

Town of Milton
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
September 26, 2023

ATTENDANCE:

Members: Laura Turgeon (Chair), Bob Carrier, Renata Gamache, Peg Hurd, Kim Wischnewski, Stephanie Mills, Claudine Burnham

Absent: Mike Beaulieu

Public: Ken Robichaud

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), Kimberly Wischnewski, Bob Carrier, Peg Hurd, Renata Gamache, Stephanie Mills, Claudine Burnham. A quorum was present.

3.) Review/Approval of Minutes:

Ms. Hurd motioned to approve the August 22, 2023, minutes with corrections. Ms. Mills seconded the motion.

Laura Turgeon, Peg Hurd, Bob Carrier, Renata Gamache, Kim Wischnewski, Claudine Burnham, Stephanie Mills voted Yes. Motion Carried – 7/0/0.

Ms. Hurd motioned to approve the September 14, 2023, minutes with corrections. Ms. Mills seconded the motion.

Laura Turgeon, Peg Hurd, Bob Carrier, Renata Gamache, Kim Wischnewski, Claudine Burnham, Stephanie Mills voted Yes. Motion Carried – 7/0/0.

- 4.) Town Expenditure Reports:** Ms. Burnham provided follow-up to questions from the previous meeting concerning expenditures for Government Buildings, Highway, Solid Waste and Recreation. An area of immediate concern is the Welfare line. Ms. Burnham said this has become a focus for the BOS as expenditures are very high. The 2023 Budget for Welfare was set at \$8,500; Expenditures to date are even higher than the \$24,000 reflected in the current report. While they knew this line would be over, it continues to trend even higher. The BOS will review RSAs and the town mandates. It's believed that part of the issue is due to landlords who are supporting behaviors that continue to hurt the situation. Ms. Mills asked why is the town responsible for this and not the county or state? Ms. Burnham said this is what the BOS will be looking into. Mr. Carrier asked if an individual who was helped got back onto their feet, aren't they responsible for repayments? Ms. Burnham said yes, that is how it should work. However, sometimes people will leave the town before repaying and the town does not have the resources available to pursue them. She acknowledged there are a few individuals who abuse the situation.

Ms. Turgeon said it does appear the Fire Department expenditures have slowed down or at least are not increasing.

5.) School Expenditure Report, Revenue and Grant Reports: Ms. Turgeon thanked Ms. Hurd and Adam Houghton, SAU Superintendent, for continuing to review the reports to answer questions and provide information to the Budget Committee. In reviewing the School Expenditure reports, Ms. Hurd said there are many incorrect allocations in the current report, and they will be corrected. Ms. Turgeon said it is confusing since the way the school does encumbrances is different than how the town does.

Ms. Hurd explained the breakouts between the schools is now 50 (MES) due to an increase in students at MES / 25 (Middle) / 25 (High School). The budget currently reflects a 40/60 split.

Ms. Turgeon asked about expenditures for a mentor for the Business Manager? Ms. Hurd explained they have rehired Nathan to provide help/support for the Business Manager.

Alma software: It is currently costing more than originally budgeted for. Ms. Hurd explained in future years, the amount should decrease.

Background Criminal Checks: Ms. Hurd said the School District now pays for a teacher's required background check. Prior to this, a teacher would be responsible for payment. This is seen as a perk. Ms. Burnham recommended this have its own line-item instead of including it in dues.

Custodian Salaries: Ms. Turgeon asked about this since it had been part of a previous School Board meeting discussion. It was stated that "ESSR funds are now gone and can no longer be used to supplement custodian salaries". Were ESSR funds used as a way to supplement salary or were they a one-time bonus? Ms. Hurd said this line-item is predicted to be over; they have been down one position and others have been working OT to help with coverage.

Transportation: Ms. Hurd explained the previous Transportation Coordinator was part-time; the new Coordinator is full-time; she is also a bus driver. Laura Turgeon asked if the salary line item for the new Transportation Coordinator includes the pay for driving as well as salary. Ms. Hurd was unsure but will ask.

Transfer to Food Service: Mr. Houghton needs to work on this area.

Ms. Hurd – there will be a lot of changes to the report as the incorrect account line-items are fixed.

Ms. Mills said it appears the district is encumbering more than what is budgeted on a number of lines. It is so close to the beginning of the new year – the encumbrance and budget lines should be closer. She asked why is this happening? This includes line-item areas for contracts, salary, health insurance, FICA, etc. The elementary supplies encumbrance is more than double. Ms. Hurd said the \$16,000 in purchases will be moved to grants. Ms. Wischnewski asked if there is any plan when purchasing supplies?

Ms. Turgeon said at this point, everyone is aware the reports are messed up. The Budget Committee hopes by next month this is all corrected. Ms. Wischnewski said this is very concerning since very shortly we will be looking at next year's budget. Ms. Burnham agreed and said this sounds like a repeat of last year's budgeting process and we cannot do that again. She asked how

long the School Board will carry on like this? Correct reports and proper expenditures have to be provided. There is a cost to tax-payers.

Ms. Turgeon also said it is not the Budget Committee responsibility to ask Mr. Campbell the questions from tonight's meeting. That information should have been provided, especially since the District is paying another financial person to provide help to the School's Business Manager. Ms. Burnham said this kind of reporting is not acceptable for a second year. Ms. Wischnewski agreed and said the current report represents a step backward. Ms. Turgeon said everyone had high hopes at the start of a new budget. She indicated she plans to send a note to the Superintendent, School Board and Mr. Campbell voicing concerns from the Budget Committee.

Ms. Turgeon said it appears going into the upcoming budget season, we will not have enough adequate information to do a budget as final numbers for last year have not been provided.

Ms. Turgeon asked about monies provided to the School from the state; Mr. Houghton had said he would give that to the town. Ms. Hurd said the adequacy aid is for ~\$117,000. Ms. Burnham said she heard the school may have an estimated \$1M surplus? Ms. Hurd said it will probably be closer to ~\$400,000-\$500,000.

Ms. Mills said there are so many confusing things in tonight's reports. Ms. Turgeon said there is nothing correct in the reports and the Budget Committee should stop trying to make sense of the current reports. She also thanked Mr. Carrier for his diligent rooting through the reports.

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

There was no other business.

7.) Public Comments or Questions on Budget Committee Meeting Topics:

Mr. Ken Robichaud said the school expenditures report is embarrassing. He said the Budget Committee can compel the school's Business Manager and/or Superintendent to answer questions. He found the meeting enlightening. Ms. Turgeon thanked Mr. Robichaud for attending and expressed concerns and disappointment around the reports submitted by the School Board.

8.) Next Meeting: October 24, 2023

The next joint meeting between BOS and Budget is scheduled for November 16, 2023.

Ms. Turgeon said she continues to negotiate with the School Board Chair to schedule a joint meeting with the School Board. Ms. Burnham reminded the Committee the tax rate will be set in November. Information from the School Board has to be received before Thanksgiving; the Chair must be aware the hard deadline will be November 20th. Ms. Turgeon will work with the Chair and hopefully set the joint meeting for the week of October 16th.

9.) Adjournment:

- a. Ms. Hurd motioned to adjourn at 7:40PM; Seconded by Ms. Wischnewski. All were in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amy Winslow-Weiss, Recording Secretary – Budget Committee