

Town of Milton
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
January 30, 2024

ATTENDANCE:

Members: Laura Turgeon (Chair), Bob Carrier, Renata Gamache, Peg Hurd, Kimberly Wischnewski, Mike Beaulieu, Stephanie Mills

Excused: Claudine Burnham

Laura Turgeon, Chair, opened the session at 6:00PM.

1.) Pledge of Allegiance: Laura Turgeon, Chair, led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2.) Roll Call:

- a. Ms. Turgeon, Chair, led the roll call of members to determine if a quorum was present. Laura Turgeon (Chair), Bob Carrier, Peg Hurd, Renata Gamache, Kimberly Wischnewski, Mike Beaulieu, Stephanie Mills. A quorum was present.

3.) Discuss the Deliberative Session and what happens:

The School session starts at 9:00AM and the Town portion will begin at 11:30AM. Ms. Turgeon asked the Budget Committee members to be prepared to provide explanations to the way each member voted on the Warrant Articles.

4.) Discuss School expenditures:

The last time the school expenditures were reviewed was during the October meeting. Ms. Hurd said Superintendent Adam Houghton continues to dig deeper into the finances. The School Board has approved a consultant who will look through and clean up all the expenditure reports.

Ms. Wischnewski asked if the problems are with the actual information or problems with the Excel spreadsheet. Ms. Mills said the spreadsheet has been corrected and works as it should. Mr. Carrier asked if the reports will be corrected? Ms. Turgeon said yes. Ms. Hurd said the errors with data entry into the system stopped back in October. Ms. Turgeon said, however, it is now January, and the reports are still incorrect. Ms. Hurd explained the current person doing data entry had not been provided with correct or adequate training (before October). There is a learning curve for the employee.

Mr. Carrier said looking through the reports indicates too many lines with no budget allocated in the line. Ms. Turgeon said the Budget Committee has heard the same excuse for the past two years; this leads to increased frustration levels. We need to have some idea of where the stuff is going and why. Ms. Hurd agreed with Ms. Turgeon.

Mr. Carrier asked if there had been an audit. Ms. Hurd said the audit is in process. Mr. Carrier asked for the reports. Ms. Turgeon said the audit should have been done in October. Ms. Hurd said the audits started being scheduled in October.

Ms. Mills asked why there was a need for a new bus since the district remains on the Gold plan for bus routes. Ms. Hurd said a bus had been falling apart so there was a need. Ms. Mills asked if the district now had enough drivers? Ms. Hurd explained they had just hired two new drivers. Mr. Beaulieu said the process for hiring drivers is expensive and grueling; with required certifications, the cost to an individual can be \$8,000 to \$10,000. Ms. Mills said they were told the Gold plan was a short-term solution.

Mr. Carrier asked why Worker's Comp is so over budget? Ms. Mills said this was due to an employee injury. Mr. Carrier also asked about teacher turnover. Ms. Hurd said this year the district has worked very hard and has had success in keeping teachers; they are fully staffed.

Ms. Hurd continues to meet with Superintendent Houghton who understands the finances must be cleaned up. There is a consultant who will be looking through the finances and reports.

Mr. Carrier expressed his frustration with the School's process of encumbrances and pointed out the Town does not do it the same way. Ms. Turgeon agreed and asked how can you encumber something you do not have a budget line for? When you put garbage into the system, you get garbage coming out of the system. Ms. Mills said there are so many line-items and from a data entry perspective this leads to mistakes. She recommended simplifying and getting rid of all the redundancies. This will help minimize mistakes.

Ms. Hurd said she does understand everyone's concerns and relays their feedback. Ms. Mills said it's the data entry where mistakes are happening. Ms. Turgeon said we need to be able to trust the School's Finance Office; the trust levels are not there. Mr. Carrier – nothing has changed. Ms. Mills asked if Superintendent Houghton could attend the next Budget Committee meeting to go through January expenditures. Ms. Turgeon expressed her hope of seeing better data at the February meeting. We have experienced three years too many of this. Ms. Hurd said she understands everyone's continued frustration and expects the consultant to help resolve the ongoing situation.

5.) Other business that may come before the board:

There were no other business.

6.) Public Comments or Questions:

There was no public comment.

7.) Next Regular BC Meeting – February 26, 2024

Upcoming Budget Committee meetings:

March 26 – Welcome two new committee members; Election of Officers

April 30

8.) Adjournment:

- a. Ms. Hurd motioned to adjourn at 7:10PM; Seconded by Ms. Wischnewski. All were in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amy Winslow-Weiss, Recording Secretary – Budget Committee