

**TOWN OF ENFIELD
ENFIELD BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES January 25, 2024**

TIME: 6:30 PM

LOCATION: Dept. of Public Works Facility & Teams Videoconference
74 Lockhaven Road, Enfield

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Jane Plumley, Dan Kiley, Mike Diehn, James Fickett, John Kluge (ex-officio), Shirley Green (Vice-Chair), Dimitri Deserranno (Chair), Tina Stearns, Brad Rich

EXCUSED: Nancy Smith

STAFF: Ed Morris (Town Manager), Alisa Bonnette (Assistant Town Manager), Whitney Banker (Recording Secretary)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Roy Holland (Enfield Police Chief), Rob Taylor (Enfield Land Use and Community Development Administrator), Tracy Young (Enfield Select Board), Kevin Marker (Enfield Recreation Director), Jim Taylor (Enfield Public Works Director), Dave Beaufait

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Deserranno called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 18, 2024

Mr. Kiley made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Kluge seconded. Vote unanimously in favor of the motion (9-0).

Amendments

Line 92 – add “participated in the compensation study.”

BUSINESS

Budget Review

Mr. Morris provided members with proposed operating budget increases for cost-of-living adjustment (COLA)/merit/step raise percentages for NH towns compared to Enfield’s proposed budget. He asked towns about the increase in their operating budgets and included additional data if provided by the towns. Members discussed the difference in percentages for Enfield, which was represented with the two buildings and without.

Chair Deserranno reviewed a consolidated spreadsheet he had put together from the more in-depth account budgets. He reviewed the layout and what information was included to compare the 2023 and 2024 budgets. There are four groups that all accounts break out into wages, non-wage labor (benefits), non-labor (Casella, salt, utilities), and debt. He presented to members the percentage and dollar amount increases within each category. Chair Deserranno noted that he plans to further break out details of the operating section during the public meeting to help community members understand where the money will go. Mr. Morris noted a 15.7% increase in health insurance, which accounts for a large amount of the health insurance dollar amount increase (in the non-labor/benefits portion). Mr. Rich asked if the town could negotiate health insurance costs. Mr. Morris said the rates are relatively competitive, and negotiation was not likely. Ms. Stearns asked about switching to a single high-deductible plan, which

several other towns had done and found several cost savings to the taxpayers as a result. Mr. Morris said that this is something they could look into over the next year.

Members thanked Chair Deserranno for his thorough work compiling the consolidated comparison spreadsheet.

Mr. Diehn asked if Chair Deserranno had done the percentage of the total budget for each line. Chair Deserranno said that he only did the percentage for the increase but could add this. Members agreed this would be helpful to have.

Mr. Morris said that he had added the Shedd Street property to the undesignated fund balance, which somewhat brought the tax rate down.

Chair Deserranno commented that while it is not possible to predict what will happen in the future, the loans will be on the books, so there will not be another significant increase for that. The Casella contract is five years, so there will not be as much of an increase, and the Shedd Street property will be complete. These items will all lead to what will likely be a lower increase in the future versus this year's significant increase.

Mr. Diehn asked to clarify that the 11.06% is not the tax rate, but the municipal tax need increase. Mr. Morris confirmed this was correct.

Mr. Young asked Mr. Kiley if the Shedd Street \$75k remainder was put into the (Capital Improvement Program) CIP. Mr. Kiley said it was not. Mr. Morris said they had asked the town attorney and were told they could not put this into the fund. It is in the plan but not the fund (and will come from undesignated funds).

Chair Deserranno said he had seen emails on the Listserv that discussed 15% or 18% tax rate increases, which were incorrect. He said that there is a re-evaluation happening within the town. The entire town's percentage is up 11.06%, and the school side is up 3.02%. The bill will not increase 15% or 18% - it will be smaller. He estimated a 6% increase overall. Mr. Morris said that they predicted this as well, about 6%.

Mr. Diehn asked what the school district is trying to raise in taxes. Chair Deserranno and Mr. Kiley said they did not know this number separated from the overall budget. Mr. Diehn said that community members would then need to understand that overall, the increase on their bill would be about 6%. Members agreed this was correct.

Mr. Morris clarified that the recreation number, under personnel, covers multiple people who fall under this category. The recreation director alone is not receiving a 21% increase. The column shows a significant increase. However, this is not going to a single employee. The expectation is that there will be an increase in revenue for recreation when taking over sports registration as well, which will offset some of the Recreation Director's salary. The Mascoma Youth Sports have included all five towns in the past.

Chair Deserranno identified other categories with significant increases: Recreation, DPW, Elections/Registrations/Vital Statistics (several people were moved from other accounts into this one, creating what appears to be a significant increase, as well as a Microsoft government migration move that will be a considerable cost here).

Mr. Diehn asked Chair Deserranno if the total change column percentage was for that line; he confirmed it was. Mr. Diehn asked about the difference between wage and non-wage. Chair Deserranno clarified that

non-wage was benefits. Chair Deserranno will change non-wage to read 'benefits' and non-labor to read 'general operating expenses.'

Mr. Diehn clarified that the general sense is the tax bill will go up by about 6%. There is an 11.06% increase in the town portion of the tax bill, and 5.06% of that is for the new buildings.

Chair Deserranno said that of the operating budget increase, the new buildings, health insurance, and Casella account for 76%. With Shedd Street included these account for 84% of the rise.

Members discussed and agreed that if Casella's curbside pickup were removed, the costs and environmental impacts of increasing the transfer station's size (and staffing) would account for a higher cost. Ms. Plumley added that we know that having the curbside pickup helps avoid trash being dumped on the roadside. She said that she still felt the town should look into separating glass. Mr. Morris asked Mr. J. Taylor if he could get the number difference for trash versus recycling to determine how much the town could save by separating glass. Mr. J. Taylor said that he would get this information.

Presentation Preparation

Chair Deserranno said he plans to use the same format as last year for his presentation, with some areas broken down further to help community members understand. He said that he would send the presentation to members for feedback and reminded members to only reply to him and not everyone (which would then count as a meeting). After all feedback is returned, Chair Deserranno will forward the updated presentation to Mr. Morris.

Mr. Diehn asked if the "Concerned Citizens of Enfield" had submitted their warrant articles. Mr. Morris said that some were submitted today. Mr. Diehn asked when the warrant articles would be available for review. Mr. Morris said he could put them together and send them out.

Ms. Plumley said it was important for the public to know that the town isn't always awarded grants, but they are aggressively applying for them. Mr. Morris said the slide with grants applied for versus grants received could be added to the presentation.

OTHER BUSINESS

Public Comments

Mr. Young asked, assuming the undesignated fund balance is used as suggested, what percentage remains in the undesignated fund balance? Mr. Morris estimated they would be within the 10-12% range. Mr. Young suggested that the committee may wish to confirm if the undesignated fund balance buy-down (which kicks part of the rate increase to next year). Members agreed that they did want to do the \$100k write-down of the tax rate from the undesignated fund balance. No large expenses (like the two buildings) are expected for next year. Members agreed that a major storm would be the only thing they could anticipate, which may have some FEMA funding assistance available. Chief Holland said that the average turn-around time for FEMA payback is about eight months at this time (but would anticipate this may be longer for a large, catastrophic event). Mr. Morris added that the town is very good about tracking and submitting numbers to FEMA in a very timely manner. Mr. Young said several infrastructure items may be liquidated in the future, such as the Depot Street facility, the Union Street fire station, and some money from the Shedd Street property. These will contribute to lowering the tax rate.

Mr. Young commented that he felt the committee members should hold their heads high about their work on this budget. Mr. Beaufait commented that the presentation sounded great but may be hard to follow

without the spreadsheets; he asked if the spreadsheets would be available to the general public. Mr. Morris said that he would make them available.

Any Other Business

NEXT MEETINGS

Additional meetings to be scheduled if needed

February 6, 2024, presentation to Select Board, 6:30 PM, Public Works Facility & via Teams videoconference

February 7, 2024, Public Budget Hearing & Budget Committee meeting, 7:00 PM, Public Works Facility & via Teams videoconference

BUSINESS

Subheading – bold for each item

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kiley made a motion to adjourn at 7:30 pm. Ms. Plumley seconded. Vote unanimously in favor of the motion (9-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.