

**Town of Eliot  
Budget Committee Meeting  
Thursday, March 15, 2023**

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**1. Call to Order**

Chair Donna Murphy called the meeting to order at 5:30pm. In attendance in person were Reggie Fowler, Denny Lentz, Donna Murphy, and Gene Wypyski, and in attendance remotely was Diane Holt. Jean Hardy was absent. Jeff Leathe was absent as he was traveling and the link to the remote access was not working. Ann Lukejord, recording secretary, was in attendance. There were no members of the public in attendance.

**2. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**3. Approval of the Minutes**

Donna moved and Gene seconded to table the minutes for the March 8, 2023, meeting to the next meeting. The motion passed with a roll call vote of 5-0.

**4. Budget Review**

The Chair opened the discussion on Articles #10, 18, 19, and 24 which the Budget Committee had tabled voting on as members needed more information.

**Article 10, Department of Public Works**

The Budget Committee received the listing of roads and estimated amount for each road and information that if funds allowed the back of the Police and Fire stations would also be paved. The Chair said that there was a note included that stated that Steve Robinson, the Eliot DPW Director who recently passed away, had negotiated with Libby Scott to keep the prices for paving supplies the same they were for the previous year, saving the Town significant funds. Gene asked if the Town Manager had gotten back to the Chair concerning the \$240,000 difference in funds that the Town Manager is requesting. Donna said yes and that she had just addressed what that amount would be used for. Diane said the Town Manager did get back to the Committee and that he wanted to do the courts, so she is in favor of moving on and approving the \$1 million for Public Works paving.

Donna moved and Reggie seconded that the Budget Committee approve the requested amount which was inclusive of the paving budget for the amount of \$1,845,591 for the Department of Public Works. The motion passed with a roll call vote of 5-0.

Article 10, Department of Public Works, votes by Budget Committee members						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	Absent	Yes	Absent	Yes	Yes	Yes

**Article 18, Capital Improvements**

The Chair said there was minimal paperwork provided to the Committee. She noted that the next two articles (#18 and #19) do not raise money through taxes but is a proposal to move \$1.6 million from the undesignated account balance to put into the Capital Improvements and Reserve accounts.

She added there are no specifics as to why these funds are needed. Donna added that the Town Manager did mention at a meeting that this would free up \$400,000 for a pickleball court. Donna asked if there is already \$400,000 in the account, why is the Town allocating more funds there. Donna said the Committee does not have specifics on that yet. Reggie added that there is no extra taxpayer money. Donna reiterated that the funds are not through raising taxes but from the undesignated account balance and said that the question could be put on the ballot in November. She added that the Committee needs more information on this. Denny asked if the Select Board approved this, and Donna said the Select Board did and that the Select Board approved everything the Town Manager proposed with the exception of the Library.

Diane noted that the audio was breaking up. Donna said the audio connection was faint when they were trying to hear Diane remotely. The members adjusted the OWL and checked the laptop connection. Diane said the audio was better. The OWL video was up as well.

The meeting continued with discussion of Article 18, Capital Improvements. Donna said the Committee does not have complete information, the only information is a note that the auditors suggested moving the funds. Reggie asked if this was something the Town did every few years. Donna said she has never seen money taken out over the 10-15 years she has been going to Budget Committee meetings. She added that this is too much money for the Committee to approve without details. Gene directed members to the proposal from the Town Manager where the Town Manager goes through the rationale for why moving the funds is necessary. Gene said the funds were mis-accounted for over the years and the Town Manager is working to right the accounts. Donna said that was interesting as a few years ago, they went through all the accounts and straightened them out with the auditors and it wasn't an issue. She added that the Committee is missing information and that they are not saying the information is incorrect, there just isn't the information to verify it. Gene asked what information was missing. Donna responded that what is missing is the details of where the \$400,000 is coming from that they are going to allocate elsewhere. Gene asked again if that information was not on the page where the Town Manager goes through the current accounts. Donna said all members had received the information and read it. She asked members if they had received the information and read it. They had. Members looked through documents individually.

Donna said she cannot support something with the little information provided and proposed that the Committee not support this article, that the Committee receive more information, and that the article go on the November ballot. Reggie asked if an auditor makes a suggestion like this, does the auditor need to give an explanation. Donna said the auditor should, Reggie asked if they could see that. He added that this might be a great idea to move the funds but that there are too many changes that do not look familiar at all to the way the Town has been doing the budget for years. He added that the Committee needs an explanation for this. Donna read from the notes that the proposed moving of funds would free up nearly half a million dollars already raised from previous taxes to be available for expenditure. Reggie asked what does that mean to "free up." Gene said it means they are no longer a part of a specific reserve. Members questioned why funds are going to the undesignated funds and reserve accounts. Donna reiterated that the best solution may be for this to go to the November ballot where there can be more information on this. Members reviewed documents individually.

At this point in the meeting, approximately 5:15pm, the remote access stopped working. Diane was on the video but the connection to the meeting room was disconnected. Diane called the Chair on her phone. Diane turned off her laptop and her remote connection at approximately 5:17pm. The live feed and video recording of the meeting ended at this time. The recording secretary used her audio recording and notes taken during the meeting to continue the minutes.

Denny asked what the Select Board's recommendation for Article 18 was. Donna said the Select Board supported everything, there was very little questioning, and that it was clear from comments made that they were not looking at the article with much depth.

Donna worked on the laptop to regain connection with Diane and the public. There was no connection with the Town internet. A member of the local Dems committee entered the meeting thinking her group had reserved the room. Connection to the internet could not be restored. The Chair noted that the meeting was still being recorded in the form of the minutes.

The Chair continued the meeting with Article 18 under discussion. Denny asked what the difference was in the dollar figure for the amount requested for Article 18, Donna answered that the request is for \$1.4 million but she is suggesting the Budget Committee table the article until they receive more information and look at it for the November ballot. Denny asked if they were talking about \$50,000 or \$100,000. Donna answered they were looking at \$1.47 million in this article. Gene interrupted, saying that the information the Committee is looking for is on the page provided by the Town Manager. Donna asked Gene not to interrupt. She said between the two articles they are looking at a little over \$1.6 million. Denny said he understood what Donna was saying and that the Committee would just not approve the \$1.4 million. Donna said that would be her proposal that the Committee not approve it now and that the voters would decide as there would be two choices on the ballot; zero from the Budget Committee or the \$1.47 million from the Select Board. She added the Budget Committee is saying let's hold off on this until we get more information.

Denny asked what the Committee was challenging in the \$1.47 million. Reggie read from the article that reads "to see what sum the Town will vote to move" or transfer. Denny asked if it meant to raise the appropriate funds for assistance. Donna said no, it is not to raise funds, it is to transfer existing funds, and will not affect anyone's taxes as it is coming out of the undesignated fund balance. She added this was money already put there by taxpayers in previous years. Reggie re-read the wording in the article and said the Committee does not just want to see what amount people would vote for but to give them a reason as to why they should vote to transfer the funds. Gene said the explanation and reasoning is all right within the document from the Town Manager that he had been showing the members. Donna said the information was not there.

Gene directed Donna to the third page and the \$1.637 million listed there. He said, it shows in the Fiscal Year '22 column where this money was, he corrected himself and pointed to the \$2.1 million and said those funds were redistributed to the column on the right and when they do that they will free up \$468,000 that was incorrectly put in the Reserve Accounts. He added that the \$468,000 will go back to the undesignated fund and can be used for anything that the Select Board decides to use it for. Donna asked then why would you put \$400,000 plus back into the designated fund and turn around and pull more out here? She added that the funds are not being put back; they are leaving it

there to use it. Gene said, yes, to anything we want, and the Town Manager is suggesting a pickleball court. He added that to Donna's question of where are the funds coming from, he said they are coming from the existing accounting for these Reserve Accounts which is incorrect and that is why he is trying to move it to the correct accounts per state law, and so it's a semantics, it's an accounting thing, there's no money moving literally.

Donna said then why don't we remove the \$400,000-plus from this and just leave that money in here so he can remove less out. Gene said from what he can read that the Town Manager provided, the answer is because the auditor said it was wrong. Gene quoted from the document about not complying with the State of Maine statutes. Donna asked Gene if he was satisfied with the explanation that now that money has been moved around to take \$400,000 out of the undesignated funds account for a pickleball court and then take more money out of the undesignated fund balance to stick in here. Donna suggested the Town leave the \$400,000 in there and then they are only looking for \$1 million. She added that there is not enough information in the Committee's packet on this item and that the Reserve Accounts have been looked at over the years and there has not been a problem. Donna asked Gene where the problem came from, and Gene replied that he did not know, and Donna should ask the auditor. Gene added that he was at the presentation the auditor gave to the Select Board several months ago. Donna asked Gene again if he was comfortable with these numbers, could he explain how the auditors came up with these numbers as that is what the Budget Committee needs to understand. Donna asked Gene to share that information, and he responded that he cannot as he is not a financial person. He added that listened to the auditors' explanation and that the gist of it was that the Town was out of compliance and had been for years. The Chair asked other members for comment, and they had none.

Donna moved and Reggie seconded that the Budget Committee fund Article 18, Capital Improvements at zero with the recommendation that the Budget Committee receive more information either written or in a presentation by the Town Manager and that once that information is received the article be placed on the November ballot. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 4-1 if Diane's vote is allowed via the phone, and passed by a roll call of 3-1 if Diane's vote is not allowed via the phone.

Article 18, Capital Improvements, votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	absent	Yes, via phone	Absent	Yes	yes	no

### **Article 19, Reserve Accounts**

Donna said Article 19 presents the same situation as Article 18 did. Donna said the Committee did not have enough information to discuss the article last week and still does not have the information this week. Donna directed members to page 12. Gene said the last one, page 12. Reggie asked Gene to clarify that the auditors said the Town was out of compliance with Article 18, and Gene said yes. Gene said Administrative fees were on the last page. Denny pointed out the public impact safety fees. Donna said there is \$119,000 for sick leave reserve, contingency reserve at \$115,000, and it looks like the Town Manager is suggesting that \$120,000 be added. Donna said the contingency reserve had been used by the former Police Chief when he went over budget but that was not the correct use of it. The appropriate use for the emergency funds, she explained, was where there are no funds and a full vote by the Select Board voting 100% in favor where if one member said no, the

funds would not be approved. She added that the amount is usually \$70,000 or \$80,000 in that account. She said as it is presented in the budget they are reviewing, there is \$115,000 in it and the Town is suggesting they add \$120,000.

Gene said the \$120,000 represents sick leave and health. Donna said not if you look at the line items. Gene read from the Town Manager's note that said he was consolidating items. Donna said the contingency fund is different from sick leave. Members reviewed these accounts and discussed. Donna said they did not have enough information about the accounts. Donna said consolidating money removes transparency. Diane said she agreed that she does not see what the Town Manager is intending here and that the amounts represented too much of a jump from past budgets. Diane asked if the Committee was going to approach Article 19 as they did Article 18. Donna said yes as the Town is looking to transfer money and not raise taxes.

Reggie moved and Donna seconded that the Budget Committee vote to recommend zero on Article 19 until they receive further information, The Chair opened the floor to further discussion. There was none. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 4-1 if Diane's vote is allowed via the phone, and passed by a roll call of 3-1 if Diane's vote is not allowed via the phone.

Article 19, Reserve Accounts, votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	absent	Yes, via phone	Absent	Yes	yes	No

## Article 22, Social Service Agencies

Donna said the Committee needs to go back to Article 22. Donna pointed out that any member who voted in the negative on the initial vote could not make a motion on reconsidering that vote. Gene had voted no on the initial vote. Donna moved and Reggie second that the Committee reconsider its vote and the Committee now needs to include Footprints Food Pantry and Mainspring within that article. The Chair opened the floor to further discussion. Reggie asked to clarify that this vote is to add the \$12,000 for Footprints and the \$50,000 for Mainspring back to the Committee's recommendation as those two requests cannot be separated out in their own articles. Donna said that is correct. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 5-0 if Diane's vote is allowed via the phone and passed by a roll call of 4-0 if Diane's vote is not allowed via the phone.

Reconsider Article 22, Social Service Agencies. votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	absent	Yes	Absent	yes	yes	Yes

Donna introduced for discussion Eastern Trail Management which the Town Manager recently added under Article 22, Social Service Agencies. She provided a brief summary of the project which goes back to 2009 and said there is no information of any work scheduled in Eliot. She said her understanding is that work on the trail for hiking and biking is now in South Berwick. Donna said the Committee was also being asked to support York County Shelter under Article 22 and that she did not have time to look at the York County Shelter budget. Members reviewed and discussed Article 22 items and options for voters. Donna said that the Committee is now voting for Article 22 with Footprints and Mainspring included, and that if Eastern Trail Management is added the total amount

for Article 22 would be \$80,115, and if Eastern Trail Management is not added the total amount would \$76,615.

Donna moved and Denny seconded that the Budget Committee approve funding of Article 22 for \$76,615. There was no further discussion. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 5-0 if Diane's vote is allowed via the phone and passed by a roll call of 4-0 if Diane's vote is not allowed via the phone.

Reconsider Article 22, Social Service Agencies. votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	absent	Yes	Absent	yes	yes	Yes

#### **Article 24, Debt Services**

Donna said the article had been tabled as Jeff requested more information, but the Committee did not receive any more information. Denny asked what made the \$30,000 difference between the two requests: one for \$592,271 under Debt Services and a changed request for \$565,271. Members reviewed their notes and documents. Donna said the difference is the leases, and Denny was fine with that. Reggie asked if the Committee was now voting on \$592,271, and Donna said yes and it can be found on the March 2 budget.

Gene motioned and Denny seconded that the Committee approve Article 24 in the amount of \$592,271. There was no further discussion.

Reconsider Article 22, Social Service Agencies, votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	absent	Yes	Absent	Yes	yes	Yes

The motion passed by a roll call vote of 5-0 if Diane's vote is allowed via the phone and passed by a roll call of 4-0 if Diane's vote is not allowed via the phone.

#### **Article 22, Social Services Agencies**

For the purpose of the record, the Chair directed members to vote on past motions that were no longer relevant given the Select Board's votes. Donna said she would make motions for the Committee to reconsider those original votes to create separate articles for Mainspring and Footprints Food Pantry and to vote to zero those amounts.

Donna made a motion and Denny seconded that the Committee reconsider its recommendation that Mainspring be funded under a separate article for \$50,000 due to it now being included under Social Services Agencies. There was no further discussion.

Reconsider Mainspring as a separate article, votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	absent	Yes	Absent	yes	yes	Yes

The motion passed by a roll call vote of 5-0 if Diane's vote is allowed via the phone and passed by a roll call of 4-0 if Diane's vote is not allowed via the phone.

Donna motioned and Denny seconded that the Committee vote to fund Mainspring at zero as a separate article as it now is recommended for \$12,000 under the Social Services Agencies article. There was no further discussion.

Reconsider Article 22, Social Service Agencies. votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	Absent	Yes	Absent	yes	yes	Yes

The motion passed by a roll call vote of 5-0 if Diane's vote is allowed via the phone and passed by a roll call of 4-0 if Diane's vote is not allowed via the phone.

Donna made a motion and Reggie seconded that the Committee reconsider its recommendation that Footprints Food Pantry be funded under a separate article at \$12,000 due to it now being included under Social Services Agencies. There was no further discussion.

Reconsider Footprints Food Pantry as a separate article, votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	Absent	Yes	Absent	yes	yes	Yes

The motion passed by a roll call vote of 5-0 if Diane's vote is allowed via the phone and passed by a roll call of 4-0 if Diane's vote is not allowed via the phone.

Donna motioned and Reggie seconded that the Committee fund Footprints Food Pantry at zero as a separate article as it now has been recommended for \$12,000 under the Social Services Agencies article. There was no further discussion.

Reconsider Article 22, Social Service Agencies. votes by Budget Committee member						
Reggie Fowler	Jean Hardy	Diane Holt	Jeff Leathe	Denny Lentz	Donna Murphy	Gene Wypyski
Yes	Absent	Yes	Absent	yes	yes	Yes

The motion passed by a roll call vote of 5-0 if Diane's vote is allowed via the phone and passed by a roll call of 4-0 if Diane's vote is not allowed via the phone.

Donna reviewed articles and votes with the recording secretary for accuracy and to share with the Town Manager. She noted that Article 20 has the Committee's wrong amount listed. She noted that Article 24, Social Services Agencies, now included Mainspring and Footprints and does not include Eastern Trail Management.

#### **4. Budget Committee member reports/comment**

The Chair asked each member if they had anything. No one did. Donna shared that she had the sympathy card for members to sign to send to the family of Steve Robinson.

#### **5. Adjournment**

Reggie motioned and Gene seconded that the meeting adjourn. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 5-0, if Diane's vote via the phone is included, and by a vote of 4-0 if Diane's vote cannot be included. The meeting adjourned at 6:31pm.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Donna Murphy, Chair**

**Date Approved: April 12, 2023**

**Jean Hardy, Secretary**