

TOWN OF HOPKINTON
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 18, 2018
Approved

COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Janet Krzyzaniak, Don Houston, Ken Traum, Richard Houston, Deborah Norris, Jonathan Cohen Ginni Haines, and Liz Durant, School Board Representative for Matt Belanger

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

John Wuellenweber, Mark Zankel, and Matt Belanger

PUBLIC ATTENDEE

Diane LaChange, Candice Youngman, Mary Kusturin

CALL TO ORDER

Janet Krzyzaniak called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m., at the Town Hall. Don Houston led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Don Houston motioned that Janet Krzyzaniak be nominated as the Chair of the Budget Committee. Ginni Haines seconded the motion. There were no other nominations. *A vote was taken. All Board Members approved the motion.*

Ken Traum motioned that Rich Houston be nominated as the Vice-Chair of the Budget Committee. Debbie Norris seconded the motion. There were no other nominations. *A vote was taken. All Board Members approved the motion.*

APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 14, 2018, PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT MINUTES

Ken Traum moved to approve the February 14, 2018, Public Hearing Draft Minutes. Don Houston seconded the motion. A vote was taken to approve the February 14, 2018, minutes. Ginni Haines thanked Tammy Clay for the details included in the minutes. *A vote was taken. All Board Members approved the motion.*

PROGRAMMATIC BUDGET FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD DISCUSSION

Janet Krzyzaniak wanted to discuss Mark Zankel's expression, made at the February 14, 2018, Public Hearing, that he thought there needed to be some members of the School Board, Budget Committee, and a Select Person to consider the ideas raised at the Public Hearing about the need for the School Board to present a programmatic budget. He would like to see some sort of task force established between the three committees, to help community members better understand the details behind the School Board's Budget.

PROGRAMMATIC BUDGET FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD DISCUSSION, cont.

Liz Durant shared that there are concerns regarding the confidentiality issues. She asked if the Board knew what a programmatic budget is? She would like Mr. Zankel to be present to explain what the intent of the “task force” would be. She asked if these issues could be answered with the elected officials already in place, instead of creating new “committees”? She explained that a programmatic budget is much different for a town versus a school.

Ms. Krzyzaniak asked Ms. Durant what her idea of a programmatic budget was.

Ms. Durant explained that Steve Chamberlin looked up and found that there are no other school districts in the State of NH that prepare a programmatic budget. She explained that a programmatic budget would call out certain programs within the high school to describe what the true cost is to provide a class to the number of students who want to take advantage of that class. She asked what information the task force is looking for, that is not already provided in the reports. She asked if the problem is a presentation issue rather as opposed to an information issue.

Ginni Haines found the following regarding the advantages of having a Programmatic Budget:

- It helps in determining the priority of projects.
- It helps in the planning and managing delivery of services/programs.
- It monitors the allocation and resources to a project and how they are used to meet the goals.
- It helps identify the areas where cost reductions and savings could be made.
- It helps find the areas where funds are required.

She explained that, no matter what type of budget is being presented, these are the important areas that need to be included.

Ms. Durant responded that these are great guidelines to be included in a presentation.

Don Houston explained that his vision of a programmatic budget would be that each department present their budget, vertically, starting with payroll and benefits, and then continue line by line with the costs of that department. It would continue the same way with each of the classes offered in that department. This would educate the town about each dollar spent. He explained that having the information provided vertically allows for a clearer understanding of what a particular curriculum segment would cost; this would then make it easier set priorities because the “true” cost for offering a class would be clearly visible.

Ms. Durant explained that there is always value to certain situations, and they are being evaluated constantly, and she would like Steve Chamberlin to speak on this from an educational perspective. She said that what she needs to hear from the Budget Committee is, “in order for you all to make the decisions that rests within the responsibilities of this committee, what information would be helpful”? She would like to continue conversations with the Budget Committee, and talk with Mr. Chamberlin, so that we can move forward in creating a collaborative working relationship, meeting in the middle, so that enough information is being provided. Ms. Durant explained that she will take the request, if it’s the consensus of the

PROGRAMMATIC BUDGET FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD DISCUSSION, cont.

Budget Committee, to the School Board. This will give the School Board a chance to respond. From there the Boards can collectively decide where the middle might be.

Don Houston suggested that a meeting, for this topic, be held separately to discuss what this topic means and are there other things that need to be discussed besides the programmatic budget.

Ms. Durant explained that Matt Belanger would come back to discuss what and that with the School Board. If the School Board feels this is a good place to meet, providing enough information, to allow the Budget Committee to do their job they are charged with doing.

Mr. Houston explained that when the public comes to the Budget Committee meetings, they are looking for information, that is much clearer to them, than what was presented.

Ms. Durant encouraged the public to attend the School Board meetings throughout the budget process, there is so much more information, in greater detail than is shared at these meetings.

Rich Houston asked that, if this task force is formed, one of the items he'd like discussed is aligning the school and the town's fiscal years. He finds that when talking about the town budget, everything is clear because decisions are being made at the end of the year. When the school budget is discussed in February, there are still five months to go until the end of their fiscal year, and estimates are way out there for the end of the year budget. It is very difficult, for him, to understand the school budget because it is difficult to get answers from the School Board, when the budget doesn't end for another six months. Mr. Houston feels that a programmatic budget would clean things up a little bit, allowing the Budget Committee to have figures in black and white, six months ahead.

Ms. Durant explained that there are contracts and the school budget is based on an academic year.

Jonathan Cohen stated he is wondering if more information could be put into the School Board Minutes, that everyone can look at. He suggested having the format of the information presented be improved, so that it is easier to understand.

Ms. Durant suggested that feedback be given to the School Board regarding how to make their presentations easier to understand. She suggested that the Budget Committee put together a list of items they'd like the School Board to discuss, Matt can bring them back to the School Board to be discussed, and then the School Board could respond.

Ms. Durant stated she does not support the idea of a task force, she'd rather work with the existing elected bodies, including the Budget Committee, to take a look at what they can do to provide better and more information, where they can.

Ms. Krzyziniak explained that her reason for having a meeting this soon, was so that this item could be discussed and worked on.

PROGRAMMATIC BUDGET FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD DISCUSSION, cont.

Ms. Haines stated that having the streaming services available for all Town Hall meetings is a wonderful opportunity because people are listening. She would like the School Board to consider being a part of this too.

Ms. Durant explained that there are different regulations for town meetings than there are for school meetings for streaming or posting. She explained that there are legality issues regarding streaming live, archiving to watch later, and recording. This topic is being investigated with the School Board lawyers and the information will be shared as soon as it is available; there are different regulations that pertain to School Board Meetings. Audio recordings are available at this time, but storing streamed meetings on their web site, to be viewed later, might not be legal and they could be fined.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Diane LaChance shared that she found a web site that described the benefits of programmatic versus line item budgets regarding School Districts. She reinforced that it is the Budget Committee's responsibility to find a balance between all the other expenses in town and the school expenses. She wonders how many programs are being funded that the taxpayers don't know about, when describing the football program.

Liz Durant encouraged that all interested taxpayers attend the Program of Studies Night (this meeting is a presentation to the School Board that outlines all the courses that will be available at the high school for the upcoming year) and the School Board and Budget Committee Meetings, so that they are aware of the upcoming expenses.

Mary Kusterin suggested that an increase in revenues and cuts to the budget need to go hand in hand, so that residents can save some money.

Overall, the main request was for more detailed school budget information be available to tax payers.

REPORTS

No financial reports were required at this meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD

Rich Houston asked when the Steering Committee Meetings for the Facilities Project would resume.

Ms. Durant explained that May 8th will be the first meeting and Jay Burgess will continue as Committee Chair for the Facilities Project. There may be some steering committee members leaving and new members joining. It is the hope of the School Board that the information will be provided to them early enough, so that it can be presented to the Budget Committee in a timely manner.

OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, cont.

Don Houston shared that there is a new non-profit Ad Hoc Committee in the state <http://sdganh.org/> whose mission is “giving voters a voice by empowering elected school district officials to reclaim power over budgets and curriculum. Knowledge is power.” He asked if the Collective Bargaining negotiations would be open to public attendees.

Ms. Durant explained that this will be investigated.

Upcoming Budget Meetings:

Wednesday, May 9 – 5:30 pm – Hopkinton Town Hall

Wednesday, June 13 – 5:30 pm – Hopkinton Town Hall

July and August there will be no meetings, at this time.

Don Houston asked about the framework for School Board Meetings regarding questions versus comments.

Ms. Durant explained that the response method is up to the Chair to decide if a question can be answered, with the detail needed, to give a clear answer. The Board is not obligated to answer questions at their Business Meetings. If a question cannot be answered at that time, that question can be answered at the next meeting for better clarification and a clearer answer. The School Board wants to answer questions as accurately as possible.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Ken Traum motioned to adjourn at 6:45 p.m. Don Houston seconded the motion. There was no discussion. A vote was taken, and all Board Members approved to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,
Tammy Clay