

Town of Eliot  
Budget Committee  
March 4, 2019

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**Budget Committee Members:** Donna Murphy (Chair), Jim Tessier (Vice-Chair), Dennis Lentz (Secretary), Janie Wang, Brad Hughes, and Ed Strong (joined at 7:10). Noah Lemire excused due to work.

**Call to Order:**

- Meeting was called to order @ 6:00 pm by the Chair (video streaming was used).

**Public Comment:**

- One member of the public present.

**Approval of Minutes**

- Motion by Brad Hughes, second by Denny Lentz to approve the January 31, 2019 minutes as amended. Vote: 5-0 to approve as amended.
- Motion by Jim Tessier, second by Denny Lentz to approve the February 12, 2019 minutes as amended. Vote: 5-0 to approve as amended.

**2019/2020 budget review and vote on recommendations**

- Jim stated we have one significant issue. Public Works administration assistant and time billed to Sewer. Sewer billing is quarterly. Jim spoke to the sheet Joel handed out for this position. Jim came up with 160 hours which is 8%. Jim stated you are up to 12%-15%. They are also charging 24.7% of Joel's salary. Back when there were issues with the sewer, he may have been spending that much time but now with the improvements is he spending that much time. Between the two salaries you are at \$130,000 and then you add the benefits. Brad stated there has been talk with coming in under LD1 and it seems to be, charge the sewer. If it is valid then Brad is okay with it but if not, we shouldn't be burdening the sewer uses. Donna stated it would be valid to ask Dana how he calculated that number. Janie asked if the \$35,000 is the number added. Jim stated it is based on 25% of time from the Public Works director and the administrative assistant. Brad stated if you take a look at the TIF they have estimated the costs. He takes it out of the salary and puts it in fixed assessments. Go down to the sewer he takes the number out and it doesn't go anywhere. He adds it into the revenue which is still in the budget. There is an up and a down. The money put on the master wage sheet for the Public Works director and the assistant is not there to pay them. It should be in fixed assessments. Brad stated they are taking the money from a different fund so it shouldn't be in the Public Works. They need to add it in the fixed assessments and put

it in revenue. \$34,900 of expenses. Denny asked if the Town Manager know about this? Brad and Jim stated no. Brad stated when this was taken out someone should have known it needed to go somewhere. Jim stated this is important and they need to adjust the budget figures. Brad stated they need to have a tick list of items they need to collect from other funds. Jim stated we have asked about other items, are we collecting the money? Jim talked about other money from TIF for consultants and legal. If we don't use it, it goes to Undesignated fund and should go back to the TIF. Brad stated when he was on the Select Board it was difficult, and they used a lot. Jack asked if the Town auditor found out about this or is it at a level that he is not aware of it. Brad stated probably not. As long as everything is where it should be, he wouldn't see it. This is something the Treasurer and the Town Manager should be catching, and they are not. Janie asked, shouldn't we only take what we use? Brad stated it is like the library, the check is drawn the first day of the new year. Janie stated for tonight if we are having concerns about wages, are we comfortable voting on this? Are there numbers we can vote on? Brad handed out worksheet.

- Administration: Jim stated the biggest question is, are we going to approve the Land Use Assistant? Jim stated there is a big difference in cost because the Land Use assistant and Public Works assistant because the Land Use assistant is taking health benefits. This may change if the current person leaves and the next hire wants health insurance. Denny suggested looking at third part-time position. Donna questioned if the data supports the need? Do they need to look at more efficient ways to work, looking at down time, and shifting tasks? Janie stated that there was discussion that if it was only one position to go with Public Works. Janie stated she would support the Public Works and not the Land Use. Denny stated if we are the mindset to approve, he would go with Public Works and not Land Use. Denny stated he is not convinced we need any. Jim stated he feels we are not going to get anymore that we have and we need to make a decision. Janie spoke that she felt it was not realistic to get the numbers and more hard data. They should have done this but at this point it is not going to happen. Jim stated he agreed with what Janie is saying. Jim stated maybe we propose a third part-time person and you have another year to collect data. It gives them an opportunity to provide the numbers. Donna spoke to the expectations of having the data when the request is made. Janie stated that Donna's work the system may have been in place for years and this is not the way it is here. Donna stated that this is an expense to the taxpayers every year. It is not going to go away. Should we be asking for justification for the taxpayers? Brad spoke to the Public Works director and not taking time off and the administrative work. Brad saw the bills. Joel used to do this the best he could. They had issues with this in the past. Brad sees a lack there. Brad stated coming from the private sector we have been told do more with less. Denny doesn't see the difficulty in taking the work and splitting it among two people. Two part-time can use the same desk and work different hours. Brad stated when the position was requested last year for the Land Use Assistant it was a different reason.

Brad stated there are management issues here and we all know that. Brad stated the Town Manager amount needs to be budgeted. Janie asked if it dropped through if the Select Board does not approve? This worker stated no, it is not a line item and can be spent elsewhere in Administration. Items for discussion are wages for the Assessor, Administrative Assistant, and Planner. These salaries are above the wage scale and should remain where they are until the yearly adjustments to the wage scale catch up. Brad fears that this is not within our recommendations but is not sure. Donna requested this but hasn't received it. Brad will ask if the rest of the committee is okay with this. Janie stated it isn't the money it is the thought behind it. Janie stated will the amount change anyone's mind. Donna stated that it is the principle and that the disparity will continue. Brad agreed stating it will probable go on year after year. Jim's opinion is that Town Manager is struggling to retain his employees and by giving this small increase he can retain them. Janie stated that at some point they would catch up as they are getting the 1.5%. Janie does not have an issue with this. Denny suggested that Brad get the numbers for 20 hours and for 28 hours for the Land Use Assistant.

- Town Committees/Outside agencies: Jim agrees with Town Manager's recommendation for \$5,000 for Land Bank.
- The Budget Committee voted on the articles with the following exceptions. Administration, Public Works, Fixed Assessments, and Revenues were tabled due to the need for more information.

Motion by Brad Hughes, second by Jim Tessier to approve Town Committees for \$32,028. Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Janie Wang, second by Ed Strong to approve Social Services for \$12,050. Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Ed Strong, second by Brad Hughes to approve William Fogg Library for \$170,000. Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Brad Hughes, second by Jim Tessier to approve Debt Service for \$118,250. Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Brad Hughes, second by Jim Tessier to approve Hearings & Elections for \$27,107. Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Jim Tessier, second by Ed Strong to approve Fire Department for \$183,989. Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Ed Strong, second by Brad Hughes to approve Police Department for \$1,126,739. Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Brad Hughes, second by Jim Tessier to approve Winter Roads for \$250,848.  
Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Jim Tessier, second by Ed Strong to approve Roads & Bridges for \$15,000.  
Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Brad Hughes, second by Ed Strong to approve Summer Maintenance for \$78,240. Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Jim Tessier, second by Brad Hughes to approve Transfer Station for \$252,296.  
Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Jim Tessier, second by Brad Hughes to approve Stormwater for \$200,000.  
Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Brad Hughes, second by Jim Tessier to approve Community Services for \$479,943. Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Jim Tessier, second by Ed Strong to approve General Assistance for \$20,000.  
Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Jim Tessier, second by Ed Strong to approve Reserves for \$38,000. Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Brad Hughes, second by Ed Strong to approve Public Safety for \$278,615.  
Vote 6-0 to approve.

Motion by Janie Wang, second by Ed Strong to approve CIP for \$960,600. Vote 6-0 to approve.

- The Committee agreed to meet on Thursday at 7:00 to vote on the remaining articles.
- Jim stated on April 11<sup>th</sup> of last year for the final warrant and this was the meeting we didn't get the final copy. Jim wanted to ensure that the Budget Committee had a copy of the final warrant. Donna stated that she wanted to ensure that the Budget Committee was involved in the writing of the newsletter. The Budget Committee needs to write the letter for the Town Book. Janie offered to write the letter. The Town Manager sent out the warrant articles this morning which were sent to the Budget Committee. There were numerous errors in them.

**Budget Committee member reports and comments**

- None

**Adjournment**

- Motion by Jim Tessier, second by Brad Hughes to adjourn. Vote 5-0

Respectfully submitted,

*Donna Murphy*, Chair

Date Approved: April 9, 2019

*Dennis F. Lentz*, Secretary