene said, "I've invested my time going to Select Board meetings, talking to Select Board members, to understand the budget. Listening to the Town Manager's presentation at the Select Board meetings about the budget, I try to understand what's going on here. So, I think I understand what I'm supposed to do. I think I bring a new perspective to a process that's been stuck in the mud for many years, and I'm hoping we can go forward and whether it's more cooperative or less cooperative that remains to be seen, but I think we need to get off the dime and start making decisions. That's all I'll say."

Donna asked, "What are you speaking of that is stuck in the mud?"

Gene answered, "What do you mean what do you mean?"

Donna said, "You just said this process has been stuck in the mud for years and I've never seen you at a Budget Committee meeting until you were elected. So what are you speaking of when you say stuck in the mud?"

Gene said, "I'm saying that we have an opportunity to do a much better job this year going forward. That's what I'm going to say."

Donna said, "Well, I don't know what you're referring to."

Reggie said, "You made an accusation. I mean that's an accusation. You kind of need to back that up."

Gene said, "All right, I'll back it up. Last year's election was a debacle. The Budget Committee didn't do its job and it required a special Town Meeting to fix it. And I hope that's not what happens this time."

Donna said, "It did not require a special Town Meeting. The Budget Committee absolutely did their job (interrupted)."

Gene said, "The Budget Committee did not do its job."

Donna said, "Let me finish."

Gene said, "Let me finish. Let me finish."

Donna said, "No. You were done and I'm responding then you can respond."

Gene said, "All right."

Donna said, "The Town Manager refused to give us information. That is documented week after week of our meetings. He refused to give us that information. We did our job. I know that you openly ran on pushing the Town Manager's agenda. I know that you did that. I heard you say it. I've had many a person in here tell me you went to the (unclear) saying you could be elected pushing the Town Manager. Those were the words that you used. That isn't your job here. He presents his

budget, we assess that, and we make recommendations based on what we feel is best for the townspeople. They are our responsibility, not the Town Manager.”

Gene said, “I agree one hundred percent.”

Donna continued, “We did our job last year. He did not do his job. As a matter of fact, while he had every right to call that Town Meeting, he failed to follow the process in this Town because it’s right in here [Town Charter] that anything that goes before, there’s a budget matter that goes before this Town must have the Budget Committee’s recommendation written on that ballot. He did not follow that protocol. He never asked us for our recommendations in there. So, he failed in that sense. We did our job.”

Gene responded, “No. The job was not done correctly when the Budget Committee starts messing with the form of the budget, i.e., moving numbers from one category to another that totally confuse the Electorate, that’s not doing the job. That’s not communicating correctly.”

Reggie said, “You truly don’t understand what we do here.”

Gene said, “No, you truly don’t understand what happened last June (interrupted).”

Donna said, “Let Gene finish.”

Gene continued, “I stood outside ten hours and to a person that opened their mouth about anything to do with anything the question was what’s with the budget, why is it so confusing, what’s going on. And, of course, as a candidate, I didn’t say anything. I was not allowed to say anything. That was the one topic I heard over and over again, how confused everything was to the voter. The Budget Committee did not convey correctly and clearly what was going on.”

Donna said, “I heard quite the opposite as a matter of fact. (Overtalk.) We put our (unclear) out, and clearly explained what our vote was. If you look at the vote that the people did, they clearly don’t want their taxes going up because they voted for the lowest amounts, I think, in all but two categories. Jean Hardy, you wanted to go?”

Jean said, “Yes, mam. I take offense at what is being said. We did our job, as you say. It was a lot of work because the Town Manager decided to change where things went. He should not have done that. And, Gene, you’re not going to like it but that’s the bottom line. And I’m glad you support the Town Manager, but also support this Budget Committee. That’s all I have to say.”

Donna said, “Jean, the Town Manager actually has the authority to move things but the Budget Committee had made recommendations based on what they feel is best. That doesn’t mean they were wrong, it means they have a different vision. And, Gene, it is clear that you do not understand your role on the Budget Committee when you are running to push the Town Manager’s agenda because that (interrupted).”

Gene said, “You’re putting words in my mouth.”

Donna said, “No, I’m not.”

Gene said, "Yes, you are. Yes, you are. You are putting words in my mouth and I'm not going to listen to that."

Donna said, "Gene, if you expect people to listen to you, you will listen to other people. (Pause.) But you openly ran on that."

Gene said, "I did not. I openly ran on supporting the Select Board who was out there campaigning with me, Select Board members."

Donna said, "That is not your job to be out there with the Select Board. (Overtalk.)"

Gene said, "I wanted to get myself elected, and I got myself elected, so (pause)."

Donna said, "The job of this Committee is not to support the Select Board. It is to report to the voters and citizens of this Town, and make recommendations on what they feel is in the best interest of this Town regarding the budget. All those numbers come from the Town Manager. If we have questions on those numbers, it is the Town Manager's job to provide those answers to us. And when he declines to do so, and doesn't get the support, that falls on him, not the Budget Committee."

Jean said, "Madame Chair, Diane has a (pause)."

Donna said, "Diane? Okay."

Diane said, "I just want to say (coughing) since I've been on this Committee, last year was the first year we did not agree with the Select Board on our Town budget that went forth. And which was because of the salary changes and so forth that was done. That did become confusing to the voters of Eliot, I understand that. But the previous years, we had no problem whatsoever. So, to say that it's been in the mud for a long time is an inaccurate assessment because prior to last year things were working well and we did work well with the Select Board such that at the end of the time, we had a concurring budget letter that went out. That's all I have to say."

Donna said, "Thank you, Diane. Any other comments to be made? Denny?"

Denny answered, "No."

Donna asked, "Reggie?"

Reggie said, "We're spending a lot of time on this, we've got a lot to do."

Donna said, "Let's move forward and look at the questions we're going to ask. Did you have anything further on Article 6, Jeff?"

Jeff said, "No, I just want to clarify that we certainly have the right to ask (unclear) for this information in as much detail as we require."

Donna said, "Thank you."

Reggie added, "And it should be provided."

Jeff said, "And it should be provided."

Donna said, "Yes."

Jeff said, "It's pretty simple as that."

Reggie said, "And that's what happened for years."

Donna said, "Yes, we never had any issues with getting information that we requested. Sometimes it was a little wait with the previous [Town] Manager but we always managed to have a communication going, a respectful communication, conversations, and ultimately, we got the information. This Town Manager has been clear he's not going to provide that to us."

Jeff said, "The largest number so far that I have seen that is not revenue is salaries, and we don't have any detail on a large number on the expense side, and that's just not acceptable."

Donna said, "Correct. I will ask for that again, Jeff."

Denny said, "I think, Madame Chair, at the end of this budget season, you'll be able to see how well the budget was done and how well it was not done. If we have a lot of those items that are not in agreement and there are things we are not willing to put our names to and recommend, that's a sign of how well the season went. And, I think, if it's anything like last year that was (unclear), there are a lot that I would not put my name behind because I just couldn't have the details to back up the numbers. Simple as that."

Donna said, "Let's move on to the Fire Department."

Donna directed members to look at the budget section for the Fire Department. She said categories are most likely lumped under Service Fee and that she would like to ask the Town Manager for a breakdown of what is included under Service Fee under the Fire Department. Gene said on page 30 of 30 in his note, the Town Manager has a breakdown. Donna said that reference was in the old budget and that the Town Manager had sent a revised proposed budget that was emailed to everyone. She directed Gene to look at the revised budget. Donna will work on those numbers to try to break them out for the Committee. She asked if there were any other questions for the Town Manager under Fire Department. Gene pointed out the notes on page thirty again. Gene asked why the salaries had increased. Donna said the Committee was waiting for complete salary information before discussing salaries.

Jeff said, "I recommend, Madame Chair, and I know we've been down this road a few times, that the budget be re-cast so that all the direct costs of each department are listed in each department. So, in this case, it's principally employee costs that are not listed in each department, and that makes it incredibly difficult to understand how much a department is costing. And by lumping them all together in Admin, we are not getting any information on how they have increased (unclear) in the aggregate. So, I think this is a very firm request that we cannot do without it. It has to be broken out in each department, in my opinion."

Donna asked, "Are you speaking also to the OASDI and Medicare?"

Jeff answered, "Yes, all of it."

Donna said, "So that's what caused the issue last year was that we disagreed with that, and we took, like Workers' Comp was one, (unclear) but it's similar to what happened last year with the Workers' Comp because each department is assessed a different amount depending on, you know, what the charge was. So, we figured that out, the figures, and put the Workers' Comp back in. I completely agree with you and will put that down as a question."

Jeff asked, "I just want to make sure, because I know you've been through this before, if each department has a Workers' Comp on it, which it should, unless there are 1099 employees or something, and are you saying that it's possible in a referendum ballot that one of those departments wouldn't be approved that way and that the Workers' Comp (pause)."

Donna responded that that was what happened last year. Jeff asked how the Budget Committee can avoid that from happening again this year.

Jeff asked, "So, is he lumping this all together in Admin to avoid any confusion about sub-votes as went through the process?"

Donna said no and that the Town Manager had done this last year.

Gene said, "He [Town Manager] said it was in one because of one policy."

Donna asked Gene when the Town Manager told him that and Gene replied, months ago. Jeff said departments have principles and policies with all departments having a piece of the larger cost and that the Budget Committee does not know what each department has. Gene asked why would they have to know that.

Reggie answered, "Because we're the Budget Committee. That's all that we do, look at every line item."

Gene asked, "Why do we need to know what every department costs? Why is that relevant?"

Reggie answered, "We cannot do anything without that information."

Gene said, "But we can't compare from year to year because he's changed the accounts."

Reggie said, "That's the problem."

Gene suggested the Budget Committee start with the new program and move forward. Jean and Denny asked what was the new program. Gene said the account lists that the Town Manager and the Select Board had provided the Budget Committee. Donna clarified that the information was not supplied by the Select Board but by the Town Manager as it is the Town Manager's budget. Gene said he was concerned that the Committee was starting to invent things. Donna said the Committee was not doing that and that she does not have time to explain it and that there are six people in the

meeting who do understand. Gene referred back to Jean's earlier mention of the "Question Authority" bumper sticker.

Jeff said he had no problem with changing a budget if it was needed from an operational perspective. He added by way of example that if when presenting a budget to a board of directors, if he changed the format, the board does not have to accept it, and if he went into a board of directors meeting and said there was no comparison available in his presented budget because he moved all the numbers around, they would throw him out. Reggie added that if the Committee does not ask for detailed numbers, over time, the information could get paired down to the point where the line item for the Fire Department is simply one lump sum. Denny asked, and would you sign off on that? Donna agreed that there was less and less detail when it should be going in the other direction with more detail. Jeff said the budget should be presented matching new format to new format to compare against. Denny agreed, wondering why the Town Manager had not presented this proposed budget in the same format as his budget last year. Gene said the auditor made a lot of these changes. Jeff said that is not an auditing function. Gene answered saying the auditor told the Town Manager there was too much detail.

Donna said, "That's interesting because the auditors were let go a number of years ago and then brought back. So, they were auditors here for years and years and years when we had the old format."

Discussion turned to finishing up review of the Fire Department budget. Jean said she would like to know what the cost is for ladder testing certification, post testing certification, pump testing certification, and response system maintenance contract. Donna said she would ask for all that. Reggie said that he had read somewhere that Propane had been moved as it was only being used on the generator, but he could not find where he saw that. Donna will look for that. Jean asked about the cost of Propane which has gone up. Diane asked about Service Fee and Donna said that was what they had been talking about where things had been lumped together.

Donna directed the Committee to Police. Denny said overtime had a big jump. Donna pointed out that Outside Activities is offset by the same amount in Revenues. Donna said where things are missing, she would ask about. She added that she wanted to ask about Uniforms which has a \$6000 proposed cost, but she understood that the Police had received a pay increase in their union contract to offset the cost of their paying for their own uniforms.

Members reviewed their budget sheets and asked questions and discussed items. Those items included cell phones, seasonal staff, and regional social services. Donna stated that SRO [School Resource Officer] at \$9000 should be offset under Revenues in the budget. Discussion turned to Boat Basin staff which might be under Community Services Department and the hiring of a new person to increase revenue. Members searched for this information. Donna noted that there were only two notes on the Police Department in the budget and that Animal Control will be part of a regional compact but that it should be under Public Safety as stated in the ordinance. Donna pointed out that department-specific tech was just \$17,710. She noted numbers were missing. Jean asked what PSAP York was, and Donna said 911. Jean noted an increase to Kittery Dispatch and Donna said that was expected and a long time coming. Donna asked if there was anything else on Police, there was not, and she directed members to Public Safety.

Under Public Safety, Donna thought Harbormaster Supplies may have been put under Police and asked if the members can agree that they will ask for the numbers that are not in the Public Service

budget. Jean reiterated that it was important that the Committee have all the information. Donna noted that ACL or the dog catcher, was up just under \$5000 and she will ask what caused the increase. There was discussion about the streetlights going to LEDs and the cost and savings in doing that.

The Committee looked at Public Works. Reggie asked why overtime in DPW was being cut in half and Donna said she will ask. She noted that a DPW worker had retired so there may be a decrease there. Discussion turned to Catch-basin Repair and Maintenance which showed an increase and Sweeping which showed a decrease. There was a question about DPW Electricity increasing from \$500 to \$2500. Jean asked about the erosion stone and guard rail. Donna said the numbers are the same amount as last year but in the wrong column. She noted that the costs were \$30,000 and \$3500 for a total of \$33, 500. Jean noted that Paving was at one-million dollars, and Denny said he would like to know what roads the DPW would be working on. Jean said Equipment Repair and Maintenance had jumped, but Donna stated that that might reflect items the Town Manager has combined in that account. There were comments on costs related to signs, repair and maintenance, and contract maintenance. There was a question about tires and where were they listed. Donna said she will ask for a breakdown of Vehicle Repair and Maintenance.

Summer Maintenance was discussed. There was a question about what items were in the Public Works budget and what was under this category. Donna will request details. It was noted that there was a Sweeping category under DPW for \$2000 and that there is a note stating that sweeping was combined with other costs. Donna asked why Sweeping is listed under Roads and Bridges and not DPW. Donna pointed out that at the top of page nine, there is a line for Equipment Lease with no number.

Snow Removal was reviewed with members praising the Town workers for their efficiency in getting the roads cleared. Jean mentioned that Salt is at \$151 and that it looks like Sand is combined. Donna said that if the Committee gets Reserve Accounts, they should see the Reserve Account for Salt and Sand. That is how it has worked for five years.

The Transfer Station was next reviewed. Members discussed disposal fees and a past contract that was secured at a very good price. Reggie asked if things were lumped together in this category, and Donna said there was no notes on the Transfer Station. Reggie asked if Tools were coming from a different area of the budget. Members discussed compost and waste bags. Donna will do the numbers on the Transfer Station.

Under Storm Water, Donna noted there was a decrease. GIS Mapping at a cost of \$11,000 was moved into Admin. There were no questions.

Under General Assistance, Donna said the cost was only up \$5900, and Reggie said most of that was in oil and electricity. There were no questions.

The Committee skipped over Capital Improvements as they will wait until they have the Reserve Accounts to discuss Capital Improvements.

Under Fixed Assessments, members discussed the TIF account and Sewer Work. After discussion, it was agreed that the TIF bond was at \$500,000.

Members reviewed budgets for Town Standing Committees. Donna would ask for a breakdown of funds requested to see what committees are requesting funds for. Reggie asked how the Planning Board uses its \$25,000 budget. Jeff, who is a member of the Planning Board, said it is for legal fees, public notices, and experts.

The proposed budget for Outside Agencies was discussed. The Chair noted that the budget for Outside Agencies had increased significantly. She also noted that she was mindful that the meeting was nearing its 7pm end time, but the issue of funding Outside Agencies to be an important one that she wanted members to consider and discuss. She added she is uncomfortable with assessing money donated to charities and imposing that on the townspeople.

Donna said if the townspeople wanted to donate to a charity, they should take out their checkbooks or go to Venmo and do that. She does not begrudge or disagree with the charities and their efforts; she donates regularly to Footprints and supports many of the organizations on her own. She said she feels the Town is imposing these agencies on the townspeople and choosing which charities Town funds will go to. She added what if the Town gives to your charity but to mine. Reggie said once the Town sets precedence, what prevents the Town from donating to all charities. He said there's nothing wrong with giving to charities, but the people need to have a voice as to where their taxes are going. Gene said the Committee should not lump the charities listed with generic charities as the charities listed act in support of Eliot residents. Donna said there are other area charities that benefit Eliot residents that are not listed. She asked members to consider the larger question of the role of the Budget Committee, the Town Manager, and the Select Board in choosing for Eliot townspeople what charities will receive their tax dollars. Gene said residents do see the list of charities each June on Election Day. Donna responded that the residents do not get to vote on the list or add to the list.

Members looked at the specific agencies on the Outside Agencies list. Donna pointed out that she gives to Footprints regularly by choice but if Footprints was now funded by her tax dollars, might that cause her to stop donating as an individual knowing her Town is donating with her tax dollars. Reggie said it was a good question and that the issue does go both ways. Donna said that when she donates to Footprints, it's her choice, but that if that donation is through the Town budget, they have taken away that choice. Gene thought the Committee was being standoff-ish in not wanting to support these organizations. Donna reiterated that she started the discussion by stating that she was not saying the agencies were not doing good work. She shared that the Town Manager had shared with her that in Massachusetts it is illegal for a municipality to give to a charitable organization. Reggie noted there are a lot of ways to abuse that. Donna said that Maine does not have that law. She added, so who are we to impose this \$50,000 for Mainspring to raise money because they decided to purchase a purchase?

Jeff asked if the Town had a policy in this area and did not think so. He added that he suspected, and it's only a suspicion, that the Town has probably been donating to charities for a long time. Donna said the Town has been. Jeff said if the Committee took Mainspring's request out of those listed on the Outside Agencies listing, the funds spread over the whole budget would be pennies on the dollar. He thought that it is more of the principle of the issue rather than the actual dollars. Donna referenced an article she read about Mainspring and said she read that there are corporations backing Mainspring and reiterated that if people wanted to donate to Mainspring, they should do so on their own.

Jeff said he thought Eliot townspeople did get to vote on it in the June election. Donna said they do but asked what if 49% of the people do not want their taxes going to the listed organizations. She added that they are not Town departments. Jeff cited that that is the way of the world, if the vote is 51% to 49%, we go with 51%. Donna said she would agree with that if it were the Fire Department, Police, Admin, or other Town department, but that Outside Agencies is not a Town department. Jeff said he does not disagree with that, but that history probably tells them that this is how the Town has been doing it.

Jeff said the other agencies on the list do seem to do a lot for the Town. He added that that is judgmental, and that the Budget Committee should not do anything that is judgmental. Donna asked him to explain what he meant by judgmental. He answered the same thing Donna is saying, why should the Budget Committee be judging which charities get funded by the Town. He added that it is difficult as they do not have a policy.

Reggie shared his support and enthusiasm for Footprints, citing his own continuing efforts to grow food for them, but that he is not sure that a request on the Town budget is the right way to fund the nonprofit. Jeff asked what did the Budget Committee do last year. Donna said the request for funding Outside Agencies has been cut back significantly over the past years, since 2010. She said it had been as high as \$30,000 when the Town took a good look at what was being funded. Jeff suggested the Select Board look into creating a policy. Diane said clarity is needed as to how the Town should proceed.

The William Fogg Library budget discussion was tabled to the February 15th meeting. There was some discussion on Debt Service relating to TIF, principle, and offset.

Jeff said he would work on the Community Services Department numbers as best he could but that he would not attend the next meeting as he will be away. Donna said she will get the questions done this weekend and send them to the Town Manager. She added that items for the next meeting would include Revenues, Community Services Department, and Capital Improvements.

6. Budget Committee member reports/comments

There were no member reports or comments.

7. Adjournment

Reggie moved and Denny seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed by a roll-call vote of 7-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Murphy, Chair

Date Approved: February 22, 2023

Jean Hardy, Secretary