

**Town of Eliot  
Budget Committee Meeting  
Wednesday, June 14, 2023**

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**1. Call to Order**

Chair Donna Murphy called the meeting to order at 5:00pm and welcomed the new members, Jim Latter and Brad Swanson. This is the first Budget Committee meeting of the 2023-2024 fiscal year and following the election of two new members by the Town on June 13, 2023. In attendance in person were Reggie Fowler, Diane Holt, Jim Latter, Jeff Leathe, Donna Murphy, Brad Swanson, and Gene Wypyski. Ann Lukegard, recording secretary, attended in person. Bill Widi was in attendance as a member of the public.

**2. Welcome New Members**

Chair Murphy welcomed Jim Latter and Brad Swanson as newly elected members to the Committee. She noted that both members had been sworn in by the Town Clerk. Members joined her in welcoming them and went around the room to introduce themselves as did the new members.

**3. Election of Officers**

Chair Murphy opened the floor to the purpose of nominating and electing officers. Jim said he had heard that past elections were done by secret ballot, and he asked the clerk for an opinion. Jim read the opinion from the Maine Municipal Association (MMA) that says, "Secret ballot is not a permissible method of voting in any meeting that is required by Maine's Freedom of Access Act." He asked that it be an open election. Donna agreed and said in the past secret ballot was done as directed by the Town Clerk. She agreed that election of officers would not be by secret ballot. Others commented briefly.

Jeff Leathe was nominated by Donna, seconded by Reggie to serve as chair. Gene Wypyski was nominated by Brad, seconded by Jim to serve as chair. Members elected Jeff to be chair by a vote of 6-1. Jim moved and Donna seconded that the Committee reconsider its vote to unanimously elect its chair. The motion passed by a vote of 7-0. Jim moved and Donna seconded that members reconsider their votes for chair, members elected Jeff Leathe as chair by a roll call vote of 7-0. Members congratulated Jeff as Donna handed him the key.

Jeff continued the meeting as Chair and asked for nominations for vice chair. Gene Wypyski was nominated by Jim, seconded by Brad to serve as vice chair. Reggie Fowler was nominated by Donna, seconded by Diane to serve as vice chair. Members elected Reggie to be chair by a roll call vote of 4-3. Jim noted that as he was not in the majority of voting he could not move to reconsider the vote and recommend voting unanimously to elect the vice chair. As such, Donna moved, and Brad seconded that the Committee reconsider its vote to unanimously elect its vice chair. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 7-0. Donna moved and Jim seconded that members elect Reggie vice chair, members elected Reggie Fowler as vice chair by a roll call vote of 7-0.

Diane Holt was nominated by Reggie, seconded by Donna to serve as secretary. Diane was elected secretary by a roll call vote of 7-0.

In summation, the Budget Committee elected Jeff Leathe to be chair; Reggie Fowler to be vice chair; and Diane Holt to be secretary.

#### **4. Election of a representative for union contract negotiations.**

Chair Leathe opened nominations for a Budget Committee representative for union contract negotiations. Gene suggested delaying the election as there are no contracts to be negotiated by the Town this fiscal year. Donna said it was still important that the Committee elect a member to the post and that this first meeting of the new fiscal year is the time to do so. Jim stated that the Budget Committee member role in union contract negotiations is an advisory one and that that member does not have a vote. Donna disagreed stating that the Budget Committee member is a full member of the negotiating team. Jim said his reading of the Charter says that is not the case, but he agrees that it is important that the Committee has a representative. Jim said that the Select Board's approval of a tentative agreement is a binding vote.

Jim Latter was nominated by Brad, seconded by Reggie to serve as the Budget Committee representative for union contract negotiations. Donna nominated Reggie but Reggie did not accept the nomination citing that he was not familiar with the process. Jim spoke about his experience as a negotiator in Beverly MA. The floor was open to discussion. Gene pointed out that there were no negotiations scheduled for the coming year. Donna said that this is the appropriate meeting in which to elect someone as representative in case anything might come up. Diane agreed. Jim said that his understanding in his reading of the Charter that a Budget Committee representative to that committee would be advisory and not have a vote. Donna disagreed, saying that the final vote comes before a public meeting at the Select Board meeting, and they have the final vote. Jim said his reading of the Charter is that the Select Board votes on any tentative agreement, and Donna responded, "Correct but you are part of the negotiating committee." Jeff said, "The advisory role is the role we would want to play." Jim was elected to the post by a roll call vote of 7-0.

#### **5. Public comment.**

Bill Widi commented as a member of the public that the Budget Committee and Select Board achieved 100% agreement this year and that the voting process was not contentious. He said he was attending the meeting as a show of good faith. There was no other public comment in person or on Zoom. The Chair closed the public comment.

#### **6. Approval of minutes.**

The Chair asked members for any edits or changes to the draft May 10, 2023, minutes. The recording secretary noted that the Committee's approved April minutes from three meetings had not been posted on the Town website and should she send a reminder to the Town Clerk, the Chair asked that she do so. There were no edits or changes to the draft May 10, 2023, minutes. Donna moved and Diane seconded that the minutes from the Committee's May 10, 2023, meeting be approved. The motion passed with a roll call vote of 5-0-2 with the two new members abstaining as they were not active members at the time of the meeting.

#### **7. Budget Committee by-laws.**

The Chair opened discussion to the Committee by-laws. He informed members that the Committee had had a short introduction to the Budget Committee bylaws through Gene's presentation at the last meeting, and that that will be an agenda topic at the next meeting. Jeff said he had a conversation with Wendy, the Town Clerk, about by-laws v. Charter v. mission statement v. policies and procedures statements and what was settled on was that the Committee should have a Charter

and by-laws but does not need a mission statement or policies and procedures statement. Further, he said, the Committee can incorporate within the bylaws procedural changes and process-oriented items, how the Committee wants to do certain things moving forward. He said it was a good solution, rather than creating a new document for policies and procedures. Jeff added that if everyone agrees with that, the Committee can move forward in that fashion and that it will take more than one meeting today and table it to the next meeting or have more discussion at this meeting and then at the next meeting. Gene said he did not go as far as Jeff is proposing but had made some simple changes. Gene handed out printed copies of his suggested edits which he had presented at the May meeting. Members agreed to discuss the suggested changes at the July meeting after members had time to look at the documents. Diane asked if Jeff had a list of proposed changes members could look at before the next meeting. Jeff said he had commentary to speak about these changes but that he did not specifically write down a list of proposed changes. Donna thought it would be helpful if the Chair's thoughts or anyone's thoughts were emailed ahead of time.

Gene asked Jeff what his big picture view is in terms of policies and procedures as chair of the Budget Committee. Jeff answered that his areas of concern included organizational and procedural aspects of how the Committee operates, particularly how members can work together moving forward. Jim said that many of the bylaws are defined in the Charter. He suggested taking the relevant portion of the Charter and maybe adding that to the bylaws. He said that they do not want to define a bylaw the same as a Charter because if something gets changed, the Charter takes precedence and that what is stated in the by-laws must adhere to what the Charter says. He suggested starting from the relevant part of the Charter. Jeff agreed and said the Committee ran into the issue this past year where the bylaw said one thing and the Charter another. Jim shared as an example how on a council he sat on one member could table an issue to the next meeting, calling it a nuclear option, and said it was written into the council's bylaws but not in the Charter. He added that that is the type of item that should be defined. Reggie asked Jim to clarify, and Jim did. He explained how tabling an item can be used but it must be used for administrative purposes and sparingly.

Diane asked Jeff if members should email any thoughts on the bylaws to him. Jeff answered that is fine or just bring those thoughts to the meeting for discussion. Brad asked if Jeff will be emailing members in advance with materials for the next meeting. Jeff said yes and that concerning communications, he wants to make sure all members have the same materials and information in front of them. Donna said that historically all communications have gone through the Committee Chair and then to the Town Manager and to the Chair and then to Committee members. She spoke about members going outside the Committee to get information. Jeff said he would like to keep materials and information in one shared space for members that could be maintained by Diane as the secretary or Ann as the recording secretary. Donna suggested being mindful of the work given to the recording secretary as that is a paid position. Brad suggested using Google docs or a cloud-based system. Gene said the Conservation Commission is using such a system for document sharing. Diane said a board she is on in Florida uses Google. Jim pointed out that members meeting or communicating online becomes a meeting. Donna said all communications should go through the Chair. Jeff said that last year deliberate conversations held by members outside Committee meetings were an issue and that there needs to be clarity on how members speak outside Committee meetings to Town officials and that when they do have such discussion, they need to report on having done so and share content of the conversation with all members. Jeff said he would like to put this in the by-laws. Reggie said the practice had been a distraction. Jeff added that

if each Committee member is speaking to Town staff members, department heads, the Town Manager or other board members, it can become annoying for the individuals being engaged, and members need to be mindful of that. Brad said a shared folder for notes from outside Committee interactions would be good to have. Jim mentioned something about a deep dive. Jeff added that members had gotten a little too busy internally. Bill Widi, a member of the public who is also on the Select Board, shared that he, as a Select Board member, cannot just go talk to the Police Chief but has to go through the Town Manager. Donna said that has been the standard with the Budget Committee and that such a request needs to go through the Budget Committee Chair.

Jeff spoke about the budget process moving forward. He said not having meetings with department heads hindered the process last year and that as part of the budgetary schedule this year he would like to schedule meetings with department heads. Jeff pointed out that direct communication with department heads will help the Committee get the answers they need and that the Committee through the Chair can then ask questions of the Town Manager if needed. He added that the Committee's biggest area of improvement would be having the right approach. Diane agreed, saying that meeting with department heads is very important as are meetings with the Select Board so everyone can work together. Jeff agreed. Brad said from his experience in Middleton MA, joint meetings are very helpful. Donna said historically the Committee has received the budget and then scheduled meetings with Select Board and department heads within the following months. Jeff said a dialogue is important and that he was pleased with the past cycle where the Budget Committee and Select Board agreed on every article and had good communications. Donna said that past meetings with department heads were extremely helpful. She added that it is okay for the Budget Committee members to disagree with the Select Board as long as they can explain why they voted as they did. She said she felt in some cases this past year her hand was being held to the fire and she voted as she did as she did not want to hinder Town operations. Reggie said there was a lot of stumbling over the past two years but that the Budget Committee did not fall down. He added that the Budget Committee needs to establish strong communications and rapport with the Town before going deep into its work scrutinizing the proposed budget. He said he liked Jeff's idea and that he thought last year's process was not bad with 90% of items sailing through and only difficulty with 10%. Jeff said over the next few months, the Committee will work on the process. Brad asked when the Committee would meet with department heads, and Jeff answered early on. Diane pointed out that it would be dependent on when the Town Manager requires the departments to have their budgets done. Donna said they had been done before Christmas but this year they came in in January.

Jeff reviewed in general the calendar ahead for the Committee. He said typically the Committee meets 20 to 25 times a year. He said this past year the Town Manager presented the budget to them on January 12 and that the Citizens' Option meeting was held on March 27. Donna pointed out that the Budget Committee had to have its recommendations submitted by the first week of March.

Jim referred to the budget handout and asked if it was a TRIO software report, Gene answered that TRIO was only used for monthly reports.

Jeff continued with scheduling and suggested for discussion an April 13 reconciliation meeting with the Select Board, giving them significant time prior to the June election date. Jim asked to return the conversation to meetings with department heads and said that there is no way the Committee can compel the Town Manager to allow department heads to meet with the Budget Committee. He agrees doing so is a good idea but how does the Committee move forward if it cannot. Jeff said it

states in the Budget Committee by-laws that the Committee can invite anyone they want to its meetings.

Jeff said, “Whenever you have an organization with \$20 million dollars running through its bank accounts like we do and have one person in the whole organization corralling all of that information through that mouthpiece, from an auditor’s perspective, you have to be professionally skeptical that everything is okay. So, I think it’s in Mike’s best interest, in the Town Manager’s best interest to share information and employees rather than putting himself in a situation where he controls everything. And if something ultimately blows up, if we have an embezzlement or we have \$5 million dollars we didn’t know we can now invest or something drastic happens, it’s his fault (interrupted)”

Jim turned to Bill Widi, a member of the public in attendance who is also a member of the Select Board, and asked if the Select Board has a position on that.

Bill Widi said, “Jeff you made a joke that the last thing you want is department heads coming in here and saying, ‘oh, I wished I never talked to that committee again.’ That is exactly what they said three years ago, every one of them. Now it is a different committee, different people, okay, Mike is going to protect our people, the Select Board feels the same. I’m just speaking for myself to be clear, I want to tell you, but I got a pretty good idea of the pulse of the Select Board, and they want to protect the people. So, if you have parameters that these department heads aren’t feeling like they are being attacked or have some, maybe have some written questions that they can come in and answer and then some follow-ups to those. I don’t think that’s going to be a difficult thing to do but if it’s just going to be the Wild West, I don’t see it happening.”

Jeff said, “That’s not how it’s going to be.”

Mr. Widi continued, saying, “That was one thing. Be careful what you say about what other towns do because all the towns around here say yes-or-no on budget voting. They don’t do the Budget Committee recommends the numbers like (unclear), every other town it’s either yes no. So, if we’re going to go down that route, I would be pushing to go yes no. I actually think that consolidates your no votes, which I think is actually a good thing for dissenting people. You wouldn’t have an issue like we had in the special town meeting. I’m just putting it out there, I’m not trying, you know, to be difficult about it. I would be in favor of a reconciliation meeting prior to the Citizens Option. (Unclear) It might help bring down some of that mudslinging at the Citizens Option and if we have to have another one after, fine. But if we schedule that reconciliation meeting prior to it, I think that would be more helpful, in my opinion.”

Donna said, “I take exception to what was just said. And I do recall years ago, when I first sat on this Budget Committee, there was a lot of disrespect, there was (unclear), and you can watch it on tape, and I said repeatedly that when we started having joint meetings, (unclear) that we would use that opportunity to clarify and not to be arguing those positions. You can watch for yourself the last three years that we were able to meet with them, was that conversation and I heard very differently from the department heads from what was just presented here, that they did appreciate the opportunity to be heard, And you can watch it on tape and see for yourself.”

Diane said it does not have to be adversarial and that no one on the Committee wants that but would rather work together. Diane stressed that achieving transparency and openness on both sides

would eliminate any adversity or nastiness or whatever anyone wants to call it. She added that the voters want everyone to work together, voters put everyone in this position so they would work together, and she feels they can do it.

Jim responded to Donna saying, “Be that as it may, there is nothing we can (pause) the department heads don’t report to us as an organization. They report to the Town Manager, they report to the Town Manager. We can’t compel that to happen. They may want to come here but there may be good reason for the Town Manager and his management style to not have them come here. There might be something going on, there might be a personnel issue, something he can’t share. He might decide he wants to, that the Town Manager may not want someone speaking to the Budget Committee if there is a personnel issue, there might be something he can’t share. He might decide he wants to present, let’s for the sake of argument say, we’ve developed a rapport with the Town Manager, he understands it’s in his best interest to bring the department heads forward to this Committee which I think in the long term it is. I really do. He might have a department head where there is a personnel issue or there’s something going on and he wants to come in and present that department of redundancy department budget. Well, why are you here now? Well, there’s something going on, I can present this budget. He’s just doing then en masse now. If we were talking to ten department heads in one budget season, one of the department heads came and said, yeah, Jane’s having an issue, there’s been an issue with George, whatever his excuse is, and he says I’m going to present this budget, well, okay. He’s just doing that across the board which makes it an uncomfortable situation. It wasn’t in the wrong, I’m just surmising what may have happened. The point I am getting to is that the way we get the department heads in here is to build the rapport with the Board of Selectmen and the Town Manager so that they don’t feel as if they have to protect their employees by presenting them forward to this board. Getting to that level of rapport is in everybody’s best interest whether it’s valid or not, Bill just said that there was a situation where the Town Manager and the Board of Selectmen felt that they did not want to bring forward department heads to this Committee because the department heads were not comfortable doing it. I don’t know how that happened but the fact that that situation exists is what we need to remedy to get to the next step.”

Donna responded saying, “I heard differently from department heads. Department heads talk, everybody talks, and you hear conflicting information. I am not suggesting we compel anybody. I’m not telling you to take my word for it, I’m saying if you’re really curious and want to look, there were joint meetings that were held with the previous Town Manager (unclear) and people were not attacked. (Unclear) I’m not saying take my word for it, I’m also not saying take anybody else’s word for it. See it with your own eyes and hear it and make your own determination.”

Diane said, “Some of the department heads I talked to said it was a new experience for them, so they felt uncomfortable doing it, which is common when you’re first doing it. But in the same realm, we got the immediate questions answered so we didn’t have to keep sending questions three or four times trying to get answers. Because either he didn’t understand what we were asking, or he didn’t have the knowledge in detail enough that the department heads would have had. You know, so it wasted everybody’s time, it did.”

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

Jeff moved the meeting on to the next agenda item. Donna, as the former Chair, explained to all members the purpose of this agenda item as to allow members the opportunity to share information.

Jeff took the opportunity to go through some items, those he had touched on and those he had not. These items included establishing control of the documents members receive and discuss in an orderly and organized fashion; being mindful as a member in discussions with town leaders and employees of one's role as a Committee member; utilizing a roundtable seating format Committee meeting as the Committee works as a discussion group and the floor is rarely occupied by the public; publicizing budget meetings with departments heads as those meetings may draw the interest of the public; and assigning the recording secretary with online, remote meetings responsibilities to allow Chair to act as Chair.

Jeff said, "The Budget Committee is unique, is a unique committee in terms of how the Town of Eliot is governed, and Bill talked a little bit about that. We're elected by the Legislative Body, the townspeople, to independently represent their financial decisions. And I think as part of that they fully expect us to understand the ramifications of financial decisions which you can't just get from one person who supposedly knows every single detail about a \$20 million budget which he has only been working with for a year or two. I do think we have a strong desire to make sure we do feel comfortable at the end of the day when we put our names on these budgets that we know what we are talking about. But, as Jim said and others have pointed out, we don't make policy, we don't have executive powers over the Town's employees, they don't report to us. They never will and they shouldn't. The only thing we can do as a Committee is make recommendations on all matters of finance that have an influence on the voting matters that come up. We're required to vote on any proposed articles which may have a financial impact, and I think in this last go-around this notion of should we authorize a \$4 million dollar project to move forward, which we are going to have to spend money on to make it move forward, frankly was an incorrect approach by the Select Board and the Town Manager, and I don't think that can happen again based on the Charter. The principal issue which we've talked about for the last two years is that we simply have not been given enough timely access to the required financial information to make the decision that we have been required to make. There are some facts here that I think everybody knows but I'll just repeat those reasons for this. The accounting record-keeping and the internal controls have been weak, all you have to do is read the most current audit report which is, and then the one that hasn't been filed yet which is very much in arrears. There has been a lack of reconciling monthly bank statements. There have been many months delay in finalizing the audit. We had a whole bunch of excess cash which we suddenly realized we could invest and make money on, which is great, but we lost a lot of money last year because we didn't do that. The Town financial software is admittedly by the Town Manager antiquated and accounting financial staffing is light. Those all add up to make our job more difficult. And they are facts. Cooperation from the Town Manager has been lacking as noted in our annual letter to the Town and Bill explained a little bit about the mindset behind that and I think Bill and all of us agree, we need to work together to see if we can make some progress in that area, and I'm not pointing fingers at anybody, we all need to work together to make that happen and want to make that happen. And, as I mentioned, all the local towns do talk directly with the department heads, and I didn't sense in any of the reporting that I read in all those towns that there's a lot of problems with that. I didn't see anything that indicated that that had been a problem. So, I don't know why there's a problem here. I think that's our biggest challenge in the budget cycle. So, those are my initial sort of thoughts. For the next meeting, I think we should review and discuss the Charter, just to make sure, you know, it's just a handful of words but people do tend to discern different

meanings from those words. I'd like to make sure we're all on the same page as to what exactly our Charter is. I'd like to update our by-laws. There are a lot of things in there we could probably spend a whole meeting or more working on that, but it would be really worthwhile doing. We will initiate a remote participation policy, but that really goes without saying, the Planning Board, other boards all have the standard format, so we just need to adopt that basically."

Donna said the Committee had already adopted the remote participation policy. Jeff answered that he had not seen it. Gene said the Town Clerk had not received a signed copy. Gene said that in the posted minutes of August 11, 2021, it says the policy is attached and it is not. Jeff said that can be taken care of.

Jeff continued to discuss improving financial reporting and spoke about and presented the 577-page printout from Accounts Payable produced by Payroll that is difficult to read due to its length and that a summary report would better serve to update the Committee. Donna said she does read it. Brad said there is a summary page. Jeff said he looked around at how other towns reported and that Kittery and its Town Manager Kendra Amaral does a really good job sending out monthly and especially quarterly reports. He noted that she sends them out every two to three weeks after the end of the quarter and very much on time. Jeff handed out to members a copy of Kittery's third-quarter report which includes summary pages. He thought she could summarize that in one report and that would be an A+. Brad pointed out that the report in the Kittery report is a Munis report which is not always the best software, but it is good for accounting and reporting. Reggie asked if this is where Jeff wants the Town to go or should members just glean information from this. Jeff answered that that was a good question. He added that he has talked to the Mike, the Town Manager, and he is very much against giving the Budget Committee any more information than they are giving the Select Board. Jeff added that he does not think the Select Board is receiving a package like this, alluding back to the Kittery quarterly report and he thinks it would benefit the Select Board to receive such a package. Jeff shared that he understood staffing issues related to getting monthly reporting done and that he had offered to help with putting in monthly numbers, but the Town Manager did not like that idea. Jeff said a second approach would be for the Budget Committee to come with what it thinks is a reasonable quarterly package for elected officials to receive, written by the Town Manager with input if wanted from the Select Board, as to where the Town is concerning revenue, expenses, capital projects, cash flow, investments, and so forth, allowing everybody to be on the same page as to exactly where the Town is. He said this will make each budget cycle easier as everyone is on the same page, and everyone knows where we are and where we are going. Jeff said the Kittery example is purely educational and meant to be helpful. Donna said that the current monthly reports available to the Town are created with the push of a button and are already available. She asked if Jeff is suggesting the Town no longer receive those reports. Jeff said no and he is presenting the Kittery example as a means for the Committee to consider a better way to communicate information. Members discussed materials they were receiving now and looked over the Kittery example and discussed it and accounting software. Diane asked if the Town was looking into new accounting software. Jeff said Mike is not interested in doing that now. Jeff said that brings the Committee back to the question of are they receiving enough financial information in real time to understand what is going on and that would help the Committee in the budget process.

Bill Widi addressed the Committee, saying, "I talked to the Town Manager about this actually today. He, the auditor, and I'm not saying that we make a decision based on what the auditor's opinion is, I'm just saying, the auditor was not in favor of our switching from Trio at this time. I do want to say that the audit years that we are in arrears were Dana Lee Town Manager years, they were not the



current Town Manager. He didn't come until November of a year that hasn't even been started yet. And we are, our investments are making money. \$140,000 of free money last year, so, that was something that wasn't happening. We were somehow the only municipality in the world who was losing money in 2020, 2021, and when the new Town Manager came in that was one of first things, I actually distinctively remember that conversation. He said are you guys crazy, you're the only people losing money right now. And so, he did make that change right away. In addition to that, he switched from Key Bank to Kennebunk Savings, and he saved an additional \$17,000 a year in bank fees. So, just this past year, he saved us \$57,000 dollars based on him and the prior Town Manager."

Jeff asked Bill if he thought in his view if the Town was adequately staffed in that function?

Bill answered, "I think if you want quarterly reports, there's a million, he's got a million things going on. I think let's start with bi-annual and work our way from there maybe. I know when we get an annual report, I suppose you guys get the same thing which will be coming in the next month or so when the fiscal year closes out, but you want one every six months, I think that's a more reasonable ask at this time. Or if you wanted to do quarterlies, I'm open-minded to that, I think Mike would be too, but you know where they're chasing their tail trying to get this audit stuff done, the audit stuff needed to get done because we needed to go out for the TIF so that needed to be number one priority. You gotta deal with this stuff in the right order. So, that's what's been happening. You noticed, I understand the frustration, but I think some understanding that of, it was a house on fire and we're working on systematically righting the ship here and it's getting better every day. So, if we can get you more information, I'm in favor of that but I don't think quarterly is reasonable at this time. If you want it every six months, I think I can make that happen."

Brad asked how many town accountants the Town has had in the last five years. Bill gave the recent history and said three. Jeff asked Bill if the Town had only one person for the role, Bill answered one with Mike helping out and Melissa handles payroll. Brad spoke to the importance of long-lasting town employees, stating that having a revolving door in any department slows things down and causes delays. Jeff agreed and said it's not unusual, but it is a problem and that his sense is there might have been some money available in the last budget to have addressed some of the staffing shortage.

Jeff added, "So, if someone leaves and all that engrained knowledge leaves with that person, we're not starting from minus five again, we have someone who is actually trained to take over." Brad agreed it's the biggest problem right now.

Donna spoke to the procedure for requesting the proposed quarterly reports. She said, "As far as requesting these quarterly reports, I would recommend that we take the proper channels, if this Committee agrees to request those reports, and that should go through the Chair and not through a single selectman sitting here at a meeting because he cannot act as a member of the Select Board without their approval." She added that the channels for such a request is from the Chair through the Town Manager.

Jim said, "I understood Mr. Widi, he said as soon as he got here, he did not represent the Board, he represented an individual. I think he was trying to be informative, not out of line."

Donna said, "I'm stating that because he offered to make it happen."

Jim said, “He offered to (unclear), excuse me, Mr. Chair, it was my taking that he offered to advocate for that position.”

Donna said, “He made a statement. I’m not attacking him. I’m just making a point that this Committee is the one who agrees to or requests information that goes through the Chair.”

Jeff spoke to the Committee’s transition from the prior fiscal year to the current one. He praised past Budget Committee members Jean Hardy and Denny Lentz for serving the Town for many years. He spoke to the importance of public service, the amount of time and energy it requires, and his fear that interest seems to be waning in public service. The Chair praised Donna Murphy, citing that she has been on the Budget Committee since 2013 and Chair of the Committee since 2014, a long time to serve. He thanked her for staying on to finish out her term as a member and assist the Committee as it moves forward and particularly to assist him as he takes on the duties as Chair. Donna added that Ed Strong deserved the Committee’s thanks as well for his long service and wealth of knowledge. All agreed.

Jim said to Donna, “I kind of came in here, Donna, like a bull in a China shop and I kind of came at you a little bit and I hope you understand that I’m just trying to lay down a baseline and I’m trying to understand how things happen. And I applaud your years of service, it’s not easy. I’ve done work like this in other places for a long time and everybody hates me, and I got reelected by twelve votes, I’m probably doing my job. So, I’ll say thank you for your service and for your leadership over the years. All that said, a lot has happened, but nothing has happened to this Committee as it is constituted. Today is a new day. You said we didn’t get this, and we didn’t get that, and that may have happened. We didn’t get information or things didn’t happen, let’s move forward and make our decisions collectively as to what happens. And I appreciate the institutional knowledge. You bring a lot of information and I applaud that service, but nobody’s never not given me information on this Committee because I’ve only been here for about four hours.”

Donna responded saying Jim could poll the three members and the members they just spoke of to understand the Committee has not had these issues until the last two years. She added information may have been received late, but the Committee always got the information until the last two years.

Brad made a closing comment, saying, “I’ve seen a lot of people over the last couple of years beat up on our new manager and I would urge everybody to remember that there was a committee of, a very good committee put together with I don’t know how many years of municipal experience on that committee, that went through fifty different candidates and got down to three and by recommendation was really down to two, Mr. Sullivan being one of them. He is a very well-respected manager in Massachusetts. And I know we’re always going to have this thing about Massachusetts but when I talk to people that used to work with him, up until he retired, they miss him greatly and wish he had never left. So, I would urge everybody to remember, you might not get along with Mr. Sullivan, but he is a good manager. I just wanted to point that out.”

## **9. Adjournment**

The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. Reggie motioned and Donna seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 7-0. The meeting was adjourned at 6:34pm.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Jeffrey Leathe, Chair**

**Date Approved: July 12, 2023**

**Diane Holt, Secretary**