

**Town of Eliot  
Budget Committee Meeting  
Wednesday, January 31, 2024**

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**1. ROLL CALL**

In attendance in person were Donna Murphy; Jeff Leathe, chair; Brad Swanson; and Jim Latter, and via zoom were Gene Wypyski and Diane Holt, secretary. Reggie Fowler, vice chair, was absent.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:03pm. He stated the Committee had a quorum and asked if anyone had a conflict of interest with items to be discussed. No member did.

**2. 10-MINUTE PUBLIC INPUT SESSION (Community Participation is Encouraged)**

The Chair opened the floor to public input. There was no public input.

**3) BEGIN REVIEW of TOWN MANAGER'S FY2025 BUDGET**

The Chair reviewed the upcoming meetings with members, stating that there are five meetings scheduled for Wednesday, February 14 at 6pm; Wednesday, February 28 at 6pm; Wednesday, March 13 at 6pm; and Wednesday, March 27 at 6pm. Mr. Leathe added that the Planning Committee would like to hold a joint meeting with the Budget Committee.

Discussion focused on the budget materials. Mr. Leathe pointed out that the Town Manager added a column to the proposed budget to include the percentage increase in a cost from the prior year's budget. Members requested printed hard copies of documents from the Town and Mr. Leathe said he would ask the Town Manager for those. Members discussed the formatting of the information that had been received from the Town Manager.

Ms. Murphy shared that the date of the Committee's next meeting is Wednesday, February 14 which falls on both Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day; she wanted to make the Committee aware of the date if they had a conflict. The Chair asked if anyone had a conflict, and no one did. The Chair said the Committee is limited to when it can meet as only one Town committee at a time can use the meeting room and its online remote capability via Zoom. Members agreed to keep the next meeting to Wednesday, February 14 at 6pm.

**4. BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBER INPUT: REPORTS ON INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS AND/OR ANY OTHER COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS/QUESTIONS**

There was no member input.

**5. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES (if available)**

Members decided to table review of minutes until the next meeting on Wednesday, February 13.

**6. OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair opened discussion to the Committee's review of the proposed 2025 Town budget and directed members to the first section of the budget, the Admin Dept. He added that he had asked the Town Manager for monthly revenue pages and that he was waiting for them.

Mr. Leathe gave the floor to Mr. Wypyski who had requested to speak about salaries and benefits. Mr. Wypyski said the Committee should request monthly head count numbers in the department pages to

see how head count is distributed by department. He would like to see how that number changes over the year and how many full-time and part-time employees are in each department. Discussion continued on data about FTEs (full-time equivalent) staffing and numbers. Ms. Murphy said she would like to see complete information on salaries, including salaries for each employee. Mr. Leathe said he did not need to see individual salaries but just head count. Ms. Holt said that the Select Board warrants contain each employee's salary and that it is important for the Committee to know about any significant salary changes. She added that she did not need names of the employees, just the position. Mr. Leathe said he would like the Committee to agree on a format for the data. Mr. Wypyski said the information needed for Budget Committee purposes would include the number of employees by department and the headcount numbers. Ms. Holt said just a lump sum number was not enough and that the Committee needs to know about any vacancies that might be filled the upcoming year that would significantly affect the proposed budget.

Members discussed the use of the employee benefit package. Mr. Leathe said of the Town's 43 employees only 23 employees use the employee benefit package. He pointed out that the cost of benefits has increased from \$1.16 million to \$1.3 million. Mr. Leathe said that with that line item, which currently only covers half the Town's workforce, could change significantly with new hires. Mr. Leathe said Admin salaries have increased from \$326,000 in 2024 to \$367,000 in 2025, and asked Mr. Wypyski if he was fine with numbers like that. Mr. Wypyski answered that he was not and wanted to see headcounts to see if the Town was hiring more people. Mr. Leathe asked if the Town Manager is budgeting to the number of people on staff, what is that number and how could the Committee get that information. Mr. Swanson said there might be a flow chart that would give the Committee that information. Mr. Latter suggested a head count per department in FTEs. Ms. Murphy said the Town has historically budgeted to full staff. Mr. Swanson said the title of the position and salary would be enough information. Mr. Leathe suggested a chart with every Town position for 2024 and for 2025 to see changes in staffing, 2024 salary, and proposed 2025 salary.

**Ms. Murphy motioned, seconded by Ms. Holt, that the Committee receive current salaries and salaries budgeted for 2025 to see the increases in salary.** Mr. Wypyski said he was concerned about the Committee overstepping the realm of management. Mr. Wypyski said that he thought employee salaries were private. Ms. Murphy said, and Mr. Swanson agreed, that information about current and proposed Town salaries is public information. Members discussed the level of details they need on salaries. Ms. Holt said that since payroll is such a substantial part of the budget, the Budget Committee should have the details. **Mr. Latter motioned, and My Wypyski seconded, that the motion be amended.** Members discussed and researched protocol as stated in Robert's Rules of Order on how to proceed when a motion on the floor has been requested to be amended. **Following protocol, members voted on the motion to amend the motion which passed by a roll-call vote of 4-2. Members voted on the amended motion to request from the Town Manager only FTEs per department to be listed on the document, and the amended motion passed by a roll-call vote of 4-2.**

Mr. Leathe referred to the 2025 Budget Workbook and the Town Manager's PowerPoint presentation as resources for information for the Committee. He added that the has Town Manager provided FTEs for the Administrative department. Mr. Wypyski explained why he wants to see numbers by month as those numbers would reflect summer hires and other seasonal adjustments. Members shared opinions on the need for or not for individual salaries by name. Ms. Murphy said she did not understand why members would not want to see complete information on salaries. Mr. Leathe commented that wages have gone up significantly, and Ms. Murphy said she would like to see that information as she cannot support

increases without knowing why the increase happened. Discussion turned to comparison of salaries to other municipalities. Mr. Latter said the health insurance number is a big number that catches his attention. Mr. Leathe suggested the Committee ask the Town Manager for salary information that would explain the 12% increase. Ms. Murphy asked why would the Committee shy away from doing so. Mr. Leathe asked what level of information can the Committee ask for without feeling like it is an invasion. Ms. Murphy emphasized the importance of the Committee receiving full information. Mr. Wypyski said there is an overall 10.4% salary increase which may include merits, promotions, cost of living, and other adjustments. Mr. Latter said there are ten salary lines and could the Committee invite the Town Manager to a meeting to clarify those ten salary lines. Ms. Murphy said she wants complete salary information which is public information and available through FOIA to citizens. Mr. Leathe said, and Mr. Swanson agreed, it would help the Committee to receive from the Town Manager a breakdown by percentage of increases in four to five categories.

The Chair explained that the recording secretary will compile and email to the Town Manager questions the Committee has about the budget. He said the Town Manager has five business days to respond and that the recording secretary will share those responses with the members. Ms. Murphy emphasized the importance of the Town providing members with printed copies of budget materials. Mr. Leathe agreed and said he would also ask that those materials be dated and have page numbers. Members agreed that questions did not have to be presented as a motion and voted on. The Committee compiled via the recording secretary the following questions for the Town Manager which includes the first request for information from earlier in the meeting:

1. The Committee requests a document that lists FTEs per department.
2. To better manage and keep organized the budget paperwork, the Committee requests that each time you make a change to the budget document that you email BC members that a change has been made with the latest document, that that document includes the date of the change and page numbers, and that that document also be printed and put into BC members' boxes at Town Hall for them to pick up.
3. Wages are budgeted to be up 10.5% and the Committee would like to understand the rationale for that increase. What makes up the 10.5% proposed increase?
4. The Committee does not see unfunded liability or post-employee benefits in the budget, is that an issue?
5. What caused FICA to go up 16% if salaries went up 10.5%?
6. Please explain health insurance costs budgeted for 2025.
7. When you look at Wages, as in Land Use office, do you feel this is the last year of wage increases? Have Town wages reached an appropriate and competitive level?
8. What caused the 46% increase in Mapping and is this a cost that should be anticipated periodically, for instance, every two to three years?
9. The Committee would like to remind you to share monthly financial reports with members, documents that include expense summary report (monthly), income summary report (monthly), and current account status (quarterly and in electronic form only.)

## **7. CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence.

## **8. SET AGENDA AND DATE FOR NEXT MEETING**

- a. Continue FY25 Budget Review, specifically budgets for Police and Fire.
- b. Next Meeting Date: Wednesday, February 14, 2024 @ 6:00pm

## **9. MOTION TO ADJOURN**

Mr. Latter motioned, and Mr. Swanson seconded, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Jeffrey Leathe, Chair**

**Date Approved:** February 14, 2024

**Diane Holt, Secretary**