

**Town of Eliot
Budget Committee Meeting
Wednesday, March 8, 2023**

1. Call to Order

Chair Donna Murphy called the meeting to order at 5:00pm. In attendance in person were Reggie Fowler, Jeff Leathe, Donna Murphy, and Gene Wypyski, and in attendance remotely were Jean Hardy and Diane Holt. Denny Lentz was absent. Ann Lukegard, recording secretary, was in attendance in person. There were no members of the public in attendance.

The Chair talked about the passing of Steve Robinson, Eliot DPW Director, and longtime Eliot resident and friend to many. She said she would send a sympathy card on behalf of the Committee to Steve's family if no one objected. No one did. The Chair noted that some members had worked with Mr. Robinson and known him as a personal friend. She asked members to observe not just a moment of silence, but a minute of silence in honor of Steve Robinson and out of respect for his family. The members observed a minute of silence. The Chair also said she sends out thoughts and condolences for all the Town employees who worked with Mr. Robinson for many years. She opened up the floor for any member to share his or her thoughts. With the memorial service for Mr. Robinson on Wednesday, March 15th, from 4:00 to 5:00pm, the Chair said the Budget Committee would look at rescheduling or starting its March 15th meeting at a later time.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of the Minutes

The members reviewed the minutes for the March 2, 2023, meeting. Gene moved and Reggie seconded that the March 2, 2023, minutes be approved as amended. The motion passed with a roll call vote of 5-0-1 with one abstention. Jeff abstained as he did not attend the March 2 meeting.

4. Budget Review

The Chair said that the Committee would be voting that night on the final numbers for referendum. She asked if everyone received the information about the Citizens Option Meeting as that included how the articles will appear on the ballot. Donna added that she had updated the worksheet and passed out and emailed copies to members. She went over the format of the Budget Committee Worksheet 2023-2024 Budget and said the Committee would be looking at the numbers the Town Manager requested. Donna said that the Town Manager had sent out an email stating that the Town had received numbers from the Maine Revenue Sharing and that \$32,000 would be added onto Revenues, which is reflected on the worksheet. She noted that Expenses are up \$1.87 million from last year. Gene asked where she was reading from, and Donna directed him and all members to go to line 26 on the worksheet to where Revenues were listed under the "TM Requested" column. She said she had added in the \$32,000 from Maine Revenue Sharing into the \$4,789,400 amount. Members looked at and discussed the Budget Committee notes under Public Safety and Summer Maintenance where funds were removed and added in to see if there might be double content, comparing figures to those in the articles. Jeff said the Town Manager had the number correctly in the article but not in his budget. Review of the documents continued. Donna noted that the

numbers for the Police and Public Safety were correct, and Jeff agreed. Jeff said he did not know where the revenue number \$4757 came from and where would he find it in the budget. Donna responded that the amount is now \$4789. Members continued reviewing documents, including the latest budget from the Town Manager, searching for where and how that and other numbers were calculated, and working to reconcile numbers. Members looked at Property Tax figures and considered that the differences in the number may be due to TIF, Administration, and sewer funds. They agreed that those three items matched up with the figures they were questioning.

Donna informed members that they will vote on each of the articles and that the amount they vote on will be recorded with the vote as that information will be listed on the ballot. She outlined the meeting format as follows: members will discuss and comment on each article, members will make a motion and second that motion, and then the floor will be opened for further discussion prior to voting.

Article 4, Revenues

Donna made a motion that Article 4, Revenues, be approved by the Budget Committee in the amount requested of \$4,789,400.00. Reggie seconded the motion.

Jean pointed out that on the Budget Committee worksheet dated 3/3/21, the Budget Committee recommendation was \$4,939,204. Reggie asked why the Committee would go back two years and what Jean's comment is in reference to. Jean said it is a reference to past revenues and that she wondered why is there a decrease in revenues. Donna did not know the answer to that question and pointed out that numbers listed are projections and estimates.

The Committee voted on the motion on the floor. The motion passed with a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article 4, Revenues, votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
yes	yes	yes	yes	absent	yes	Yes

Article 5, Administration

The Chair directed members to Article 5, Administration where the Select Board recommends \$2,363,074. She noted a dollar difference from the original amount presented to the Committee as the original budget rounded down and the final number is rounded up and only a dollar difference. She opened the floor to discussion on Administration.

Donna noted that the Town Manager has moved all social security, retirement, and workman's compensation for all Town employees under Administration. She added that that is a format issue and that the Committee moved those three costs back last year. She noted that for years the Town has worked for complete transparency so that the Town has a full understanding of what each department costs and that this has taken a step backward such that the Town no longer has that transparency. She hoped that in future years transparency would return as townspeople have indicated for years that they want transparency.

Gene said that the collective cost of health insurance had gone down \$86,000. Donna said that that health costs are not something Town has control over. She added that with items being combined, the Town Manager elected to have less transparency in the budget. Donna said it was very difficult to match up numbers. Reggie said he has only been on the Committee for a year, and that this year's budget is very confusing compared to what he has been privy to over the last two years. Donna reiterated the lack of transparency and cited this year as the second year the Town Manager has not wanted the Committee to have information and has not provided requested information. She added that it is very concerning and that the townspeople need to know this is happening and the Committee can certainly share that in their letter to the Eliot residents.

Diane said she was fine with the Administration figure at this point as she has added amounts back into it in and was okay with it. She added there is not much they can do about it at this point and the number does seem reasonable.

Jean requested a note be included with the budget that states what the Administration amount includes, specifically that everything is lumped into Administration. Donna answered they could not do that as the Committee is voting strictly on what to put on the ballot which will be shared with the Select Board on Thursday night. She added that the note Jean is suggesting could be put in the Committee's letter to residents which will be prepared at the next meeting. Jean was fine with that.

Donna made a motion that the Budget Committee approve Administration, Article #5, at \$2,363,074. Reggie seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article 5, Administration, votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
yes	Yes	yes	yes	absent	yes	Yes

Article 6, Hearings & Elections

The Chair introduced Article 6, Hearings & Elections which the Select Board is recommending for \$23,600. There was no discussion.

Donna made a motion that the Committee approve Hearings & Elections, Article 6, for \$23,600. Reggie seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article 6, Hearings & Elections, votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
yes	Yes	yes	yes	absent	yes	Yes

Article 7, Fire Department

The Chair introduced Article 7, Fire Department, which the Select Board is recommending for \$315,079. She opened the floor to discussion.

Donna said this is the largest increase she has seen for the Fire Department, which is typically a conservative budget, and that the biggest increase is under salaries. Reggie asked if Fire was adding a new position. Jean said that salaries for 2023-24 are requested at \$211,279 and that salaries for 2022-23 were at \$132, 867. Donna noted that there was little explanation for the increase and that historically, the Fire Department budget has been the most even and clearest budget. Diane said it might be for new training. Donna said the increase is under salaries. Jean said the Travel and Training went up by \$2,000. Donna said she had no issue with the proposed funding for the Fire Department as the Town is fortunate to have such a professional volunteer Fire Department. Members praised the Eliot Fire Department. Jean was concerned that ladder testing, hose testing, and pump testing certifications were missing. Reggie and Donna said those items were moved in the budget. Reggie noted that the amount appears to be lumped in with other costs. Donna noted that lumping information together reduces transparency. Gene said he disagreed.

The Chair asked Gene not to interrupt the person speaking. He said he needed to correct misinformation and that the goal was not to decrease transparency. Reggie and Donna told Gene he was not always right. Gene responded he was right in this case as he was told point blank. Donna said the Committee was told differently. Gene said he did not know who was telling them what. Donna asked Gene where he was getting his information. Gene answered the Town Manager. Donna asked if he had been discussing the budget with the Town Manager. Gene did not answer.

Donna noted that when line items are reduced, and items lumped in together it reduces transparency. Jean said her concern was that essential items do not get overlooked and that she does not want the Fire Department to be short-changed and have to come up with funds for yearly tasks the Department must do. Donna agreed and reiterated that transparency has been reduced significantly in this budget. Jean asked if the Committee could send a request to the Town Manager to tell them if missing items are allocated elsewhere in the budget. Donna said the Fire Chief has not missed anything over the years and he is the one who presented this budget to the Town Manager so she feels those items must be there. Jean said she does not want another merry-go-round experience like the Town had last summer for which the Budget Committee was blamed but not responsible for.

Donna made a motion that the Budget Committee approve Fire Department, Article #7, at \$315,079. Reggie seconded the motion. The floor was opened for further discussion.

Jean asked if the Committee wanted to vote on what the Fire Department requested or what the Town Manager requested. Donna said the Committee is voting on the number put before the Budget Committee which is the Town Manager's recommendation and listed on the worksheet as the Select Board's recommendation. Jean asked if the Budget Committee could make its own recommendation. Reggie responded that since the Committee received no specifics on the proposed amount as they requested the Committee can only work with what they have. Donna said the Committee can vote for a different number but there is the expectation that there is a reason for that change, so members can explain to voters why the Budget Committee recommended a different amount. Jeff said the difference between what the Fire Department requested (\$316,579) and what the Town Manager requested (\$315,079) appears to be close. Donna said it was a \$1500

difference. Members reviewed documents to see what the \$1500 was for. Jeff said it was in heating costs.

The Committee voted on the motion on the floor. The motion passed with a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article 7, Fire Department votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
yes	Yes	yes	yes	absent	yes	Yes

Article 8, Police Department

Donna read from the worksheet that the Select Board is recommending \$1,157,777 for the Police Department. She added costs for the Harbormaster at \$4,500 and the Animal Control Office (ACO) at \$15,000 now appear under Public Safety as the Budget Committee requested them to appear to comply with the ordinance. She opened the floor for discussion.

Jeff said it is helpful to see both the Town Manager's proposed amount and the Staff or in this case, Police Department's request. He added here they are the same number. Donna noted that the significant increase in salary is driven by the union. She added that the Committee has questioned the Uniforms line and the policy and cost still do not add up.

Donna noted the lack of transparency and added that while she supports the mental health counselor, she is still unclear on how the position is paid for and that initially it was a grant-funded position which may have changed at this point. She added that this is another example of how valuable it is to hear from department heads to hear about the mental health counselor position and the department's plans for that position and its funding. She said the Budget Committee has no information on the funding of the position or if the cost is being shared by the three towns, and if so, how that cost is being assessed to each town. She noted that the Committee was denied a joint meeting to better understand this funding. She shared that she heard anecdotally from Eliot Police Department members this past summer at a Town event that the position is beneficial to the Police Department and the Town's residents. Reggie agreed it is a beneficial position for the Town but that the Committee needs to know about its funding.

The Chair asked for further comments or discussion on the Police Department budget. Gene suggested that the increase to the Police budget was due to hiring two new police officers. Donna said the funds would still be in the next year's budget whether the police officers were hired or not and that the budget numbers the Committee is looking at is for next year, not this year. Gene said he wondered if they were on the payroll yet as he knew initially the new hires were put through the academy. Donna said that would not affect the number the Committee was looking at because last year there were funds approved to cover the cost of the new hires. She added that these numbers are projections and that some of the numbers are driven by the union contract. She noted that despite what the Town Charter says, the Town Manager declined inclusion of a Budget Committee member in conversations about the union contract and that the Town Manager proceeded with negotiating the contract without a Budget Committee member. There were no further comments. The Chair said she would entertain a motion.

Donna clarified the amount the Committee was looking at for the Police Department, stating, “The initial request was for \$1,177,277 with the reduction of \$15,000 for the Animal Control and \$4,500 for Harbormaster, that brings it to \$1,157,777.”

Reggie motioned and Gene seconded that the Budget Committee approve Article 8 for the Police Department for \$1,157,777. The Chair noted that the Committee did not receive an answer on why there was a \$4,307 increase in Animal Control. She added that the Town Manager’s answer said he was looking to combine with other towns but that that did not answer why the amount would increase and not decrease.

The Committee voted on the motion on the floor. The motion passed with a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article 8, Police Department votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
yes	Yes	yes	yes	absent	yes	Yes

Article 9, Public Safety

The Chair stated that the Select Board is recommending \$366,647 for Public Safety and that this is one of the articles that requires an itemized list. She read aloud the following itemized list:

Fire hydrants, \$94,000
Dispatching, \$203,371
PSAP (9/11), \$32,776
Harbormaster, \$4,500
Streetlights, \$17,000
Animal Control officer, \$15,000

Members pointed out that the Chair had read the Public Works total amount for the Public Safety total amount and that was corrected. Donna noted that she cannot explain the proposed Public Safety increase which is more than \$75,000. Gene suggested it might be the answering service. Donna noted that the Town does not have control over the Dispatching and the PSAP 9/11 amounts. She added that she is not comfortable increasing the ACO amount without an explanation. Reggie asked if the ACO was new. Donna responded no and that in the past budget the amount was \$10,353. She added that the Committee did ask the Town Manager a question about the ACO position and asked members if they had the email that posed that question. Gene handed Donna the question on a printed page.

From the Committee’s February 8, 2023, questions to the Town Manager, Donna read aloud the Committee’s question #8 and the Town Manager’s answer, “What caused a \$4,971.07 increase in ACO salary? His answer was it’s not a salary increase, and we are working toward an inter-municipal agreement contract. Presently we are working with York to provide ACO services and anticipate an inter-municipal agreement. The Town of York is going through a managerial change and we are waiting as they prepare said agreement. We anticipate the overall cost to be less than \$15,000 which we include, (I don’t know what this means) which we include all expenses.”

Donna wondered if this meant Eliot was paying the money up front and York was going to reimburse Eliot, but she does not see that in Revenues anywhere. She questioned if it means every municipality is pitching in \$15,000 and yet York is a bigger town than Eliot. She said the Town Manager's response was a non-answer. Donna returned the page to Gene.

Reggie asked if the Committee should suggest last year's amount as the Town Manager did not provide an answer. Members reviewed last year's amount and looked through data for last year's numbers.

Donna noted that the increase is not significant but there is again a lack of transparency. Reggie pointed out that it is continuously 20%, 30%, 50% added on with no explanation which adds up to hundreds of thousands over the entire budget. Donna noted that these are things the Committee has no control over but that they can explain in its letter to townspeople. She questioned again how the cost of ACO services was being divided among municipalities and if it was based on population or calls received, and whether the person hired would be full-time or part-time and noted that the Budget Committee has been provided no information on those questions. Donna added that it is a lack of transparency and that this level of lack of transparency feels deliberate. Reggie said whether it is deliberate or not, it is still damaging. Donna said that the Committee has never faced this in the past and if the Committee had received all the answers to its questions, they would have had what they needed.

Jean questioned why the Town Manager requested more money than the Public Safety Department's request of \$347,147. She said the amount in the 2022-2023 budget was \$291,105, and if the \$15,000 for ACO and \$4,500 for the Harbormaster are added to that request, it brings the total to \$310,605. She added that the Town Manager is asking for \$366,647. Donna said the costs for ACO and Harbormaster are included in the proposed Public Safety budget request. She said the 24-hour answering service and PSPA are contract services and that the Town has no control over what is being charged for them as those fees are set. She added that the Committee can certainly weigh in on those costs. Diane said and Donna agreed that the Budget Committee knew those fees were going to go up. Donna pointed out that two items and fire hydrants are the biggest increases.

Reggie motioned and Diane seconded that the Committee vote on Article 9, Public Safety, for \$366,647. There was no further discussion. The motion passed by a roll call vote 6-0.

Article 9, Public Safety Department votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	Yes	yes	yes	absent	yes	yes

Article 10, Public Works Department

The Chair directed members to the Select Board's recommendation of \$1,845,591 for the Public Works Department (DPW) and opened the floor for discussion. Reggie said that the Town Manager had removed \$21,000 in salaries. In response Donna directed to the Town Manager's note, stating, "In this article, when we were presented with the budget, it included what used to be in Summer Maintenance, which was the salary for summertime and the toilets. In the articles, the Town

Manager removed the \$21,000 for the summer salaries but left in the cost of toilets at \$3,500. And you'll see further down when we get to Summer Maintenance that the \$21,000 is in Article 12."

Reggie asked if given that information, is the Committee considering \$1,818,091. The Chair said that will be part of the Committee's discussion. Diane said if those funds are being moved down below, they should be removed from Public Works by that amount. Donna responded, saying, "It is taken off in the article. If you look at the budget that he presented us, it's in the budget, the DPW budget. When it was brought over to the articles, you'll see that the initial, if you look at the (pause). It was \$1.866 in the budget that was presented to us. The articles is \$1.845." The Chair added that the lack of transparency in the budget made it very difficult to go through it and that she is not sure what was combined and what was not combined.

The Chair reminded members that when they review numbers that have a significant difference in amount from last year, it may be all the benefits have been removed from those numbers and put under Administration.

Jean said she is having a hard time understanding how the budget has increased and where the money is going. Gene responded paving. Donna agreed, stating that the Town Manager had added a million dollars' worth of paving into the budget. She added that the Budget Committee rejected that last year as did the voters when they voted for the Budget Committee's recommendation. Donna said she has not seen a valid explanation as to why the DPW amount has doubled. She noted that materials fees had not doubled, and that those fees do not match up with doubling the DPW budget. Jeff said that the Town Manager shared a list of the roads that would be paved. Jean said the Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) had published the work plan for Eliot for calendar years until 2025 which includes paving beginning at Route 239. She added that the Maine DOT website has good information. Donna noted that that information is for state roads, and Jean agreed. Jean added that she found it a challenge to understand the increase in the proposed budget for paving.

Members looked at emails and other items for information on paving. Gene read from the February 5th email where the Committee asked for the breakdown of paving costs and the Town Manager responded that paving pricing is not available. Donna said pricing went up but that the Town Manager's response did not inform the Committee about the amount or scope of area proposed paving. For instance, she explained how many tons the Town used in 2023 compared to what they expect to use in 2024; this information was not provided to the Committee, so the Committee did not receive the full information. Reggie said if materials costs had gone up 12% to 15%, that is not unusual, but the question is the scope of the planned maintenance or repair, be it simply an overlay or a more involved and costly full road repair or shimming.

Members discussed past road work and past DPW budgets to try to understand what the projected scope of work might be for FY24. Diane said that she did not want to put the DPW at a disadvantage because the Budget Committee did not receive the information. She said she remembers discussion about planning road paving that would include a substantial rise in the scope of the projects and funds needed in the second year which might be the upcoming the year. Diane said she heard about this in a side conversation during Town meetings last summer. Donna said that information is not in

the answer the Committee received. Donna added that she did not feel comfortable approving \$1 million more to the DPW budget when the Committee has no information as to how those funds will be used. She added that providing the Budget Committee with that information is the responsibility of the Town Manager.

Reggie asked how the Committee should move forward on Article 10, Public Works Department. Members looked over data and paperwork concerning what was approved last year and what is being requested for FY24 and percentage increases. Reggie agreed that the DPW needs the resources to keep the Town roads up-to-date and safe. Donna said the Committee could look at a 15% increase in the DPW budget which would be a \$575,000 increase as the Committee does not have any other information from the Town Manager except that material costs have increased 15%. Donna said that was one approach. Reggie responded that approach was legitimate and by the numbers but that he did not want to be hard-nosed and that the Committee just needs something more on this. Donna said the Committee is not going to get that information as the Committee is voting tonight and had asked for the information, but it was not provided.

The Chair said the question is how does the Budget Committee want to approach this decision given what they are facing. Reggie said the Committee could split the difference but if the Committee does that, they are never going to get the information they need and requested. He added the Committee is faced with a mott-and-bailey, where the requested amount is tripled and the requesting party is happy to get half. He called that approach a bad, crappy tactic.

Jeff said that as the DPW Director, the Town Manager, and the Select Board all accepted the amount, given no other details, he thought the Committee could accept the amount given that the DPW Director has been known for doing a good job with the budget. Diane said she thought it would be difficult for the Committee to not vote for the requested amount. Gene said he does not know what the lists of paving projects looked like from the past year, but as he looks at the list for paving that the Town Manager provided there is more paving than just streets. He pointed out that specifically listed for paving are Murray-Rose Park, behind the Fire Department and Police Department, Dead Duck, and the tennis and basketball courts at Frost Tufts Park. He added that these projects are beyond roadwork and maintenance.

Discussion turned to paving jobs over the past years. Donna said the Committee did not receive a list of paving projects last year. Members agreed the list should have included miles or feet of paving to assist the Committee in understanding the scope of the work and the requested cost. They found lack of information to make their job unnecessarily difficult.

Members discussed the action the Committee can take on the article and how they as members will explain to voters the action they took especially if voters complain about streets not being maintained. Jean asked if the Budget Committee can change its recommendation after the Committee has voted on it. Donna said this is the Committee's final vote and that if the townspeople at the Citizens Option Meeting recommend a different amount, the Committee could go with what they say. Both Donna and Jean said they could not vote for the \$1,000,000 increase to the DPW budget without information about how those funds will be used as it is a lot of money to

ask from taxpayers without an explanation. Donna said the Budget Committee is in the unfortunate position of having to be the ones saying they did not get the information they requested.

Members discussed their options, including going with the budget amount from last year's budget, going with last year's amount and adding a 15% increase as that is the information received from the Town Manager in response to the Committee request, or going with last year's amount and adding more than 15%. Members discussed numbers they might be comfortable with recommending. Diane said the \$500,000 increase would not be satisfying to her as she does not think that will meet the funds needed to do the amount of roadwork the DPW is planning to do. She said she is struggling with what the Committee should do but does not think half a million is enough. Members recalled paving projects in Town that were done or had been planned for. Gene said he believes the list the Committee received this year for roads to be paved, including parking lots, is a bigger list than those roads and projects addressed last year. Gene added that he believes if paving projects are not done, the cost doubles when they are done in the future. Reggie asked if Gene meant financially it would be better to take care of the roads this year. Gene said he thought the risk of "overspending" would be low as once the roads are paved, they won't be paved next year. Donna asked Gene if he had the data on that, and Gene said he did not.

Reggie said the Committee does not know what the scope of the work will be and as such cannot estimate what the cost might be. He added if this work is important to the Town, the Committee needs that information and that getting that information to the Committee is not complicated. Reggie asked Gene if he was going to sign off on half of a million dollars of taxpayers' money when he does not have the information. Gene said he is satisfied with the information the Committee has. Gene said he does not think the Town needs to defer projects as they did last year due to a lack of funding. Reggie agreed but said that is not the Committee's choice, adding that if the Town does not give the Committee information on the numbers, the Committee is not making moral choices. Gene said we are providing recommendations to the citizens. Reggie agreed. Gene said he cannot explain to a citizen why he did not pave a given road. Reggie said he can because the Town Manager would not give the Committee the information. Gene reiterated that the Committee's job is to make a recommendation to the townsfolk and that that is the job and not "our personal opinion, not our personal preference, not our personal lifestyle, this is about what makes sense for the citizenry." He added that he is ready to take the information he received and run with it. Reggie thanked Gene for that explanation.

Jean asked how many of the roads listed were in dire critical situations, or unpassable. Diane said that is not the Committee's job and that taking care of a road now is better than when it is crumbling. She added that she thought the Committee was beating its head against the wall at this point. Diane said she could support the million dollars because, as Gene said, there are more projects on the list than just roads and that from what she understood the Town and DPW wanted to focus on road repair and maintenance. Donna responded then why didn't the Town give the Committee the data. She added that she wanted to remind members that their job is to be looking at hard numbers and data. Diane agreed. Donna continued saying that if the Committee were looking at \$1 million, previously in the past, the Committee had been given the information to back up that money. She added that that has happened every single year until two years ago. She stated that the Town Manager has that information, and that if he doesn't then how did he come up with

\$1 million and why does he not want to share that information when the Committee after the Committee requested it. Diane said she thought it was one person and that they could have gotten the information from the department heads. Donna said she knew she could get that information from the department heads, but they were told not to share it with members of the Budget Committee. Jean asked if items listed on the paving list are part of the TIF (Transportation Infrastructure Fund) or the sewer system. Donna answered that she did not have an answer as that information was not provided. Jean asked if the Town would be paying for something that the TIF should be paying for. Donna said there is no explanation and that she does not have any information about whether or not the numbers she is looking at are legitimate. She added that her job as a member of the Budget Committee is to answer that question, but she cannot do that as the information has been denied to the Committee.

Donna said, "Shame on the people that denied it. My name goes on this, and all of your names go on this, and you have to decide if you are comfortable with basically blindly voting for a million dollars of taxpayer money without the information and the numbers to back up that request." Jean said she cannot.

The Chair said if there was no further discussion, did a member want to make a motion. She added that she could support a 15% increase in the Public Works department budget as the Committee has an explanation for that cost. Reggie agreed they should do that and that then the Committee can explain why they recommended this amount. He added that if it is so important for the department to have this money, then the Committee should have been given a full explanation. As an example, the Chair asked members if she came to them and asked for a million dollars with no explanation and wanted them to just give her the money, would they.

Jeff said, "Frankly, just sitting here listening to this tonight, what I've come to appreciate in listening to it all, is every single article has come down to the same thing. So, is it right to make a guess on \$100,000, \$200,000, I don't think it's the money. If we don't have the answers and it sounds like we don't have the answers for a lot of these, we've already approved a bunch, you know, the Chair has already said we don't have the information we need. We've already put ourselves in a compromising position."

Donna said she thinks when the Committee discussed Public Safety, they had the answers for that. She added that under Police, increasing wages was under the union contract. Reggie said he saw it as a difference between extrapolation and blind hope that it's going to work out, stating, "In the smaller numbers, we can't extrapolate from previous years but on this particular instance with the paving, we didn't get the numbers last year, we didn't get the numbers this year. And this is the biggest line item we are voting on. So, it is different. I do understand the principle you are explaining here but there's a drastic difference in this item compared to the others. We can't back it out, we can't extrapolate. You can disagree."

Jeff responded, "I just think we've been doing it all night. I'm just trying to figure where the line is."

Reggie said, "Half a million dollars is my line."

Jeff said that is what he is trying to get to. Donna said that members should also consider that the Committee's recommendation is going to be different than the Select Board's recommendation and

that the townspeople ultimately decide whether they want to spend the million dollars on the roads or they want to spend the amount the Budget Committee recommends that is different. Jeff said that this is a perfectly fine solution. Gene asked what was the solution. Jeff answered that the Budget Committee decide between \$500,000 and \$1 million and let the townspeople decide.

Donna made a motion for Article 10, Public Works Department, \$1,420, 591, and that increases last year's paving amount by 15%. Reggie seconded. The Chair opened the floor for further discussion. There was none. The motion failed with a roll call vote of 3-3.

Article 10, Public Works Department, at \$1,420,591 votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	Yes	no	no	absent	yes	no

Diane asked what the Committee should do. Reggie answered, change the number, and vote again. Donna said she does not feel comfortable going with a higher number as she does not have information to back it up. Reggie said this sets a horrible precedence. Donna said that it set as precedence that you can do what you want and not provide information.

Donna said that she needs a number that she can explain to a taxpayer why she voted for it. She added that the only explanation she has heard for the million dollars is that the Committee should just trust it. Donna noted that the Town Manager must have the information for how and why he came up with the million-dollar figure and she could not understand why he would not share that with the Committee to advocate for what he wants. She questioned what might be in that information that they do not want the Budget Committee to see.

Jeff asked for the paving numbers for 2021-2022. Donna responded that historically \$500,000 has been a good number. Jeff pointed out that the number is not listed in the report. Members looked through their documents for past numbers. Reggie read that the paving numbers for FY19 were \$470,000 and for FY20 \$450,000. Donna said last year the Town Manager requested a million dollars while the DPW Director asked for \$500,000, and that the Town voted for the \$500,000. Jeff asked if this might be a cyclical event in which the DPW has spent a certain amount every year but then reaches a point where it can't put off larger or more complex projects. Reggie responded that if that were the explanation, that would not be a difficult one to provide to the Budget Committee. Jeff agreed and said it looked like the request was for incremental numbers. He added that the Committee cannot approve less than what they have approved in the past and if the Committee cannot agree on the million, they need to come up with a number everyone can agree on. Diane said it must be more than 15%. She added that she does not agree with the \$1 million, but if the DPW runs into project issues during completion of work, the DPW would need more than 15%. She encouraged members to give more than the 15%. Donna responded that the 15% is the only hard number that the Town Manager gave to the Committee when he said that the DPW costs were going to increase by 15%. Diane said, "Based at the time on the cost of the stuff and that is if the jobs go smooth." She added that she could go with something more than 15% and thought maybe 20% but she was not sure. Donna did the math on 20% which would bring the amount up \$600 instead of \$575 and a total of \$1,445,591. Diane said she felt the Committee needed to give the DPW some leeway.

Diane motioned that Article 10, be approved for \$1,445,591, for Public Works. Reggie seconded the motion. The Chair opened the floor for further discussion. There was none. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 4-2.

Article 10, Public Works Department for \$1,445,591 votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	Yes	yes	no	absent	yes	no

Article 11, Snow Removal & Winter Roads

Donna motioned and Reggie seconded that \$222,000 be approved for Article 11, Snow Removal & Winter Roads. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article 11, Snow Removal & Winter Roads votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	Yes	yes	yes	absent	yes	Yes

Article 12, Summer Maintenance

Donna motioned and Jeff seconded that \$21,000 be approved for Article 12, Summer Maintenance. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article 12, Summer Maintenance votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	Yes	yes	yes	absent	yes	yes

Article 13, Roads & Bridges

Donna motioned and Jeff seconded that \$2,000 be approved for Article 13, Roads & Bridges. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0. It was noted that the majority of work under Article 13 is sweeping.

Article 13, Roads & Bridges votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	Yes	yes	yes	absent	yes	yes

Article 14, Transfer Station

Donna said the salaries under Article 14 are subject to the union contract. Members reviewed and discussed the documents and figures for the Transfer Station. Diane motioned and Donna seconded that \$293,112 be approved for Article 14, Transfer Station. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article14, Transfer Station votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	Yes	yes	yes	absent	yes	yes

Article 15, Federal Stormwater

Donna noted that the amount has decreased. Diane motioned and Reggie seconded that \$124,000 be approved for Article 15, Federal Stormwater. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article 15, Federal Stormwater votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	Yes	yes	yes	absent	yes	yes

Article 16, Community Services Department

Reggie motioned and Donna seconded that \$438,565 be approved for Article 16, Community Services Department. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article 16, Community Services Department votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	Yes	Yes	yes	absent	yes	yes

Article 17, General Assistance

Donna said this amount has remained the same in recent years following some good work by the Town years ago researching additional resources services that provide assistance. Jeff noted the costs of heating and housing have increased significantly. Donna motioned and Jeff seconded that \$25,900 be approved for General Assistance. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article 17, General Assistance votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	Yes	yes	yes	absent	yes	yes

Article 18, Capital Improvements

Reggie suggested moving on to other articles as Capital Improvements would entail a great deal of discussion. Donna asked the Committee if they wanted to do so but discussion had begun. Jean asked if the Town was getting a new town hall. Donna answered that years ago the Town had voted it down but that a study as to what was needed at town hall was approved some three years ago. Donna added that she was not sure what the numbers were for town hall improvements as the Committee had not received complete information. Gene asked if the Chair had received the February 23 email with Reserve Accounts proposals from the Town Manager. Donna answered that the Committee was looking at Capital Improvements.

Jeff said to Donna, "If you were very concerned about going from \$500,000 to a million for paving, we've got \$1.5 million in Capital with no explanation at all."

Donna responded, "The townspeople whatever we decide tonight will have the option going with the Select Board or (pause)."

Gene asked what they were talking about, and if they are talking about Article 18. Jeff pointed out to Gene where they were.

Donna said the articles were sent to members last week and that was when the Committee received information.

Gene said, "Here's the detail in this (pointing out a sheet to Jeff) Reserve Accounts, allocation of Reserve Accounts proposal."

Donna pointed out that the Committee was reviewing Capital Improvements and that Reserve Accounts was the next article.

Gene said, "What I am saying is that the information is (unclear) Capital Improvements is part of this memo he sent out on the 24th of February."

Donna asked, "That who sent out? I have nothing from the Town Manager on the 24th."

Jean said, "Neither do I."

Donna asked, "Is it something he just sent to you perhaps?"

Gene said, "No."

Donna looked through emails and found one dated 2/27 for Reserve Accounts, not for Capital Improvements (CIP) and asked Gene if he was referring to 2/27 and not 2/24. She added it was sent out to all members on 2/27. Donna clarified that the email on Capital Improvements was sent to her as the Chair on 2/27 and she then sent it to all members on 2/28. Jean said she understood where Gene is coming from as the document in the email from the Town Manager is dated February 23rd and submitted to the Select Board, not the Budget Committee. She added that the Committee is now talking about the CIP, not the Reserve Accounts. Donna agreed and said the Committee is talking about the CIP and they have no information about the CIP. She asked members if they had last year's CIP to look at.

To clarify, Donna said that the amounts in the email Gene referenced are the balances under the Reserve Accounts. She added, "That doesn't mean he (unclear) isn't asking to increase any of these amounts outside of Administration or Reserves and Public Safety impacts."

Jeff asked if the number is similar to last year's, if the Committee received more information last year, and how much was the request for last year. Reggie shared the page with information from last year. Donna read from the page that the request for Town offices last year was \$30,000. Jeff said it just said Capital and not what it is. Jeff asked if the Committee remembered what they did last year. Donna and Jeff reviewed the sheet and what the Committee did last year.

Donna said that these funds were "accrued, so we knew from the CIP that we would be putting money in every year for a new fire truck, we'd be putting money in for certain things, some of these things are from previous years."

Donna explained how historically it was agreed that funds would be put in year to year so when the Town needed to replace a police cruiser, the funds were there. She added that the number for the Police Department has been consistent, and she has no problem with the figure for the Police Department. She added the Town has always tucked money away as well for the next fire truck the Town may need. Discussion continued on the practice and the cost of vehicles for the Police and Fire Departments.

Jean asked for clarification of what items are under Capital Improvements. Donna responded that items included a police cruiser in the Police amount, Fire Department funds were for a fire truck or vehicles, Public Works would be the same. For the Transfer Station, Donna said it was the big bins. Diane mentioned the rolling machinery for the Transfer Station as well.

Jean said she is looking at the 2022-2023 proposed CIP budget and read aloud the amounts and what they are for as follows for 2022-2023:

Paving, \$1,000,000
Public Works vehicle reserve, nothing
Backhoe lease, \$22,800
(unclear) lease, \$28,200
Excavator lease, \$15,100
Police cruiser, \$56,000
Town office technology, \$30,000
Fire truck SCVA lease, \$70,000
Fire truck reserve, \$125,000
for a total of \$1,347,700

Donna said the Committee has been put in a difficult situation as it did not receive information. She questioned the listings for Eliot stormwater and the Land Bank at \$31,016 and if the Town is purchasing property in which case how did the Town come up with that figure. Jean did not know.

Donna said this article may have to be tabled and that the Committee would call an emergency meeting through the Town Clerk that would require a seven-day notice for the Committee to meet and look at the number.

Donna motioned and Reggie seconded that the Committee table Article 18, Capital Improvements, until which time the Committee receives information that defines the numbers in the article. She asked if there was any further discussion. Gene asked if she was talking about Article 18. She said yes. Reggie added they were just tabling it for now. The motion passed with a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article 18, Capital Improvements to be tabled votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
yes	yes	yes	Yes	absent	yes	yes

Article 19, Reserve Accounts

The Chair opened discussion stating that the Town Manager was requesting the following:

\$120,000, Administration Reserve
\$43,193, Public Safety impact fees
for a total of \$163,193

Donna said she could not find an explanation for Administration Reserve. Jeff said he could not find information on either number. Donna said she could not vote on this tonight because of the lack of information. Diane and Jean had no comments.

Gene said, “These aren’t new monies or anything. This is just, this is a formality that we’re voting on. The Town already has this money in the bank. There is no new monies being introduced in here. All we’re trying to do is transfer from existing funds to Capital Funds or to Reserve Accounts. Okay. So, these aren’t new expenses or anything.”

Jeff responded, “It’s sort of an opportunity cost. So, if you have a reserve and you move it into a different category, it’s no longer available for something else in the future.”

Gene said, “Right.”

Jeff said, “I think that is partly what is going on here.”

Donna said, “He’s correct.”

Gene said that in the discussion (unclear) at the Select Board meeting, it was stated that a lot of these reserve accounts were obsolete and that they weren’t being tracked properly. Jeff said if that were the answer he would agree with the answer and that he thought he saw a document recently concerning this issue. Donna said that that document would be in the email she sent on 2/28 that is dated the 23rd. She said there is an explanation in there that does not give any detail, it tells how the Town Manager is going to use the funds, but it doesn’t explain why he needs \$120,000 in Administration.

Donna motioned and Reggie seconded that the Committee table Article 19, Reserve Accounts, until they receive further information. There was no further discussion or comments. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article 19, Reserve Accounts to be tabled votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
yes	yes	yes	Yes	absent	yes	yes

Jeff said that he did not know tabling was an option and suggested tabling Article 10 on the paving issue to request more information. Reggie agreed that if the Committee received further information, they would have something to work with. The Chair explained that a member can motion to reconsider tonight or in one week but that only a member who supported the article can make a motion to reconsider.

Motion to reconsider Article 10

Jean motioned and seconded by Reggie to reconsider the Committee’s vote on Article 10, under Public Works and specific to the paving. The Chair asked for further discussion. There was none. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0.

Motion to reconsider the Committee DPW vote votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
yes	yes	yes	Yes	absent	yes	yes

Motion to table Article 10, Public Works Department

Donna motioned that the Committee not approve an amount tonight on Article 10, Public Works and table it until the Committee receives further information. Jeff seconded the motion. The Chair asked for further discussion. There was none. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article 10, Public Works Department to be tabled votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
yes	yes	yes	Yes	absent	yes	yes

Jeff asked how the process would go forward. Donna said she would email the Town Manager and ask for the information and that he responded before next week's Budget Committee meeting so members could vote on it. Jean asked what they would do if the Town Manager did not give them the information. Donna said that the Committee was back to where it was, considering the amount they had or a different amount. Jeff asked about the timing and format of the email the Chair will be sending. Members agreed to continue looking at the articles and look at a date to meet next week after looking at the articles. Jeff suggested sending an emissary with the note to the Town Manager rather than just sending an email as Jeff fears the Committee will be in the same place next week. Donna said that would be the Town Manager's choice and that as the Committee has been instructed to do, she will send the email to him. She added if she were in the Town Manager's position, she would want to advocate for the budget and as such, provide the information. She said it is not the Budget Committee's job to go and speak with the Town Manager but that the Committee has requested the information and he has chosen not to provide it.

Diane suggested the email to the Town Manager might say the Committee needs the numbers or will have to revert back to last year's numbers, so he knows where the Committee is going with the situation. Donna said she cannot say that as she does not know how each individual member is going to vote. She added that she can say in the email that the majority of members, given the vote tonight, are not comfortable supporting a million dollars without having further information. Diane thought that sounded fair. Donna added this would hold true for the Capital Improvements and Reserve Accounts where the Town Manager has the data, has had it for a while, and if he wants to advocate for these numbers, would send the Committee the data.

Article 20, Town Standing Committees

The Chair directed members to Article 20, Town Standing Committees, for \$38,300. She suggested one change which was minor and approved by the voters last year that the Aging In Place Committee request for \$300 for rewards for people be denied. She added that last year the Budget Committee removed the amount, citing that it was not a good use of taxpayers' money. As the amounts are broken out on the ballot for taxpayers to see, Donna read the amounts:

Board of Appeals, \$5,000
Budget Committee, \$3,780
Conservation Committee, \$1,520
Planning Board, \$25,000
Aging In Place Committee, \$2,000
Agriculture & Food Security, \$1,000
for a total of \$38,300

Donna motioned and Jean seconded that Article 20, Town Standing Committees, be approved for \$38,000 and the reduction is in Aging In Place from \$2,000 to \$1,700. The Chair asked for further discussion. There was none. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article 20, Town Standing Committees votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
yes	yes	yes	Yes	absent	yes	yes

Article 21, William Fogg Library

The Chair said the Select Board is recommending the full amount at \$253,811 and opened the floor for discussion. Jean said she cannot support funds or an increase in funds for the Library. Gene asked that Jean explain her position.

Jean said, "First of all, the majority of the funding is coming from the Town of Eliot, and it gives me great heartburn when the Library does not want to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Town of Eliot. This is a lot of money; this is a quarter of a million dollars. And they keep asking for more and more and expecting the Town of Eliot residents to keep paying for it. They received PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) money when the Town of Eliot was fully funding them. That does not sit well with me. I just cannot support an increase for the Library this year."

Jeff asked what the Committee had from the Library in terms of substantiation for the requested amount of \$253,811. Donna said it is the same as last year, information as to where the money goes to and a good portion of that is salaries. Jeff asked if the Library provided a budget that worked out to the amount they are requesting. Donna confirmed the Library did. Donna said one of the questions she had and that she asked when the Library representatives came to the Budget Committee meeting was about rolling over the unused payroll funds when the Library was without a director for a quarter of a year. Donna added the Library agreed they could roll over that money and promised to get that amount to the Committee but never did. Reggie said the Library also said it would give the Committee information on the PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) loan. Donna corrected Reggie and said they did not say they would, they said they could not give out the application for the PPP loan. Donna asked members to consider the possibility of reducing the requested funds for the Library by the amount of the saved funds for not having a director for the full year by \$13,000. She added that reduction is a guess as she may not have the correct information. Jean said the Library director's salary for FY23 was \$60,600 and for this year they are proposing \$62,600. Donna suggested a 25% reduction would be \$15,150 because that is money that they have not been paying out and that is only for the Library director. She added that the Library also had some other staff positions that were vacant. Donna said when the Library representatives met with the Budget Committee, they said rolling back that the funds not spent on the Library director's salary was something they could do and added that was something for members to also consider.

Reggie motioned and Donna seconded for Article 21, William Fogg Library, to approve \$238, 661 which removes \$15,150 which is a quarter of the salary only for the Library director. The Chair asked for further discussion. Diane said that she thought that was fair as the Library said at their meeting with the Budget Committee, they would take that amount out. The Chair asked for further discussion. There was none. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 5-1.

Article 21, William Fogg Library votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
yes	yes	yes	Yes	absent	yes	No

Article 22, Social Service Agencies

The Chair said that the amount requested is \$76,615, which is a significant increase from last year's, which was \$11,600. She said the increase is due to two items: \$12,000 for Footprints Food Pantry to purchase fresh vegetables with that money and \$50,000 for Mainspring. She spoke about the request for Mainspring, saying the proposal is for \$100,000 over two years so they will be asking for \$50,000 again next year. Donna said her understanding is that the funds will be used to renovate a building in Kittery to house social service agencies. She noted the other items under Article 22 are standard requests. Jeff asked about presenting the items for Footprints and Mainspring as a separate article; Donna said that the Town Manager's response was that he would bring that request to the Select Board, and they do not meet until Thursday night.

Jean suggested the Committee table Article 22. Diane said if the Committee agrees with the amount, why should they table it. Donna said she thought if the Committee votes for the full amount, they may not consider the Committee's request for a separate article. She did not have an issue with the amount requested, with lumping such a significant amount in under one article. Jeff asked if voters would see the breakout and if the amounts would be broken out whether they are lumped together or in a separate article. Donna said what she sees as a possible issue was that voters have in the past voted for the lowest number and may do that again here. Jeff said that with all the numbers lumped together, the voters may not vote for funding of any of the agencies. Donna said one of the choices would be the \$11,600 so those other agencies would be funded.

Gene said, "I think trying to game the system is fraught with risks too." Donna said she was not trying to game the system. Reggie said he agreed with Gene that it is inappropriate to try to game the system by tucking these items in an area. Gene said that he means gaming in terms of anticipating that the voters are going to do this if it's formatted that way and that kind of thing makes him very nervous. Donna said she is not trying to game the system but that she is citing data. She added that taxpayers are clear that they do not want their taxes going up and pointed to how the taxpayers voted last year in that the lowest amount prevailed in all but two articles.

Gene said, "And I venture that that is because they were confused." Donna asked what data Gene had to back that up; he cited people talking to him as they walked into the election booth. Donna said she had a lot of people talking to her and saying they did not want their taxes going up so they would vote for the lowest amount. Gene asked if Donna had people talking to her for ten hours. Donna said she had a lot of people talking to her.

Jean spoke to moving forward in the process and said that the Budget Committee will make its recommendations and then the Select Board can change its mind and come up with a different recommendation. Donna said that the Select Board is going to vote for the budget full on as presented by the Town Manager. Jean said the Select Board has not signed it and the 10th of March is Friday and the 9th of March is tomorrow. Donna said the Select Board meets tomorrow and that the Budget Committee needs to have numbers on all the articles for them tomorrow night.

Jeff asked if the issue can be discussed at the Citizens Option Meeting with a presentation from Emily and Megan at the meeting. Donna said people usually do not show up at the Citizens Option Meeting unless they have a pet cause. Jeff pointed out that it is also a zoom meeting.

Jeff said he did not know if it was best to separate the items out or not. Reggie spoke to the reasoning behind separating the items out to help voters better understand and see what they are voting for. He was concerned that while voters may be familiar with Footprints, they may not have heard of Mainspring. Jeff asked Reggie what he think they should do; Reggie said he thinks it should be a separate line item and tell the public what they are voting for rather than throwing it in a bucket and hoping no one notices. Jeff said he did not know if they hoped no one would notice but agreed putting the items in a separate article allows for PR for the organizations and might work out better for them. Reggie agreed. Jeff said he thought the items should be in separate articles.

Jean said Mainspring is on the agenda for tomorrow's Select Board meeting. She added that Mainspring had originally asked for a gift from the Town of Eliot for \$100,000. Donna said Mainspring is asking for that over two years.

Jeff asked how the Committee should act on this. Reggie pointed out that the Committee is at an impasse as the Committee has asked the Town Manager and the Select Board to consider separating the items out so if the Budget Committee votes on it, they are going back to the Town Manager and Select Board are not going to change anything. Jeff suggested the Committee table Article 22. Donna said the other option for the Committee is to call an emergency meeting before the Select Board meeting tomorrow night where all Budget Committee members would have to be present, they would receive the information requested on the tabled articles, and then break out in a separate meeting and vote on the tabled articles. Donna noted that the Select Board has a timeline they must meet and have the numbers so Wendy can get the information out for the Citizens Option Meeting.

Jeff asked if the Committee tabled the article and asked the Select Board about the presentation and not the money, why couldn't the Select Board clear it up quickly. Donna said all the Budget Committee members would have to be present to vote on it again. Donna added that the Committee was out of time.

Members briefly commented on the process this year in reviewing and working on the budget. Jean said she felt used by the Town Manager and that he knew exactly what he did. Reggie said whether the Town Manager did or did not know, the Committee still has the same problem. Reggie added that he had said at the beginning of the process in January, that the Committee was going to slowly trudge along because the Town Manager was not going to answer the questions and the Committee was going to run out of time, and that that is exactly what the Town Manager did.

Jeff said he thought tabling or denying the article might get a lot of action quickly. Donna said if the Committee removes Footprints and Mainspring, she cannot think of anything that prevents the Committee from adding two articles and voting on it that night. Jeff asked about the process for adding an article.

Donna made a motion for Article 22, Social Services Agencies, that the Committee approve the amount of \$14,615. She said that removes \$50,000 for Mainspring and \$12,000 for Footprints from the article with the intent of putting them in a separate article. Reggie seconded the motion. The Chair asked for further discussion. Jeff asked if the motion could be amended to say that if the

Committee's new article is not approved that the Committee then approves the article in its original format. Donna said what the Committee could do is ask Wendy to schedule an emergency meeting for the next evening and the Committee could take a vote as needed. Diane was not sure she could be in attendance, and Donna said the Committee only needed a quorum.

Jean said that according to the Charter, the Committee could do this. She read under Section 6.3, under Budget Committee as follows: "There shall be a Budget Committee of seven members (blah, blah, blah). The Budget Committee shall have the responsibility of reviewing and evaluating the Town Budget. This Committee shall function as a sub-committee of, and report back to, the legislative body. The Budget Committee shall act independently from the Select Board and the Town Manager. The Budget Committee shall by majority vote of the committee members present and voting, make recommendations regarding and included in each warrant article having a financial impact whether at the Annual Meeting or at a Special Town Meeting."

Jean pointed out that the Charter says make recommendations regarding and including each warrant article and that it does not say the Committee has to follow. Donna agreed and said that is what the Committee is doing, and she has made a motion to approve the article for \$14,615 that removes Mainspring and Footprints from the article and then the Committee will make a separate motion to put them in separate articles and the Select Board can choose whether or not to adopt that.

Jeff asked about the Town of Eliot, Town Meeting ordinance, Section 4, Appropriate Articles for Referendum Ballot, wouldn't that have to include a line item that says Mainspring. Donna answered no because what Jeff is looking at has to go on at a minimum.

Donna asked if there was any further discussion on the motion. Jean said she just wants it to be recorded that the Committee has looked at the Charter and the other document that Jeff was looking at, and that there is nothing prohibiting the Budget Committee from adding an article to the warrant.

The Chair asked for further discussion. There was none. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 5-1.

Article 22, Social Services Agencies, for \$14,615 votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
yes	yes	yes	Yes	absent	yes	no

Article 23, Fixed Assessments

The Chair said she was going to do the next two articles and then move back to Mainspring to keep things in order. She said Article 23 is for Fixed Assessments and the Select Board is recommending \$515,000. The Chair opened the floor to discussion. Jeff asked what the article was about as it is county tax. Donna explained the county government for which the county tax pays and includes the county manager, county commissioners, budget committee and other roles. Jeff noted it has been \$515,000 for a number of years. Donna said she believes Eliot is still District 5 and picks up 33% of the county costs which include jails, transportation to the jails, salaries, and that sort of thing.

Donna motioned and Reggie seconded that Article 23, Fixed Assessments, be approved for \$515,000. The Chair asked if there was further discussion. There was none. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0.

Article 23, Fixed Assessments votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
yes	Yes	yes	yes	absent	yes	yes

Article 24, Debt Services

The Chair directed members to Article 24, Debt Services, stating that the Select Board recommends the amount of \$592,271. She noted that the request compared to last year's amount represents quite a difference. Jean asked what the principal amount was for. Donna read out the breakdown but realized it did not match up with the Town Manager's budget. She looked at the new budget the Town Manager had sent the Committee last week. She noted that leases went up but there was no explanation as to why.

Jeff asked what details the Committee had on the \$592,271, and Donna answered the loans that were taken out. Members looked through paperwork for information. Jean said that looking through last year's book, there is nothing is no number for principal, interest, or loan servicing fees. She said what is listed is police bond, sewer bond, LED streetlight bond, Town Hall heating/cooling bond. Diane asked if how the Debt Services is being reported is the result of the audit. Jean said she had no information on that, she added that she read and went through the audit. Jean asked what is the principal and what did the Town take a loan out for.

Jeff read aloud what the Town Manager wrote in his revised budget summary, "We will also include a lease line item (which I think must be a new line item) as these types of longer-term contractual arrangements possess some contextual and accounting similarities with debt. We will also be splitting the annual borrowing commitment, the interest, the principal and any fees associated with our borrowing cost. Presently we only have two bonds 'Town Hall/LED' and 'Sewer.' While the debt will be presented as a lump sum of interest principal and fees, we are happy to provide an accounting of each bond, years left, total amount of principal, total amount of interest, restrictions, balance of proceeds, etc."

Jeff said these are standard agreements that have long lives and he imagines the numbers are in a schedule that the Town Manager has but the Budget Committee does not have. Gene said, "So, that's not it," and Jeff answered he thought it was a piece of it. Members reviewed pages and discussed among themselves.

Jeff said the Town Manager mentions in his summary that he does have a schedule he can provide to people and as the amount is \$592,271, Jeff would like to see that schedule. Members agreed but said it was another item that wanted to see. Jean said she was concerned property taxes are going to go up this year and the Budget Committee cannot justify it. Jeff asked if there is a change in presentation to Article 24, Debt Services from last year. Reggie answered yes and looked at last year's Debt Services.

Members continued reviewing pages and comparing documents and numbers from last year to this year. Donna said people's property taxes went up on the re-evaluation. Gene said the majority of

people's taxes went down as a result. Reggie said he did not think they were talking about the same thing. Gene asked if it was about property taxes this year. Reggie said it was about the assessment of the properties because the assessments went up, the taxes went up. Donna said she is talking about the re-evaluation. Reggie said the property values went up. Gene said the total assessed values went up but the actual taxes went down because the tax rate went down. Reggie said so, the tax rate can go down but the revenues can go up. Gene said yes. Reggie said, okay then we agree. Jeff said that's a good thing, and Reggie agreed it was a good thing.

Jeff said the big change is that the principal payments have gone up from \$95,000 to \$290,000. He said it's about \$200,000 and that he does not know why and would like to see that detail. Donna said if she takes the number for the '23 budget and removes the property taxes, I get last year's revenues. She noted that last year's revenues were higher than this year's projected revenues. Jeff said revenues are going up 3.4% in this budget but he did not know what the total expense increase is. Donna asked for last year's number for Reserve Accounts, which was \$190,000. Donna looked at the Town Manager's numbers for this year and what was approved for last year. She noted that the numbers are so different from last year because of their being moved into different categories. She said the Committee is looking at an increase of \$881,000 in spending. Donna added that they are looking at a decrease in Revenues as the Town Manager has removed property taxes. Donna said she was looking at these figures as Jean was concerned about property taxes increasing. She added that the Committee could look at increases in Expenses as well.

Jeff asked for the spreadsheet from last year. Jean had the spreadsheet and said it looks nothing like this year and last year it was \$115,270. She added there was no principal, no interest, no loan servicing fees, and no leases. Donna pointed out that the Town now has new debt with the TIF. Jean asked if that came out of the TIF where the Town has millions in there. Donna said if they look under Revenues, there may be something offsetting. Donna said she also had a concern about an amount under one of the tabled articles. Jean said she cannot vote for this until the Committee has an understanding as to where the money is going. She asked why they were paying for loan servicing fees; Donna answered that that was for loans the Town approved for the TIF. Jeff said he did not think this was new but existing. Jean pointed out that it did not appear in last year's budget. Donna asked if Jean meant the Debt Services. Jean said she did and that Debt Services were included in last year's budget but did not include these items. Reggie said last year they had the bonds, the Police bond and the Sewer bond. Jeff said it still comes down to the Budget Committee needing more information.

The Chair asked members what they wanted to do about Article 24, Debt Services, and shared her concern about having to table articles. She added that the Committee did not have the information to vote on the article. Jean suggested going with last year's number, and let the Town Manager and Select Board scream but they did not give us information needed. Jean added she cannot vote in good conscience for an article she does not know what it is. She said the Committee has been voting without enough information and she has a bad feeling about it. Jean said, "Property taxes in this town are going to go up significantly because we're flying in the blind. And my experience is when you fly in the blind, you crash and burn."

Jeff said the Committee did not know the answer to Jean's concern but what they do know is they need critical information on the larger items. He added that if the Committee tables these items, they will get a response pretty quickly as the process cannot move forward when there is that big of

a disconnect between the parties. Donna suggested the Committee revisit Debt Services in its emergency meeting prior to the Select Board meeting the following night.

Jean said history has shown that the Town Manager is not forthcoming with information and the Committee keeps hoping he will step up and provide the Committee with the information. She added that she believes the goal is to get rid of the Budget Committee. Gene laughed.

Reggie said the Committee has four articles where they are at an impasse: Public Works, Capital Improvements, Reserve Accounts, and Debt Services. Jean pointed out that the amount of money in the articles is a significant amount. Members moved on to voting on separate articles for Mainspring and Footprints from their earlier discussion on Article 22, Social Service Agencies.

There was no vote on Article 24, Debt Services as the Committee planned to meet the following night prior to the Select Board meeting to obtain full information that answered the Committee's questions and then vote on Article 24 and present its recommendation to the Select Board at its meeting.

Article 22, Social Service Agencies – Footprints and Mainspring

Donna moved and Jeff seconded that to approve Footprints for \$12,000 under a separate article. The Chair opened the floor to further discussion. There was none. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0.

Motion to move Footprints to separate article votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
yes	yes	yes	Yes	absent	yes	yes

Donna moved and Jeff seconded that the Committee approve \$50,000 for Mainspring under a separate article. The Chair opened the floor to further discussion. There was none. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0.

Motion to move Mainspring to separate article votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
yes	yes	yes	Yes	absent	yes	yes

The Chair spoke about plans for an emergency meeting the following night prior to the Select Board meeting. Members discussed specifics about meeting the following night. Donn said she would speak with the Town Clerk about scheduling and that they could ask the Town Manager to attend to provide the Committee with missing information. Donna added that history has shown that when the Budget Committee has received the information, they have supported it.

The Chair spoke about the email she will send to the Town Manager, in which she will request information on the four tabled articles. She added she will invite the Town Manager to join them at 4:45pm tomorrow and she will work with the Town Clerk to secure the meeting room space. Diane said she would be travelling the next day but will try to attend via zoom on her phone.

The Chair asked for specific information and questions the members wanted answered from the Town Manager. Reggie said specifically, how many miles is the Town paving and cost per mile.

Donna added specifics on the CIP and sewer reserve. She noted that the whole town is being assessed on the sewer when only the sewer users should be. She added she would be asking for specifics on the Reserve Accounts and Debt Services. Jeff said he would like to see the most recent schedules or statements for each item under Debt Services.

4. Budget Committee member reports/comment

The Chair asked each member if they had anything. No one did.

5. Adjournment

Reggie motioned and Gene seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:44pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Murphy, Chair

Date Approved: April 12, 2023

Jean Hardy, Secretary