MINUTES OF THE
BUDGET COMMITTEE

MEETING OF
December 12, 2019

01) OPEN MEETING

The Municipal Budget Committee Meeting of Thursday December 12, 2019 was called to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Knightly Meeting Room.

02) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Bettencourt opened the meeting with the pledge of allegiance and introduction of members.

03) INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS

MEMBERS PRESENT:
D.J. Bettencourt, Chairman
Stephen Boyd
Paul Huard
Thomas Plante
Peter Edgerly
Steven Goddu

MEMBERS ABSENT:
Sean Lewis

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:
Bernard Campbell, School Board Representative
Selectman Bob Bryant, Board of Selectmen Representative

04) RECEIPT OF MINUTES AND CORRESPONDENCE

MOTION by Mr. Edgerly to approve the following correspondence:
• Budget Committee Minutes of November 20, 2019
SECOND by Mr. Goddu
Mr. Campbell stated that he had offered three amendments. He stated that it was the preschool that was at the Haigh School not the Kindergarten. Mr. Campbell stated that on Page 3 Line the statement that “Section 3 provided a staffing chart” should be after the word “staff” in Line 30. The last correction was on Page 11 Line 31 where the word should be ‘renovated’ instead of ‘done.’

MOTION by Mr. Campbell to amend the minutes as discussed.
SECOND by Mr. Edgerly

VOTE:  8-0-0 in favor. Motion passed.

VOTE:  8-0-0 in favor. Motion passed as amended.

05) PUBLIC HEARING
Chairman Bettencourt stated that they would discuss the Default Budget first then go to the Public Hearing.

Mr. Campbell stated that they received it yesterday and he was presenting it tonight to comply with the law. Mr. Campbell stated that the Default Budget was last year’s Budget with certain adjustments as allowed by law including increases which were contractual or required by law and decreases which were one-time expenses or staff removals and bond reductions. He stated that the two RIF positions were subtracted and the other contracted raises and services were all included. The proposed General Fund Budget presented was $72,945,924 and the Default Budget was $72,388,321. It was $557,604 less than the proposed budget which was mainly due to the bleachers. They had made a few reductions for about $5,500 here which brought the numbers a little closer.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that he would recommend taking a vote to accept the presentation.

MOTION by Mr. Campbell to accept the Default Budget presentation.
SECOND by Selectman Bryant

Chairman Bettencourt stated that the School District did a good job with the Default Budget.

VOTE: 8-0 in favor. Motion passed.

Chairman Bettencourt opened the Public Hearing at 7:10 PM.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that there did not seem to be anyone here.

MOTION by Mr. Campbell to close the Public Hearing at 7:11 PM.
SECOND by Mr. Goddu

VOTE: 8-0 in favor. Motion passed.

Chairman Bettencourt closed the Public Hearing at 7:11 PM.
06) **2019-2020 SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET FINAL VOTES**
Chairman Bettencourt stated that they did the deliberations last night and were just formalizing the motions for the most part. Mr. Edgerly would make the motions and Mr. Goddu would second them.

**100 Series - Salaries**
MOTION by Mr. Edgerly to set a figure of $35,907,247 for the 2020-2021 100 Series-Salaries Budget.
SECOND by Mr. Bettencourt

MOTION by Mr. Goddu to reduce the 100 Series by $500,000.
SECOND by Mr. Boyd

Mr. Goddu stated that this was an effort to save money. He felt it should come from Salaries. Half of the money could come from the new positions. The School District administration could determine where the rest should come from. The School District would be looking for more things later on. They needed to tighten their belts. He hoped that the $500,000 would pass where his motion last night had failed.

Mr. Campbell urged the Committee to reject the motion. They had gone through this last night. Many of the salaries had been established as a result of agreements. They had to be honored. They discussed the new positions last night. The net increase was one position which was the custodian. They had extensive discussion on that position. There was not a lot to trim here. Although it was a bottom line budget, they tried to honor each section. He urged them to reject the motion and honor the preliminary vote.

Mr. Huard asked if this passed if they would have to reopen negotiations with the bargaining units.

Mr. Campbell answered no. They would have to honor the wage increases for the staff that remained. They could reduce staff but they would have to honor the salaries.

Mr. Goddu stated that he had reducing staff in mind.

Mr. Campbell stated that they did not have staff to reduce in order to maintain the current class sizes and the services they wanted to provide.

Mr. Huard asked if they were able to take the money from everywhere in the budget.

Mr. Campbell stated that if the cut were left then the Superintendent would recommend cuts. They would look at other areas in order to retain staff. The Superintendent had made it clear that his first priority was to maintain the staff in order to provide the students with the education they needed.

Mr. Boyd stated that the Legislature was using this as fuel to add sales and income taxes. If they curtailed this spending then they could avoid those proposals.
Selectman Bryant stated that he could not remember when the School District did not give back between $750,000 and $1.5 million in unexpended funds to the Town. The School District could have spent the money over the last thirty years. They did their best to keep the budgets tight over the years. It was a little disheartening for this to happen again. Everyone said it was a bottom line budget but it worked the other way where they could spend it all the way down. That had an impact on people’s taxes too.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that the Governor would veto a sales or income tax if one was proposed in the next year. He stated that the underlined point was correct about the School District returning money to the town. There was no other option.

Mr. Huard stated that he did not remember a time where the school staff was told to spend money before time ran out and it had to be returned. He would vote against the motion.

VOTE: 4-4 in favor with Mr. Goddu, Mr. Edgerly, Chairman Bettencourt, and Mr. Boyd in favor. Motion failed.

MOTION by Mr. Bettencourt to reduce the 100 Series by $29,594 from Line 111-0-55.
SECOND by Mr. Goddu

Chairman Bettencourt stated that he was looking for savings and looking to reduce the increase. He looked at these salaries as they were high already.

Mr. Campbell stated that they debated it last night and he pointed out that the other groups were getting 3% except for the teachers who were getting 2.5%. They were looking to keep salaries ahead of those they supervised. He had also spoken about the need to compete with Massachusetts. He felt that they had a good leader and the right person leading the School District. He was asking that the Superintendent be allowed to give the raises that were equivalent to those being received by the bargaining units.

Mr. Boyd stated that they agreed the leadership team was good. They needed to curtail the increase in order to stave off a push for sales or income taxes where they used the school budgets as fuel for their arguments. They needed to curtail spending because they could.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that he did not disagree with the premise for the increases. He felt that the Superintendent was the right leader and someone he deeply admired. Chairman Bettencourt agreed with the need to keep space between the leadership and the staff. He felt that 2% would still accomplish that goal and the goal of staying competitive.

Mr. Edgerly stated that given what the private sector was doing he did not believe it was 3% growth nationally. He was supporting the motion.

VOTE: 4-4 in favor with Mr. Goddu, Mr. Edgerly, Chairman Bettencourt, and Mr. Boyd in favor. Motion failed.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that they had returned to the underlying motion.
VOTE: 4-4 in favor with Mr. Plante, Mr. Huard, Selectman Bryant, and Mr. Campbell in favor. Motion failed.

Mr. Campbell made a Point of Order to request to have the Chairman rule that the preliminary vote prevailed since that was last vote which was successful in adopting a motion. There had been no modification to that number.

Chairman Bettencourt asked if that was what was statutorily required.

Mr. Campbell stated that they had to approve a number for the 100 Series. That was why he thought they needed to use the preliminary vote to provide a number. Chairman Bettencourt could seek a legal opinion on the matter or they could table the discussion until they had a full board to break the deadlock.

Chairman Bettencourt asked about proceeding to the other items and coming back.

Mr. Campbell stated that the numbers in the other sections would be affected by what happened in this section.

MOTION by Mr. Campbell to have the preliminary vote on the 100 Series from the Budget Committee Meeting on December 11, 2019 stand as the final vote on the 100 Series.
SECOND by Selectman Bryant

Mr. Goddu stated that it was a preliminary vote last night. This was the vote that counted. It was unfortunate that they did not have a full board but they did have a quorum of the Budget Committee. He believed that the vote that happened should stand. Mr. Goddu stated that if they did not approve this then they would just be recommending that voters reject this budget.

Mr. Campbell stated that was not the result. The Budget Committee had to present a budget. It had happened in the past in that the Budget Committee did not pass a budget and the Court ordered the School District’s Budget to be presented to the voters. He would recommend waiting until they had a full Budget Committee or taking some other action.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that the member who was not here had voted in favor of the wage pool reduction so that motion might have passed if they had had a full board. The will of the full Board might have resulted in that cut passing and the final number being reduced.

Mr. Huard stated that they just cut what was already agreed contractually upon so there would be a number of lawsuits on it if it stood. They had never done anything like this before.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that they had a valid motion. He would vote on that. If that failed then he would decide. Last night when they voted on the 100 Series they passed it.

Mr. Campbell pointed out that Mr. Lewis had voted on the 100 Series in favor of the School Board’s number.
Mr. Huard stated that if this passed then they were dismissing the yes vote from last night.

Mr. Goddu stated that when he started he had questioned the need for the preliminary vote. It seemed to him that tonight was the vote that mattered. If it was the case that the preliminary vote would stand then why did they even have this meeting?

Mr. Boyd stated that he thought it was approving or disapproving this line item.

**VOTE: 4-4 in favor with Mr. Plante, Mr. Huard, Selectman Bryant, and Mr. Campbell in favor. Motion failed.**

Chairman Bettencourt called a recess at 7:42 PM.

Chairman Bettencourt called the meeting to order at 7:50 PM.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that they were at a deadlocked point on the 100 Series. They were short a member. He had spoken with the missing member. Mr. Lewis had told Chairman Bettencourt that he would have sustained his vote on the wage pool from last night. He would not force the member to leave his newborn and come here to vote on the motion.

Mr. Goddu stated that he would vote on the wage pool again. He would then vote for the rest of the line if that passed in consideration of Mr. Lewis’ vote last night.

Mr. Huard asked for a reminder on what happened with the vote last night.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that the motion failed on a 4 to 4 vote last night with Mr. Lewis voting in favor and Mr. Edgerly absent. Mr. Edgerly was here tonight while Mr. Lewis was absent. If they had a full board based on the votes last night and tonight the motion would carry 5 to 4.

Mr. Plante asked to recess until they had a full board. He was not present for the conversation with Mr. Lewis so he did not know the argument that Mr. Lewis heard. It was not wise to proceed.

Mr. Edgerly agreed with that idea.

Mr. Bettencourt asked for a motion.

**MOTION by Mr. Plante to recess the meeting until they had full membership.**

**SECOND by Mr. Edgerly**

Chairman Bettencourt asked about the statutory deadline for submitting the budget.

Ms. Payne stated that the last day for submitting it was January 23rd.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that they had some time. He wanted to be clear about the operating budget versus the Warrant Articles.
Mr. Campbell stated that they were not differentiated in the Statute.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that he wanted make sure there was not a separate deadline and it did not appear that was the case.

Mr. Goddu stated that he did not feel that they should recess. What if they were short a member then? He did not support recessing just because they did not like the way the vote turned out. They should revisit the wage pool and change the vote to reduce that line.

Chairman Bettencourt asked Ms. Payne to identify a date when they could meet again.

Mr. Plante stated that it was not the vote that led him to move to recess. It was that they did not know what was happening and the legal ramifications.

Mr. Huard asked what the cut amounted to on the tax rate.

Ms. Payne stated that it was 6/10 of a penny.

Mr. Huard stated that it was chaos now and it could get uglier. He would change his vote to get things moving.

Mr. Goddu stated that if the pool reduction passed then he would vote in the affirmative on the budget.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that he had a close relationship with the Budget Committee. There were times when the Budget Committee made reductions and the School District had pushed back and made their case at the Deliberative Session. The Deliberative Session was the next step and that was the Budget that went to the voters. If it passed tonight then the School District could pursue restoring the cut then.

Mr. Huard stated that he would move to reconsider.

Mr. Plante stated that there was already a motion on the floor.

Mr. Edgerly stated that it may only be part of a penny, but they knew there was $50 million more coming. He felt the meeting should be tabled until the member was here. It was important for Mr. Lewis to cast his vote here on this motion.

Mr. Boyd felt that they should reconsider the vote.

Mr. Goddu stated that they should defeat the motion to recess.

**VOTE: 2-4-2 in favor with Mr. Plante and Mr. Edgerly in favor and Selectman Bryant, and Mr. Campbell abstaining. Motion failed.**
MOTION by Mr. Huard to reduce the 100 Series by $29,594 from Line 111-0-55.
SECOND by Mr. Goddu

Selectman Bryant stated that he was still opposed to it. It failed last night and failed again tonight. He felt it wrong to push someone to change their vote in order to break the deadlock.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that Selectman Bryant was asking them to have Mr. Lewis come to the meeting tonight.

Selectman Bryant stated that was not what he was saying. They had lost the vote last night and tonight by 4 to 4 votes. He stated that they saw an opportunity to use the deadlock to have their motion passed.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that if they had a full board then his motion would pass 5 to 4.

VOTE: 5-3 in favor with Mr. Plante, Selectman Bryant, and Mr. Campbell opposed. Motion passed.

Mr. Campbell stated that they had a new number to vote on.

Ms. Payne stated that it was $35,877,653.

VOTE: 7-1-0 in favor with Mr. Plante opposed. Motion passed as amended.

200 Series – Employee Benefits

MOTION by Mr. Edgerly to set a figure of $17,855,006 for the 2020-2021 200 Series – Employee Benefits Budget.
SECOND by Mr. Goddu

VOTE: 8-0 in favor. Motion passed.

300 Series – Purchased Services

MOTION by Mr. Edgerly to set a figure of $1,242,128 for the 2020-2021 300 Series – Purchased Services Budget.
SECOND by Mr. Goddu

VOTE: 8-0 in favor. Motion passed

400 Series – Purchased Services

MOTION by Mr. Edgerly to set a figure of $2,170,255 for the 2020-2021 400 Series – Purchased Services Budget.
SECOND by Mr. Goddu

VOTE: 7-1 in favor with Chairman Bettencourt opposed. Motion passed

500 Series
MOTION by Mr. Edgerly to set a figure of $5,199,708 for the 2020-2021 500 Series – Other Purchased Services Budget.
SECOND by Mr. Bettencourt

VOTE: 8-0 in favor. Motion passed

600 Series – Supplies/Materials
MOTION by Mr. Edgerly to set a figure of $2,758,924 for the 2020-2021 600 Series – Supplies/Materials Budget.
SECOND by Mr. Bettencourt

VOTE: 8-0 in favor. Motion passed

700 Series – Equipment/Furniture
MOTION by Mr. Edgerly to set a figure of $575,258 for the 2020-2021 700 Series – Equipment/Furniture Budget.
SECOND by Mr. Goddu

Chairman Bettencourt stated that he wanted to revisit a motion from last night.

MOTION by Mr. Bettencourt to reduce the 700 Series by $3,929.97 by removing the items rated as Priority 5 or up from the 730 Line.
SECOND by Mr. Goddu

Chairman Bettencourt stated that was happy to support the top priorities. He wanted to wait on the lower priorities until next year.

Selectman Bryant asked the new total of the line.

Ms. Payne gave new total of $572,028 if this passed.

VOTE: 4-4 in favor with Mr. Goddu, Mr. Edgerly, Chairman Bettencourt, and Mr. Boyd in favor. Motion failed.

VOTE: 4-4 in favor with Mr. Plante, Mr. Huard, Selectman Bryant, and Mr. Campbell in favor. Motion failed.

Mr. Huard asked how the vote changed from the 7 to 1 from last night.

Mr. Plante stated that he changed his vote and Mr. Lewis was not here this evening.

Mr. Edgerly asked if they were replacing existing instruments or buying new instruments.

Mr. Campbell stated that there were three items. There was a digital piano was new to supplement elementary school performances. It was a portable item that would be stored at Soule School. The second it was a storage cabinet for the marching band to store instruments to keep them safe from
tampering in a locked area. The third item was a cello for the strings program which was growing. It would be for a student in the program who could not rent one.

Chairman Bettencourt asked if that satisfied Mr. Edgerly’s inquiry.

Mr. Edgerly stated yes.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that they were deadlocked. He asked to have it run through one more time.

**MOTION by Mr. Edgerly to set a figure of $575,258 for the 2020-2021 700 Series – Equipment/Furniture Budget.**

**SECOND by Mr. Goddu**

**VOTE: 6-2 in favor with Mr. Boyd and Mr. Bettencourt opposed. Motion passed.**

**800/900 Series**

**MOTION by Mr. Edgerly to set a figure of $7,231,978 for the 2020-2021 800/900 Series – Other Objects Budget.**

**SECOND by Mr. Bettencourt**

**VOTE: 8-0 in favor. Motion passed.**

**Federal Projects Funds/Food Service**

**MOTION by Mr. Edgerly to set a figure of $1,856,000 for the 2020-2021 Federal Projects Funds Budget.**

**SECOND by Mr. Goddu**

**VOTE: 8-0 in favor. Motion passed**

**MOTION by Mr. Edgerly to set a figure of $1,453,500 for the 2020-2021 Food Service Budget.**

**SECOND by Mr. Goddu**

Mr. Huard asked if it was an offset.

Ms. Payne answered yes.

Mr. Huard asked if they had to budget for it first.

Mr. Campbell stated that they had to appropriate the money for the budget but it had offsetting revenue.

**VOTE: 8-0 in favor. Motion passed**
Mr. Campbell thanked the Budget Committee. He tried to be respectful and appreciated the Budget Committee doing the same.

Selectman Bryant spoke about the Route 28 culvert project which the first half was done. They were trying to backfill and pave that side so they could move the work to the other side of the road.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that they had done a wonderful job with the tree out front. He stated that the next step for the School Budget was the Deliberative Session. Chairman Bettencourt asked for the date.

Ms. Payne answered that it was February 6th.

Chairman Bettencourt stated that they would reconvene on the 15th of January for the Warrant Articles.

Selectman Bryant stated that the School District should go first because the Town had a lot of Warrant Articles.

Chairman Bettencourt stated okay.

Mr. Boyd stated that everyone should complete the survey for the Woodbury School.

Chairman Bettencourt wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

MOTION by Mr. Bryant to adjourn the meeting at 8:19 PM.
SECOND by Mr. Campbell
VOTE: 8-0-0 in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Minutes recorded by: Jeremiah Lamson

Approved: Budget Committee

Date: January 21, 2020, as amended