

Town of Milton
Town Budget Committee
Wednesday, September 16, 2020
Minutes

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 6:00PM by Chairman Humphrey Williams

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Mr. Humphrey Williams – Chair; Ms. Danielle Marique ;Ms. Lisa Gautreau; Ms. Peg Hurd; Ms. Claudine Burnham; Mr. Mike Beaulieu; and Mr. Larry Brown. A Quorum was present. Mr. Thomas McDougall – Vice Chair arrived at 6:22PM

Public Attendance

Ernie Creveling, Doug Shute and Kym Dawson-Boulanger

Budget Proposal for 2021 Town Operating Budget

Mr. Williams stated that the point of this meeting was to review the budget proposals that were submitted to the Budget Committee (BC), as modified by the Board of Selectmen (BOS). Mr. Williams stated that the BOS did do what we asked them to do and they presented a bottom-line budget that is under the default Budget for 2021. Mr. Williams stated that he had met with the Town Administrator, Ernie Creveling and the BOS Chair, Andy Rawson on Tuesday, September 15th to discuss the expected process for the joint BOS-BC Budget Meeting, scheduled for September 19th, at 8:00AM, in the Town Hall BOS Chambers, so that we may stream the presentation live for the public and so that it will be recorded for public viewing. Mr. Williams proceeded to state that all the Department Heads are expected to attend the meeting from start to finish, that each Department Head would be presenting their own budget presentations and fielding any questions from the BC and BOS.

Mr. Creveling offered to run the streaming video equipment so that the documents the BC were reviewing (Excel spreadsheet of 2021 budget proposals) would be visible for the public to view as the BC was discussing the line-items.

Mr. Williams opened the Excel file and proceeded to mention to the Town Administrator, Ernie Creveling, that the budget proposals from the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) were reduced in the 2020 budget proposal and that the reduced figures of \$1,052 for the Planning Board and \$650 for the ZBA should be in the 2021 budget proposal vice the \$1750 and \$1500 respectively listed due to the Default Budget. The reductions will save approximately \$1500. Mr. Williams also noted that the Budget Summary Total was mistakenly doubled to \$8,779,117 due to an Excel summing error and that the current bottom-line budget proposed was: \$4,389,559.

Ms. Marique asked if the budget presented to the BC was the Department Head proposals or the budgets as adjusted by the BOS. Mr. Williams and Mr. Creveling both stated this is the adjusted budget as modified by the BOS. Ms. Marique asked why the spreadsheet only showed the 2020 Default Budget and 2021 budget proposals, as opposed to showing the previous 5 years of budget

proposals and expenditures. Mr. Williams stated that he would make the Excel file with the previous 5-year comparison available to the BC members. Mr. Williams also showed on the screen that he added the 2019 Default Budget and the 2020 BC Budget proposal as comparison data for the proposed 2021 Town Budget.

Ms. Marique asked if the BC would be able to see the actual Department Head proposals for 2021. Mr. Creveling responded that the Department Head proposals will be shown in their individual presentations.

Mr. Williams proceeded to display the Excel file used by the BC for the 2020 budget process that had the previous 5 years of budget proposals and expenditures and again, that he would make that available to the BC members.

Mr. Williams proceeded with reviewing each of the Department budgets. Ms. Hurd talked about Default Budgets generally changing due to contractual changes and mentioned that Town Administrator 2021 Default budget proposed was roughly \$11,000 over the 2020 Default Budget. Mr. Williams opened-up the Town Administrator budget to show the contract changes are why the Default Budget increased.

Ms. Marique asked if the BC would be able to actually see the contracts. Mr. Williams stated that the committee members would be allowed to ask questions about the contracts and expected costs. Mr. Brown stated that the contracts themselves are not the responsibility of the BC and Mr. Williams concurred. Mr. Beaulieu asked if the BC members would be allowed to ask questions about the contract costs. Mr. Williams proceeded to state that the BC responsibilities are with regards to the financial aspect of the contracts and that BC members could certainly ask questions related to the financial aspect of the contracts. Mr. Williams assured that the Department Heads would be presenting their individual budgets and that they would be the ones to ask and receive answers from related to their contract information.

Mr. Williams stated that currently various salary line-items show the Default Budget that goes back to 2018 but that the BOS issued pay raises during Default Budgets in 2019 and 2020. Mr. Williams requested that current salary information be provided for the joint meeting. The intent is so that everyone is aware of what the current salaries are so that any salary increases proposed for 2021 show the percentage of increase from the current salary and not just the higher percentage reflecting increases versus the 2018 salaries currently listed. Mr. Williams stated he wants to ensure that the public understands that the higher percentage proposed increases, as indicated on the spreadsheet, are not an accurate indication of what the actual increases are over the current 2020 salaries. An example used was for Assessing where the proposed salary indicates a 19% increase over the 2020 Default Budget, but the reality is the increase over the current salary is minimal or even zero in some cases.

The BC proceeded to review the remaining Department and Committee budget areas, as well as looking at current 2020 expenditures through August 2020 with general discussions to identify areas for potential questions at the joint BOS-BC meeting. Based on the discussions, Mr. Williams highlighted various areas where BC members identified line-items and general questions for Department Heads during the meeting, including some inconsistencies and formula errors, one of which was an error in Planning and Codes where a miscalculation in Social Security, using 1.62%

vice 6.2% in the calculation formula, resulted in a \$3,339 error in the proposed budget. Mr. Williams reiterated that he would forward the marked-up spreadsheet to all BC members for their review and preparation for the joint meeting. Mr. Williams also addressed the need for the BOS and Town Administrator to work on pay plans for all town employees. Ms. Burnham stated that the BOS and Town Administrator are working on the pay plan proposals. Mr. Beaulieu stated that it would have to be voted on, to which Mr. Williams and others agreed.

Mr. Marique asked if the town had received all the Outside Appropriation requests. Ms. Burnham stated that the BOS discussed putting Warrant Articles together for the public to vote on some of the items to get the budget below the Default. Ms. Hurd expressed her concern for putting Outside Appropriations on Warrant Articles. Mr. Williams stated that past history has shown that the expenditures for Outside Appropriations has ranged from 85.7% to over 107% expended. Additional discussion about this topic continued. Mr. Williams stated that the goal was not to solve the issue during this meeting but to highlight those areas where we want to raise any questions or concerns during the joint meeting. Ms. Dawson-Boulanger also addressed the importance of various groups in the Outside Appropriations like the Wakefield Food Pantry. Mr. Williams stated that all the questions and concerns were very valid and to ensure we ask those questions during the presentations because we cannot solve them now.

During a discussion about the reductions in the Welfare Budget, Ms. Dawson-Boulanger mentioned that rent assistance requests are most likely down because of the Covid-19 moratorium on delinquent rent and mortgages from April to date. That once the moratorium is lifted that all the overdue payments will have to be paid and requests for assistance will most likely increase.

Although the BC does not control any part of the Sanitary Sewer budget, general discussion about the Sewer budget and upgrades that are needed for the liner to the lagoon took place. Ernie Creveling stated that Mr. Dale Sprague may not be attending the joint BOS-BC meeting, but he could attend a separate meeting if the BC had specific questions.

Mr. Williams reiterated that the goal of the joint BOS-BC meeting was to get answers to as many of our questions as possible during the meeting but to ensure we have all questions answered by the end of September so that the BC may finalize our Town Budget Proposal by the end of October.

Mr. Williams proposed moving the next regularly scheduled meeting from September 22nd to October 6th to allow time for all questions and concerns to be answered. Mr. Brown suggested to have the Planning Board meeting of October 6th moved to the Emma Ramsey Center so that the BC could meet in the BOS chamber.

Other Items to be Brought Before the Committee

Mr. Shute stated that the School Board was proceeding with their budget as if the school was fully opened. Mr. Williams stated that the suggestion from the BC for the School Board was the same as for the Town's budget and that is imperative to come in under the Default Budget because the voters were very clear that they will vote for the lesser amount. Mr. Williams stated that we need to get budgets passed and under control. The longer we are under the Default Budget the harder it will be to ever get a budget passed because changes are going to keep coming.

Mr. Brown mentioned the limited capacity at the town hall for the for the budget presentations due to social distancing. Mr. Williams mentioned that the reason we are holding it at the town hall to ensure we could livestream/record the presentations for the public. If we were to hold it at the school, we would not be able to livestream/record the meeting.

Ms. Hurd thanked Mr. Williams, Mr. Creveling and Ms. Burnham for making the budget process go so much better this year than last year. Mr. Williams stated that the ideal goal is to streamline the budget process.

Mr. Beaulieu mentioned the NMHA Virtual Budget Workshop scheduled September 24, 2020. The cost is \$65 per person and the Budget Committee does have funding available for training. Mr. Williams asked Mr. Creveling how this training would be paid for – was the town going to pay for the training upfront or reimburse any individual who paid for his or her training? Mr. Creveling stated either method was acceptable. Ms. Marique asked if the town had a computer that she could use for the training. Mr. Creveling stated that the town had a computer available for Ms. Marique to use and he also stated that the BOS chambers could be used for anyone who wanted to attend the training and the town would pay for that upfront. Mr. Beaulieu, Ms. Marique and Ms. Burnham are expected to use the BOS chamber for the training. Ms. Gautreau is going to do the training from her home.

Public Comments

Public comments were made and addressed during the meeting.

Adjournment

Mr. Williams stated he would entertain a motion to conclude the meeting.

Mr. Brown made the motion to adjourn at 8:02PM. Seconded by Ms Hurd. Roll call vote – Ms. Marique – yes, Mr. McDougall – yes; Ms. Gautreau – yes; Ms. Hurd – yes; Mr. Beaulieu – yes; Ms. Burnham – yes; Mr. Brown – yes; and Mr. Williams – yes. The motion passed 8/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Humphrey Williams – Budget Committee Chairman

Minutes approved – November 12, 2020