

**Town of Eliot
Budget Committee Meeting
Wednesday, April 26, 2023**

1. Call to Order

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

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of the Minutes

There was no approval of minutes.

4. Letter for the Town Book and letter to the voters

Chair Murphy opened the discussion to matters concerning the Budget Committee's letter for the Town Book and letter to be mailed out to residents. Members discussed and reviewed particulars, including the LD1 amount of \$299,281, how non-taxed revenue is calculated, and property tax confirmation. Donna noted that the Committee will need to add "pending confirmation of these numbers" to any motion that make during the meeting.

Gene suggested rewording the line that read "are in line with the Town Manager." He said he would like to emphasis that the Committee agreed with the Town Manager and suggested using the term concur. Diane pointed out that concur means to agree 100% and as such was not sure the Committee did concur with the Town Manager. Donna said the Committee only agreed as their backs were up against the wall. Jeff suggested the wording be that the Committee agreed with the Select Board and Town Manager. Donna reminded members that this letter was the Budget Committee's letter and serving to inform voters about the Budget Committee's work.

Members discussed the use of the word "original" when discussing the Town Manager's budget and decided to remove the term "original."

Gene suggested the line that reads, "Typically, the process also includes...meetings with department heads" be removed. Gene said it is now typical that the Budget Committee does not meet with department heads. Reggie responded that given the Committee's long history of meeting with department heads, not doing so is atypical.

Jeff made two points: one, that last year's Budget Committee letter was more robust, and two, that he researched how comparable towns undertake the budget process and found that budget committees in those towns all met with department heads.

Denny suggested the Committee include a paragraph about how to make the process more efficient. He added that meetings with department heads had always been helpful. Diane said the Budget Committee would not have had to meet with the Select Board if they had been able to meet with department heads. Donna suggested that Denny's suggested paragraph about improving the process should be put in the Committee's May or June letter, and not this letter.

Jeff said that #15 in the Bylaws stated that the Budget Committee has the right to request meetings with department heads. Reggie wondered if that mattered as it seems the Select Board is not going to follow the rules. Donna said the Committee's only recourse is a legal one if the Select Board won't enforce the Charter. Jeff asked if the Committee should go to the Select Board and ask that #15 be followed. Donna said any communication the Budget Committee has with the Select Board must go through the Town Manager. Diane asked Jeff if he meant that the Committee go to the Select Board at the beginning of the next budget cycle. Jeff said yes, as a way to engage the Select Board members and the Town Manager on fixing how this works. Members further discussed how to engage the Select Board on the rules for the budget process. Jeff asked Gene if he thought this was a good idea, and Gene responded that setting the process at the beginning is a positive move.

Donna read from the letter that the Committee was composing. Donna moved, and Diane seconded that the letter be approved as amended after the numbers are checked for the Town Book. The motion passed by a 4-1 roll call vote.

Donna explained the scope of the Committee's letter to be sent to townspeople. Jeff said he had spoken with Wendy, the Town Clerk, about the process. Reggie referred members to the bottom three paragraphs. Donna said the same letter can be mailed out to the Town and should reiterate what the Budget Committee does and can do.

Gene asked about how the Town votes and if the Town does not approve the recommended amounts, the amounts default to last year's amounts. Donna explained the process.

Donna moved, and Diane seconded that the Budget Committee approve that the same letter be sent in the Town mailing as amended with amounts confirmed. The motion passed with a roll call vote of 6-0.

5. Budget Committee member reports/comments

Donna said the next meeting would be on Wednesday, May 10, at 5:00pm, and to get agenda items to her by May 2. There were no other member comments or reports.

6. Adjournment

Reggie motioned and Donna seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed by a roll call vote of 6-0. The meeting adjourned at 5:44pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Murphy, Chair

Date Approved: May 10, 2023

Jean Hardy, Secretary