

Budget Committee Minutes

6:00pm Thursday, February 1st, 2018, Vinalhaven Town Office

Present- Andrew Dorr, Janann Sherman, Lucy McCarthy, Eric Davis, Gabe McPhail, Delwyn Webster, Bill Alcorn, Holly Sault, Jocelyn McLean. Margaret Qualey was absent.

Minutes – no previous minutes

Introduction

Setting a tentative schedule – It was discussed that 6pm might be too late to meet. Andy mentioned he isn't here Mondays; Eric noted that the committee could also meet somewhere else; library etc. A tentative weekly schedule was agreed on for Wednesdays starting February 14th at 5pm. Meetings will regularly be held for 1 hour, or up to 1.5 hours if extra time is needed.

It was also mentioned that anyone not able to attend would have the option to phone in via the conference telephone.

Janann nominated Bill Alcorn to be chair of the committee; Bill agreed that he would accept the role if the committee voted in favor of this.

Motion by Lucy, **second** by Del; **Vote: 6-0-1** (Bill Abstained). **Motion carried.**

Bill nominated Gabe to be Co-chair of the committee. Everyone present was in favor of this; it was agreed that Gabe would be co-chair. No official vote was taken.

Section Review & Discussion

Discussion- Andy has been preparing goal sheets for each department to get their budget recommendations. He discussed the tentative timeline for meeting – will need to wrap up by 3rd week of April so recommendations are ready for town report & town meeting. Town meeting potential date of June 20th.

Lucy asked about role of selectmen- when do they review our recommendations?

Andy: Selectmen generally meet 3rd & 4th weeks of the month; they might have to do some budget workshops as a several of them will be away on vacation at various times this winter/spring.

It was agreed that the budget committee members will all be notified if budget discussion is on the agenda for the selectmen, so they can attend the meeting to represent the committee, answer questions, etc.

Andy mentioned that with certain items there is little control-prices are locked in; mentioned the recent software transition in our budget/accounting software. He has been working to rebuild the chart of accounts- trying find a way to input data in a way that is better presented & improved efficiency.

It was noted to expect an increase in ferry prices, but especially freight costs which are much higher in the ferry rate structure/increase presented by MSFS. There is no way to get the trucks/services that are used by the town the island rate, even though they are providing an island service.

Andy is interested in providing a survey to help gain a sense of what community members want to see in the budget. Bill asked how we would distribute this. Andy gave examples like posting online, having paper copies available at the town office, and putting an ad in the wind. He's been trying to find ways to get more people engaged and involved in the budget process. He also mentioned potentially changing locations of budget meetings based on what material we are covering that week. Gabe commented that it's a valid idea to think about in general, and great to figure out a strategy to involve more people but should be done at an earlier stage in the process. Coming up with a strategy in the fall would give time to incorporate those thoughts coming into the budget season; she also mentioned the town in general needs a broader engagement strategy. Lucy mentioned sending things (like the survey) around the same time as tax bills. Eric agreed, saying that way it would reach people who aren't full time residents but are affected by the budget. Lucy suggested having a meeting towards the end of budget season to discuss how to engage the public.

Andy explained the packet provided with the budget snapshot and sample survey. The first 6 months of budget in snapshot were discussed.

Lucy asked about the auto excise amount. Andy explained that it included what we have collected so far this year. He also mentioned that the amount collected might be correlated with success of lobstering season, and therefore it is hard to estimate future amounts.

Del left the meeting.

Bill asked if it was possible to round off to even dollar amounts (no cents). Lucy said she would also like this. Gabe had a question about revenue items that only had zeros. Andy: If there are zeros, nothing has been collected or it might have been collected in the past but hasn't been deleted from the accounting software yet.

Gabe made a comment about fees, fines, & permits, and how it's difficult to know if someone should have but didn't get a permit for something; we don't know how much we're not collecting. The town is generating this revenue only from people that are honoring the system.

Next there was an overview of different departments and potential changes that will be further discussed in subsequent meetings.

Admin- Andy mentioned a potential increase- switch to a cloud-based server system; have been having frequent issues, but need more information on this.

Police services- it's a goal of the selectmen to review law enforcement, and if the community is getting what they need/want. But we would need the people to do this, and would obviously need to pay them. Andy has been looking at additional part time coverage from Knox County and/or a combined harbor master & animal control officer position to enforce local ordinances

Ambulance- Mainland services charge for mutual aid, and are increasing their charges.

Northeast serves Lincolnville, Hope, Rockport, & Camden; we had 80 calls last year which was more than one of their contracted towns. Looking into other options, like talking to South Thomaston, who still doesn't charge. Eric noted how we are also funding our own ambulance service unlike other towns; we are already paying for this on top of these extra fees.

Harbor ordinance- being reviewed by selectmen; they have expressed wanting to enforce this more; but it's hard to do with low wages being offered.

Transfer station- looking at single stream recycling. Kenny has looked at different equipment that will make the transition go more smoothly. Janann asked what exactly is single stream? Gabe explained plastic, cardboard, paper, etc. all go into the container without having to sort it. There is a clear list; if it's on the list, they will accept it. Andy mentioned that we can also fit more in the trailer, because it will be compressed.

Public works- expected to decrease; used much less than expected (calcium chloride) this year. Also sold a truck in exchange for street sweeping and other services for the next four years.

Community services – There has been interest in the newly formed substance abuse group; sea level rise committee; considering creating a community services officer position.

Also considering getting rid of contingency line

Revenues are not predicted to be much different; perhaps a small increase excise, permit fees possibly small increase- they haven't been revised since 2008. Lucy asked how boat excise tax is determined. It was explained that it is based on the length and horsepower of the boat. The year of the boat is also a factor if it is not for commercial use.

Janann asked for clarification on the community development position. Is this like what John Bubier was doing? Andy: yes.

Harbormaster- It was asked if we have been looking at what other towns are doing. Andy: our fees far dwarf what other towns do. Bill explained how Stonington sells fuel, there are wharf charges, etc; Eric asked about charging for parking downtown. Andy talked about challenges in enforcing this, and differences in opinion in how the harbor ordinance should be enforced. Lucy mentioned that people that have their own wharf are paying for that use through property taxes for their waterfront property on top of covering their own maintenance costs.

Agenda for next meeting

Next meeting will be held Wednesday, February 14th at 5pm. Topics to be discussed will include Selectmen, Administration, Assessor, Legal Services, Local Plumbing Inspector, Code Enforcement Officer, Donations. (As time allows)

Adjourn

Motion by bill to adjourn the meeting at 7:24 pm. **Second:** Lucy. **Vote:** All in favor. **Motion carried.**