

Town of Milton
BUDGET COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING MEETING
January 16, 2021

ATTENDANCE:

Members: Humphrey Williams (Chair), Peg Hurd, Lisa Gautreau, Bob Carrier, Claudine Burnham, Larry Brown, Danielle Marique, Mike Beaulieu

Board of Selectmen: Andrew Rawson, Claudine Burnham

Staff: Ernie Creveling, Town Administrator, Julius Peel, Bruce Woodruff, Chief Richard Krauss, Betsy Baker

Representatives from the Milton School District: Doug Shute – School Board Chair, Nathan Castle – Business Admin., Jan Radowicz – Nute Middle-High School Principal, John Safina – Nute Elementary Principal, Robert Qua – Special Ed. Director,

Public: Lynette McDougall, Mr. and Mrs. Shawn Miller

Humphrey Williams, Chair, opened the public hearing at 9:00AM.

1.) Pledge of Allegiance: Humphrey Williams, Chair, led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2.) Roll Call:

a. Mr. Williams, Chair, led the roll call of members to determine if a quorum was present.

Humphrey Williams (Chair), Peg Hurd, Lisa Gautreau, Bob Carrier, Claudine Burnham, Danielle Marique, Larry Brown, Mike Beaulieu : A quorum was present.

b. Mr. Rawson made a motion to open the Board of Selectmen meeting; Ms. Burnham seconded the motion. All in were in favor; the motion passed to open the Board of Selectmen meeting.

3.) Adjustment to Budget Discussion:

Mr. Williams explained that due to recent information from Chief Krauss concerning the overall police department operating budget, the Town operating budget would also be impacted.

According to Chief Krauss, there was an increase in the NH Retirement System that starts July 1, 2021 (an increase from 28.3% to 33.8%). The increase of \$15,900, mandated from the state, is reflected in the Police Department total Budget Proposal with the following change: \$928,802 to \$939,702, as well as the Default Budget from \$938,910 to \$954,810.

Mr. Williams made a motion to accept the increase in the budget based on the corrected amounts. Ms. Marique seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Brown reminded all that this increase will be reflected in both the operating and the default budgets. Mr. Williams stated even with this increase, the proposed budget will still come in under the default. Chief Krauss apologized for his original oversight.

Roll call vote: **Ms. Gautreau, Mr. Brown, Ms. Marique, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hurd, Ms. Burnham, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Williams all voted Yes. Motion Carried – 8 / 0 / 0**

4.) Public Hearing on Town Warrants:

Article 1: Election of Officers

Mr. Williams listed the positions that will be available and reminded the town residents the positions will need to be filled. If someone is interested, beginning on January 20th, they could submit their information.

Article 2: Zoning Ordinance Amendment, Solar Facilities:

While this is not a budget committee item, Mr. Bruce Woodruff, Town Planner, gave a brief history of the planning ordinance. He explained that currently there is no guidance for staff, nor protections for the public if a facility was built next to their properties.

Article 3: Operating Budget

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the amended operating budget of \$4,600,519. Mr. Brown seconded the motion.

Discussion: There was no discussion.

Roll call vote: **Ms. Gautreau, Mr. Brown, Ms. Marique, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hurd, Ms. Burnham, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Williams all voted Yes. Motion Carried – 8 / 0 / 0**

Mr. Rawson made a motion to accept Article 3: Operating Budget as written. Ms. Burnham seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion passed.

Article 4: Highway and Road Construction Fund

This had been approved previously with no additional changes.

Discussion: Mr. Beaulieu pointed out that because last year's Article was defeated, there was no new paving to the road system, only patch work. Mr. Rawson explained that each year there are Warrant Articles put forward with the bare minimum of request. The town is currently behind in taking care of the roads. Infrastructure is vital to the town and is urging town residents to vote for this article.

Article 5: Employee Retention Plan:

Mr. Williams explained since this proposed five-year plan will have impact on the budgets going forward, the committee will need to vote on whether or not to approve this specific Warrant Article.

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the Employee Retention Plan Article as presented. Ms. Marique seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Williams explained this will help all departments and employees understand where they fall within salary ranges, establish performance expectations and help with overall yearly budgeting processes. Ms. Marique questioned what the estimated cost impact will be? Mr. Shute questioned if this will remove the public role's in approving salary increases and article wording should be updated to reflect impact on both the default and proposed budgets. Mr. Rawson also would like to see the wording of the Warrant Article tweaked slightly for added transparency and it's important to have consistency throughout all departments. Mr. Creveling noted that additional wording would be added to the Warrant Article prior to the Deliberative

Session. Mr. Carrier asked for specific information on how the plan would work. Mr. Williams pointed out that the spreadsheet of tables had been provided. In answer to Ms. Marique's initial question, Mr. Creveling will have all departments formatted using the new plan numbers and provide that information to the committee. Ms. Marique congratulated Chief Krauss for his 20 years of service to the town. All committee members recognized Chief Krauss.

Mr. Williams made a motion to rescind his original motion to accept the Employee Retention Plan Article as presented. Ms. Marique seconded the motion.

Ms. Hurd made a motion to approve Article 5 – Employee Retention Plan – with the added wording to the second sentence after... incorporated into the operating budget (and default budget)... in subsequent years. Ms. Marique seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: **Ms. Gautreau, Mr. Brown, Ms. Marique, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hurd, Ms. Burnham, Mr. Williams all voted Yes. Mr. Beaulieu voted No. Motion Carried – 7 / 1 / 0**

Article 6: Bridge Capital Reserve Fund

Mr. Woodruff provided history specifically to the Winding Road Bridge project. The match is vital to allow the town to receive monies from the state and explained the need to continually add monies to be ready at the project start. Mr. Williams also stressed this does not include the Town House Bridge.

Article 7: Municipal Building Capital Reserve Fund

Mr. Creveling pointed out this fund would help with maintenance issues for the Town Hall such as roof repairs and the foundation. This fund would help lessen the impact on the Operating Budget.

Article 8: Boat Ramp Repair

There was no discussion.

Article 9: Milton Free Public Library Capital Reserve Fund

Ms. Baker explained work has been underway for several years and this fund would help to finalize and finish all projects.

Article 10: Technology Upgrade Capital Reserve Fund

There was no discussion.

Article 11: Geographic Information System:

Mr. Woodruff provided history and information the GIS provides to both the town and to the residents. He acknowledged the system is expensive and adding data layers is expensive but vital to each town department.

Article 12: Eradicate Invasive Plant Species

Mr. Beaulieu questioned if additional wording should be added to the Article explaining what Maine is providing since Milton shares the ponds with Maine. Mr. Williams explained that the both the State of New Hampshire and State of Maine Department of Environmental services

provide Grant money to the Three Ponds Protective Association (TPPA) and that the TPPA, Town of Milton and Town of Lebanon, ME split the treatment costs equally three ways. Mr. Creveling stated the explanation section would be the best way to provide that information. Mr. Rawson thanked the residents for approving this Article in the past as it is vital to the economics of the town.

Article 13: Establishment of Independent Capital Improvement Program Committee

Mr. Woodruff explained the importance of establishing this committee. The Planning Board currently spends large amounts of time on these endeavors when their focus should be elsewhere. This committee would lessen that time amount. He also explained other communities have already created this committee. Mr. Shute questioned if the ordinance could require a member from the school board? Ms. Hurd asked if that could be added to the actual Warrant Article? Mr. Woodruff explained the first order of business is to create the committee. Their first duties would include creating by-laws and that could include adding the school board member requirement.

Article 14: Dawson Street & Silver Street Area Draining Project – Phase I

This is a new Warrant Article.

Mr. Rawson gave background information and explained the impact the current drainage system and its inability to handle major stormwater has had on residents living in the noted area.

Mr. Rawson made a motion for the Board of Selectmen to accept the Warrant Article with wording changes noting the amount of \$219,611. Ms. Burnham seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion passed.

Mr. Woodruff explained that while the town did apply for grant help, they had not been accepted. They will work to resubmit the project into a state grant program to help with sidewalks and curbing. This could help to pay for more of the project. Mr. Rawson also noted to help with financial considerations the project could be stretched out by first addressing the most important piece of the project to start. Mr. Creveling indicated the plan is posted in the lobby of the Town Hall and will have posted on the website.

Ms. Hurd made a motion to approve Article 14: Dawson Street & Silver Street Area Draining Project. Ms. Marique seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Beaulieu questioned if this Article is only for the first stage? He also questioned what the additional stages are and how would this be impacted if only the first stage was approved? Ms. Marique questioned if each stage is designed to be built upon the previous stage, what does entire project look like and are all phases designed to stand alone? According to Mr. Creveling, all stages are designed to stand alone. Mr. Rawson said this first stage is the most importance piece. Mr. Shute stated the need to really provide education and information to the town to help increase understanding. Mr. Rawson introduced Mr. and Mrs. Miller who have been directly impacted by these issues. Mr. Shawn Miller of 28 Dawson Street explained they have experienced massive damage to their foundation due to heavy rain falls. They had previously approached the town to help fix the issues, however, no help had previously been

provided. On December 25, 2020, due to heavy rain, they now have a sink hole measuring ~25 feet wide and 5 feet deep.

Ms. Burnham pointed out that previous article on road work did not pass and stressed it's so important for the town to understand and provide education to the community. She also questioned if the article does not pass, what kind of liability issues could this have? Ms. Hurd said the school has also been impacted. Mr. Williams wondered if there is any alternative plan to help the Millers should the Warrant Article not pass. Ms. Gautreau stressed how important it is to maintain the roads and town infrastructure and to not let these issues get to the point where major damage occurs. She also suggested Mr. Miller add any video showing the destruction to the town's Facebook page – this could go a long way to helping the town understand what is currently happening. Mr. Brown stated it's important to understand that municipal monies are to be used for municipal purposes. Mr. Williams would like to have a contingency plan developed in case the Article does not pass and perhaps some monies from block grant are left over.

Roll call vote: **Ms. Gautreau, Mr. Brown, Ms. Marique, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hurd, Ms. Burnham, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Williams all voted Yes. Motion Carried – 8 / 0 / 0**

Article 15: Milton Town House Special Revenue Fund

Ms. Hurd made a motion to approve the setup of a special revenue fund for upkeep and repairs of the Milton Town House. Ms. Marique seconded the motion.

Discussion: Ms. Hurd expressed while she has no problem with the concepts behind this particular article, she questioned how would this Special Revenue Fund be controlled by the Town's legislative body since you can't predict revenues nor maintenance expenditures. Mr. Brown believes this to be defective since the Town House, while being a special building due to its history, is a town owned building. Mr. Williams stated that as a government building it would be maintained by the town's Government Building funding and that we also have a Municipal Buildings Capital Reserve Fund. Ms. Gautreau questioned who put this article forward? Mr. Creveling explained this was based on discussions involving Mr. John Katwick who would like all revenues received for this building to be used only for this building. He also pointed out that SRF's (Special Revenue Fund) have been used in other communities. Mr. Williams again pointed out that it is impossible to predict both revenues and expenditures at the Annual Town Meeting and that if problems requiring maintenance arise during the year that you can't wait to address them until the next Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Rawson questioned why monies couldn't ~~monies~~ be set aside like the Town Beach or other town owned buildings. Ms. Hurd questioned if the Town Beach utilizes a revolving fund, wouldn't it make sense to also use a revolving fund for the Town House? According to Ms. McDougall, there is no real plan in place and asked for a master plan for all buildings.

Roll call vote: **Ms. Burnham voted Yes. Ms. Gautreau, Mr. Brown, Ms. Marique, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hurd, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Williams all voted No. Motion did not carry – 1 / 7 / 0**

Mr. Rawson made a motion to remove Warrant Article 15. Ms. Burnham seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion passed.

Article 16: Tax Cap Amendment

Ms. Hurd made a motion to amend the Tax Cap. Mr. Beaulieu seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Brown expressed this does nothing to change the process voted by the town, it just changes the time frame from a January to January time-frame to a July to July time-frame for determining the Consumer Price Index effects

Roll call vote: **Ms. Gautreau, Mr. Brown, Ms. Marique, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hurd, Ms. Burnham, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Williams all voted Yes. Motion Carried – 8 / 0 / 0**

Article 17: Posting Casey Road Conservation Land “No Hunting”

As explained by Mr. Rawson, the Conservation Commission submitted this to the Board of Selectmen to determine if residents would like hunting or no hunting on Casey Road. Both the Conservation Commission and the Board of Selectmen agree it is best to leave the decision to town residents. There is no needed vote from the Budget nor the BOS.

Article 18: Petition Warrant Article – Paving of Bolan Road

Mr. Williams questioned whether or not the Board of Selectman were going to provide a recommendation on this Warrant Article Mr. Rawson questioned if this is a Petition Warrant Article, is it necessary or required for the Board of Selectmen to vote? While it is not required, the BOS decided they will vote on the Warrant Article.

Mr. Rawson made a motion to recommend including the Petition Warrant Article. Ms. Burnham seconded the motion.

Discussion. Mr. Rawson recommended leaving this to the town residents to determine whether or not to approve the article. He also stressed the importance of everyone understanding the major issues involved and the safety issues to all if town infrastructure is not taken care of. Mr. Williams would like to see an overall road plan versus an Article for just one road. Currently there is no plan for moving forward. According to Mr. Creveling, the recommendation could be removed.

Mr. Rawson made a motion to leave the BOS recommendation on the Warrant Article. Ms. Burnham seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion passed.

Mr. Williams made a motion to not include the recommendation from the Budget Committee on the Warrant Article. Ms. Marique seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Brown was in favor of abstaining with the following opinions: He recognized the overall condition of the road and the hazards it posed; he recognized the need for a road plan; he also recognized that people make choices to live on the roads they do.

The Budget Committee will not vote on this article.

Mr. Rawson made a motion to end the Board of Selectmen meeting. Ms. Burnham seconded the motion. The Board of Selectmen meeting ended at 11:50AM.

5.) Public Hearing on School Warrant:

Mr. Carrier began the discussion with the following General Items from this year's School Book:

- The proposed budget excludes warrant articles.
- Support staff salaries are based on a step increase according to the approved salary schedules.
- Teacher salary increases are based on the current approved CBA.
- Health insurance is based on an increase of 1.5% over FY 21 rates.
- Dental insurance did not change over FY 21 rates.
- Retirement rates increased from 11.17% to 14.06% for employees and from 17.8% to 21.02% for teachers.
- Disability insurance costs are based on salaries at a rate of .255%.
- The proposed budget has an overall increase of \$332,018.93, which results in an increase of 3.05% over FY 21.
- The default budget is \$11,234,752.13 - .2% over the FY 22 proposed budget.

Article 1: Election of Officers: The vote and elections will occur March 9th and take place in the school gymnasium.

Article 2: Operating Budget. The Budget Committee previously recommended the Operating Budget of \$11,211,713.64 which is under the Default Budget. There was no discussion.

Article 3: Creation of Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of purchasing and maintaining maintenance vehicles for the School District, and to raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000 to be placed in this fund.

Discussion: According to Mr. Brown, the School Board has tried for the past three years to purchase necessary maintenance vehicles. Mr. Beaulieu stated the current equipment is less than adequate and believes this Article to be very worthwhile.

Article 4: Raise and appropriate the sum of \$5,000 to purchase library media for the Nute High School and Library.

Discussion: Ms. Hurd reminded everyone that the library is open to the public and will benefit from approving this Article.

Article 5: Use of unreserved fund balance and to raise and appropriate up to \$50,000 for the expendable fund trust for the education of educationally disabled children.

Discussion: Ms. Hurd stated how it's always questioned why the need to add monies to this fund when there is already money in the fund. It's important to understand how the School District can never predict exactly how much money will be needed since this is all dependent upon what new students who need services might move into the district. Mr. Williams pointed out the money still has to be paid as services are state mandated and without this fund the monies would have to come from other parts of the budget.

Article 6: Use of unreserved fund balance to raise and appropriate up to \$50,000 for the purpose of repairing and maintaining school buildings.

There was no discussion.

Article 7: Use of unreserved fund balance to raise and appropriate up to \$15,000 to be placed in the expendable trust fund for the School Bus Trust Fund.

There was no discussion.

Article 8: Use of unreserved fund balance to raise and appropriate up to \$10,000 to be placed in the Technology Expendable Trust Fund.

There was no discussion.

Mr. Williams made a motion to end the Public Hearing portion of the meeting. Ms. Hurd seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Ms. Gautreau, Mr. Brown, Ms. Marique, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hurd, Ms. Burnham, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Williams all voted Yes. Motion Carried – 8 / 0 / 0

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

Mr. Williams will continue working with Mr. Creveling on all the updates and thanked everyone for their huge effort and support. He acknowledged 2020 had been a very difficult year with COVID and late start to the process. He also thanked Mr. Tom McDougall for his commitment and contributions.

Mr. Williams again thanked the town and all town departments, as well as the School Board and Administration for developing budgets that come in under the default as requested by the Budget Committee. He stressed the need for both the town and school budgets to pass.

7.) Next Scheduled Meeting:

Mr. Williams opened the discussion to determine the next scheduled meeting date pointing out the normal meeting schedule would be at the end of the month and that the committee wait until the Deliberative Session. Ms. Hurd recommended waiting until the Deliberative Session which is February 6th. The consensus was the next meeting would be the Deliberative Session.

Additional Comments from the Committee Members:

Ms. Hurd: It's frustrating with all the recent changes regarding the Warrant Articles.

Ms. Burnham: Some Warrant Articles were given at the last minute to the Board of Selectmen delaying how quickly the Budget Committee would receive them.

Ms. Marique: She stressed the need for better and increased communication going forward.

Mr. Brown: This is very normal to receive items at the last minute.

Mr. Williams: Next year's goals include getting everything done as early as possible and encourage more public participation, especially new participants.

Mr. Beaulieu: A reminder for everyone to complete and return their town surveys. This is the town residents' opportunity to tell officials what is needed and help to establish priorities.

8.) Adjournment:

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

Ms. Marique made the motion to adjourn at 12:30PM. Seconded by Ms. Hurd. All were in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amy Winslow-Weiss, Recording Secretary – Budget Committee