

Approved as amended at the Bristol Budget Committee meeting on January 9, 2012

**BRISTOL BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
January 3, 2012**

Present:

Shaun Lagueux-Chairman, Paul Simard-Vice Chairman, Barbara Greenwood, Jon Thouin, Tom Keegan, Selectman Jeff Shackett, Dorcas Gordon, Ashley Dolloff, Wendy Costigan, Dan Arseneau, Dave Carr, Ron Preble

Absent:

Mark Chevalier

Others Present:

Town Administrator Michael Capone

Call to Order:

Chairman Lagueux called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Review of Minutes:

Chairman Lagueux asked the members to review of the minutes from the December 19, 2011 meeting. Vice Chairman Simard made a motion to accept the minutes as written and was seconded by Ms Greenwood. The vote to accept the minutes as written was unanimous.

Old Business:

No old business was brought before the Committee.

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Lagueux stated that he wanted to begin the meeting by going around the table and give each member an opportunity to give their general idea concerning the Budget as presented by the Select Board.

Mr. Carr stated that Bristol is a poorer community due to the revaluations. He added that this is a reason why it is hard to compare with other towns; every town has different evaluations of their properties. He gave each member a proposed budget that he called a "Pencil Budget". Mr. Carr stated that the Town of Bristol adjusts their overspending by adjusting the tax rate. The Select Board presented a budget that level funded the tax rate. Mr. Carr proposes to cut the bottom line of the budget not level fund the bottom line. He suggests no pay increases unless the employee is under contract, or if the position was reclassified in their job responsibilities. Health insurance shows a large increase and this annual increase will not change until the Select Board changes the benefit package of the Town's employees. He explained that he removed some items from the budget and added amounts to the road paving line and to the fire betterment line. Most of the line items that had \$1 amounts he replaced with zero amounts. Mr. Carr concluded by stating that unless we have a surplus we cannot get away from borrowing. He asked the members to review and research his budget and

come up with a better budget. He added that the Budget Committee should remember that it is possible that the Town will be financing a bond for the library addition.

Chairman Lagueux responded that it is not the intention of the committee to approve the proposed Select Board's budget without examining it thoroughly. He would like to go further in some cases, such as the ambulance. Chairman Lagueux stated that he would like to see it as a warrant article. This would remove the expense from the budget bottom line and would give the taxpayers the vote.

Ms Greenwood asked what the rationale was in removing the pay raise. Mr. Carr stated that the town simply couldn't afford it. Ms Greenwood feels that when a worker does a good job they should be compensated. We are doing them an injustice by not giving them some type of raise.

Ms Gordon stated that this is a difficult decision the employees for the Town are excellent and provide quality work for the Town. If times were good they should receive a raise but now may not be the time for this increase.

Vice Chairman Simard stated that he has received letters from taxpayers. These residents pay exorbitant property taxes. When he asked what direction the Budget Committee should go, the taxpayers replied that the Town spends too much and cutting a pay raise is only a band-aid fix on large problem. Vice Chairman Simard continued by explaining that the ambulance service is tied into the Fire Department making it difficult to separate the two. Every fireman is a certified EMT. He stated that if you need ambulance service they would bill you for that service. Vice Chairman Simard stated that the taxpayers already paid for that service by buying the ambulance and its maintenance, and paying the salary and benefits of each fireman. He suggests giving this service to the individual Firemen and let them run it for two years as a private business. Then put the ambulance service out to bid. This would eliminate \$1 million from the budget. We overspend in this area and can make changes while maintaining a quality service to the Town.

Selectman Shackett responded that the Board of Selectmen presents a proposed budget to the Town. The Town's people vote to accept this budget. We work to provide a quality service within the approved budget.

Mr. Thouin stated that the elephant in the room is the School Budget. The taxpayers and the Budget Committee need to consider the four parts of the tax bill: the State, the County, the Town and the School. The tax rate is only a number used for calculations. Mr. Thouin feels that over the years the Budget Committee has worked to maintain the Town Budget but the voters need to consider the other three parts of the tax bill and vote accordingly. He added that the Budget Committee should look at the current budget and do what we can to improve the bottom line.

Vice Chairman Simard read a letter from Charles Carpenter. Mr. Carpenter reviewed his tax bills and the current revaluation of his property. He stated in his letter that he feels the Select Board and the Budget Committee do not care about the individual taxpayer and the affect the Town's budget has on their every day life.

EXECUTIVE:

Chairman Lagueux asked for a discussion regarding the pay increase.

Mr. Keegan asked Selectman Shackett why the Select Board suggested the 2% pay increase. Selectman Shackett stated the Board felt the employees deserved it. Mr. Carr made a motion: Pay rates remain the same as 2011 with the exception of contracts or reclassification. Vice Chairman Simard seconded the motion. Mr. Carr explained that one employee had increased their job responsibilities therefore their salary was increased accordingly.

Ms Gordon stated that this was a tough question. People from the Town stated they know many may not receive pay increases this year. It is hard to not reward our employees. She hopes we can do so next year.

Mr. Thouin asked what the 2% increase would be equal to. Town Administrator Capone stated about \$36,000. Mr. Thouin added that would add about 8 cents to the tax rate. The payroll taxes and benefits would increase as well; it is not just the salaries that are affected by this increase.

Mr. Preble stated that he doesn't want anyone to lose money but this is not the year for an increase.

Ms Greenwood would rather look at the budget and see if we could give a small increase.

Chairman Lagueux reminded the members that this can be revisited. He called for a vote by show of hands and stated that all votes taken would be with a show of hands.

The motion from Mr. Carr and seconded by Vice Chairman Simard to keep the salaries the same as last year with the exception of contracted employees and any employees whose work was reclassified during 2011. The motion **passed** with 8 in favor, 3 opposed and 1 abstention.

Vice Chairman Simard made a motion to adopt \$10,000 for line 4130-130 – Selectmen salaries. Mr. Carr seconded the motion.

Vice Chairman Simard explained that the Select Board received an increase in 2011. The Budget Committee works gratis and he feels the Select Board's should be reduced as well.

Mr. Keegan stated that in 2010 we had a Town Manager and the workload for the Selectmen was reduced. Now their work has increased and he feels the \$16,000 is a fair amount.

Mr. Thouin added that he feels the \$16,000 is low compared to the amount of work and time they give to the Town. He would keep the \$16,000.

Mr. Arseneau stated that the difference between the Town Manager and the Town Administrator is small and the \$10,000 is reasonable.

Chairman Lagueux called for a vote:

The motion from Vice Chairman Simard and seconded by Mr. Carr is to adopt the amount of \$10,000 on line 4130-130--Selectmen's salary. The motion **failed** with 4 in favor, 7 opposed and 1 abstention.

Vice Chairman Simard made a motion to reduce line 4130-620—Office Supplies to \$2800. Mr. Carr seconded the motion. Vice Chairman Simard stated that it was a small change but could add up. Town Administrator Capone stated that the current expenditure for this line is \$3101.

Chairman Lagueux called for a vote:

The motion from Vice Chairman Simard and seconded by Mr. Carr is to adopt the amount of \$2800 on line 4130-620—Office Supplies. The motion **passed** with 7 in favor and 5 opposed.

Vice Chairman Simard made a motion to accept the amount of \$193,841 less the adjusted wage amount as previously voted for the total Executive budget. Mr. Arseneau seconded the motion. This motion **passed** with 11 in favor and 1 abstention.

ELECTION, REGISTRATION, VOTING:

Vice Chairman Simard made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amount of \$88,842 less the adjusted wage amount as previously voted for the total ERV budget. Mr. Arseneau seconded the motion. This motion **passed** with 12 in favor.

FINANCIAL ADMIN/TAX COLLECTOR:

Ms Gordon made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amount of \$165,043 less the adjusted wage amount as previously voted for the total Financial Adm/Tax Collector budget. Mr. Preble seconded the motion.

Mr. Thouin asked if the amount for computer support was adequate. Town Administrator Capone stated that the contracts are in and this amount is accurate.

Town Administrator Capone was asked if the Annual Audit line 301 was a contracted item. He replied that this is based on the level of service that we need. He added that with the amount of Federal money we would receive in 2012 we would probably need a level 1 audit.

Chairman Lagueux called for a vote on the motion:

Ms Gordon made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amount of \$165,043 less the adjusted wage amount as previously voted for the total Financial Adm/Tax Collector budget. Mr. Preble seconded the motion. This motion **passed** with 12 in favor.

PROPERTY REAPPRAISAL:

Vice Chairman Simard made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amount of \$108,368 less the adjusted wage amount as previously voted for the total Property Reappraisal budget. Ms Greenwood seconded the motion. This motion **passed** with 12 in favor.

LEGAL:

Mr. Carr made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amount of \$17,500 for the total Legal budget. Vice Chairman Simard seconded the motion. This motion **passed** with 12 in favor.

Chairman Lagueux publicly thanked the Select Board and the Town Administrator for keeping this line item down.

PERSONNEL ADMIN:

Vice Chairman Simard made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amount of \$77,269 for the total Personnel Admin budget. Mr. Preble seconded the motion.

Mr. Carr stated that if this were true budgeting a line for accrued benefits would be shown.

Vice Chairman Simard asked if the Drug testing line could be reduced. Town Administrator Capone stated that this is a random testing and there is no control over whom or what type of test is required. Every employee is subject to testing.

Chairman Lagueux called for a vote on the motion:

Vice Chairman Simard made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amount of \$77,269 for the total Personnel Admin budget. Mr. Preble seconded the motion. This **passed** with 12 in favor.

PLANNING BOARD, ZONING BOARD, TAX MAP:

Ms Dolloff made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amounts for the next three categories: Planning board \$9989; Zoning Board \$5694; Tax Map \$3600. Ms Gordon seconded the motion.

Vice Chairman Simard stated that if we carry the \$1 amounts that means we could spend in that item. Zero amount means money cannot be expended in that line item. He asked that we look at each section and consider the line items that have \$1 amounts.

Selectman Shackett stated that if the budget item is zeroed out and something happens during the year that would require some action with that item (i.e. receive grant money) it could be a problem.

Mr. Carr stated that if the item is not important enough to have an amount then eliminate it.

Mr. Keegan said it takes away the flexibility if it is zeroed out. It takes away any unknown funding or expenses.

Chairman Lagueux called for a vote on the motion:

Ms Dolloff made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amounts for the next three categories: Planning board \$9989; Zoning Board \$5694; Tax Map \$3600. Ms Gordon seconded the motion. This motion **passed** 10 in favor and 2 opposed.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS:

Mr. Carr made a motion to adopt the amount of \$47,109 less the adjusted wage amount as previously voted for the total General Government Buildings budget. Vice Chairman Simard seconded the motion.

Mr. Carr explained that this would eliminate Newfound Area Access. The revenue would be collected but it would go into the general fund rather than pay for this service.

Mr. Preble asked if we could find out if this was legal.

Ms Gordon stated that people like watching the town committee meetings.

Mr. Carr stated that the town could use the money better; it provides approximately \$56,000 in revenue.

Selectman Shackett stated that it is on the website and Channel 24 which allows non-resident taxpayers to watch from anywhere in the country. He feels that this is a great service to the Town.

Mr. Carr agrees that it is a great service but the town needs the income.

Mr. Courchaine asked the Chairman if he could speak. He explained that the number of viewers to the Town's website has increased from 1800 in 2009 to 64,000 since February 2011. This service provides access to the Town Crier, The Town's Website and Channel 24 on cable TV.

Vice Chairman Simard withdrew his second to the motion removing the motion from the table.

Vice Chairman Simard made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amount of \$93,160 less the adjusted wage amount as previously voted for the total General Government Buildings budget. Mr. Arseneau seconded the motion. This motion **passed** with 11 in favor and 1 opposed.

Ms Dolloff stated she would like an answer to question if this money could be used as suggested. It is an item that comes up every year and has not been researched. Town Administrator Capone will look into it and give an answer to the Budget Committee.

CEMETERIES:

Mr. Preble made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amount of \$7000 for the total Cemeteries budget. Ms Greenwood seconded the motion. This **passed** with 11 in favor and 1 abstention.

INSURANCE:

Vice Chairman Simard made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amount of \$48,852 for the total Insurance budget. Mr. Preble seconded the motion. This **passed** with 12 in favor.

REGIONAL ASSOCIATION:

Mr. Carr made a motion to adopt the amount of \$5091 for the total Regional Association budget. Vice Chairman Simard seconded the motion.

Mr. Carr explained this would eliminate the Chamber of Commerce; it is a regional chapter based in Plymouth and does little for the Town of Bristol. It would also level fund the Pasquaney Garden Club.

Mr. Keegan asked if the Chamber of Commerce has done anything for the Town. Town Administrator Capone stated that when meeting with various agencies to promote the

business climate in Town the Chamber was an active participant in that discussion. They also provide help with the triathlons and advocated for local businesses.

Vice Chairman Simard amended the motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amount of \$5221 for the Regional Association total budget. Ms Greenwood seconded the amended motion. This **passed** with 11 in favor and 1 opposed.

OTHER GENERAL GOV'T:

Ms Greenwood made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amount of \$15,000 for the total Other General Government budget. Mr. Keegan seconded the motion. This **passed** with 11 in favor and 1 opposed.

POLICE DEPARTMENT:

Selectman Shackett responded to Vice Chairman's opening comments of asking for State Police coverage. Selectman Shackett is not comfortable with that scenario. When a State trooper is called they may need to travel a long distance. He feels that Bristol needs the kind of coverage it currently has.

Mr. Carr is bothered that four supervisors are on staff to supervise six officers. He would suggest reducing the budget by \$90,000. He would not suggest a specific line item but it would be equal to two salaries. He is not sure why the Police Department needs one Lieutenant and two Sergeants.

Vice Chairman Simard made a motion to adopt the amount of \$797,915 less the adjusted wage amount as previously voted, for the total Police Department budget. Mr. Arseneau seconded the motion.

Vice Chairman Simard explained that this is not a line item budget, the Police Chief can choose where he will make the necessary cuts to meet the budget. The economy has been tough since 2009 but the Police Departments budget has grown each year. It was stated in prior years that if a position became vacant it would not be filled. Some standards suggest two officers per thousand residents. If we adopted that standard we would have 6 officers. The reduction to six officers would not affect the service provided.

Selectman Shackett feels this is too deep a cut and this would not provide the service that is needed. He added that the 2 to 1000 ratios cannot be applied broadly; it doesn't work.

Mr. Carr agreed that we need our own Police Department but not as many as we currently have. The Police Chief can manipulate the money to make it work. Our town does not need two officers 24/7.

Ms Gordon would not want to rely on the State Police for coverage. She asked if it were possible to task force with the State Police to cover one night a week to reduce our overtime.

Vice Chairman Simard stated that he made the motion to adopt the total amount rather than to line by line. This allows the Police Chief to work out how the money would work.

Mr. Thouin asked what the current expenses are. Town Administrator stated \$901,940.

Chairman Shackett added that he feels it is not morally right to have other towns pay for our coverage. That is what we would be doing if we use the State Police.

Mr. Thouin made a motion to adopt the amount of \$900,000 for the total Police Department budget. Mr. Preble seconded the motion.

Mr. Thouin explained it is a reduction from last year and a reduction of the proposed Select Board's amount. The Police Chief could determine how the money would work. Mr. Thouin explained that this amount would include the adjusted pay wage.

Selectman Shackett stated that this is a fair amount. Most of the reduction will be in the salaries and retirement and allowing the Police Chief to determine the other items shows respect for his expertise in his department.

Mr. Carr stated that there are line items that should be considered: the Bike Patrol and the Laundry for example.

Vice Chairman Simard stated that this is still too much and asked the members to vote down this amended amount and go line by line.

Chairman Lagueux called for a vote on the amended motion.

Mr. Thouin made a motion to adopt the amount of \$900,000 for the total Police Department budget. Mr. Preble seconded the motion. This **passed** with 10 in favor and 2 opposed.

He then called on a vote for the motion.

Adopting the amount of \$900,000, which would not increase any salaries, in the Police Department. This **passed** with 10 in favor and 2 opposed.

PD Outside Details:

Vice Chairman Simard made a motion to adopt the amount of \$100,000 for the total PD Outside Details budget. Mr. Arseneau seconded the motion.

Vice Chairman Simard explained that the Police Chief feels it is important to have our officers provide this detail work. It is for coverage of the Town Square work that is scheduled to begin in the spring. Vice Chairman Simard feels that the contractors and the State flag people would be able to provide coverage for this and it would reduce the cost that is added into our budget.

Chairman Shackett stated that this would be a great savings if it would work. He would like to ask why we need our Police officers to perform this outside detail. Town Administrator explained that there is an RSA stating the Police Chief has the authority to determine this need for public safety.

In response to a couple of questions the Town Administrator noted that this is detail work and does not effect overtime but it does effect payroll expenses and retirement. This amount is paid for by tax dollars but it brings in revenue to offset it.

Town Administrator Capone also explained that there are three levels of work being proposed and the work There is a warrant article asking the town to allow replacement of the water and sewer lines; the State of NH is planning to do some drainage work and the reconstruction of the Town Square. If approved these three entities will begin working this spring. This means the Town Square will be congested with equipment, workers and

general traffic flow. The type of detail worker may depend on what time of day and how much construction is taking place.

Mr. Keegan stated that the general public does not pay attention to a flag person. They need to see the blue lights before they will slow down.

Vice Chairman Simard stated that if the State brings their own flag people they will know how to handle this type of construction and traffic flow.

It was noted that if next year (2013) the Budget Committee decides to level fund the budget this \$200,000 would be carried over.

Mr. Preble stated that we could lower the amount now and discuss it with the Police Chief.

Chairman Lagueux called for a vote on the motion.

Vice Chairman Simard made a motion to adopt the amount of \$100,000 for the total PD Outside Details budget. Mr. Arseneau seconded the motion. This motion **failed** with 5 in favor and 7 opposed.

Mr. Thouin made a motion this item be tabled until we talk with the Police Chief. This **passed** with 12 in favor. Town Administrator Capone will ask the Police to come before the committee at the next meeting.

FIRE DEPARTMENT:

Ms Gordon made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amount of \$892,977 less the adjusted wage amount as previously voted for the total Fire Department budget. Ms Greenwood seconded the motion.

Selectman Shackett stated that the Fire Department provides a service the people are used to. Mr. Carr added that he has not heard a negative comment regarding the Ambulance service.

Vice Chairman would like to see the Ambulance Service separated from the Fire Department. Every fireman is EMT certified. The expense of having two officers on duty 24/7 is for ambulance coverage adding to the inflated budget. Vice Chairman Simard would like to return to a volunteer Fire Department and make the Ambulance service a private enterprise.

Mr. Arseneau feels that there are too many in the Fire Department and if three positions were dropped the same service could be provided to the Town.

Ms Greenwood stated that to go back to a volunteer Fire Department is going back 50 years. She is opposed to this suggestion.

Vice Chairman Simard stated that it is a burden on the taxpayer to pay for these professionals and it is becoming to heavy to bear.

Mr. Preble stated that the certification is now required and training is needed. This was not required in prior years.

Mr. Arseneau amended the motion to adopt \$850,000 including the adjusted pay wage as previously voted for the total Fire Department budget. The Fire Chief would determine how the money would work. Vice Chairman Simard seconded the motion.

Mr. Keegan stated that it appears we are cutting for the sake of cutting and not taking responsibility. Mr. Thouin stated that we can revisit this and would like to see the figures from the Fire Chief. Selectman Shackett stated that it is a reasonable of making the suggested cut. It shows respect for the expertise of the Fire Chief and it is his duty to work his department within the budget.

Chairman Lagueux called for a vote on the amended motion.

Mr. Arseneau amended the motion to adopt \$850,000 including the adjusted pay wage as previously voted for the total Fire Department budget. The Fire Chief would determine how the money would work. Vice Chairman Simard seconded the motion. The amended motion **passed** with 7 in favor and 5 opposed. The motion **passed** with 7 in favor and 5 opposed.

FORESTRY:

Mr. Preble made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amount of \$2500 for the total Forestry budget. Ms Greenwood seconded the motion. The motion **passed** with 11 in favor and 1 opposed.

CROSSING GUARDS:

Vice Chairman Simard made a motion to accept the Select Boards proposed amount of \$5500 less the adjusted wage amount as previously voted for the total Crossing Guards budget. Mr. Arseneau seconded the motion. The motion **passed** with 12 in favor.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:

Mr. Carr made a motion to adopt the amount of \$600 for the total Emergency Management budget. Vice Chairman Simard seconded the motion.

Mr. Carr explained this would reduce the training and eliminate the New Equipment. A brief discussion followed regarding the new equipment and its necessity.

Chairman Lagueux called for a vote on the motion.

Mr. Carr made a motion to adopt the amount of \$600 for the total Emergency Management budget. Vice Chairman Simard seconded the motion. The vote resulted in a **tie** 6 in favor and 6 opposed.

Ms Greenwood made a motion to table this item until the Committee could discuss it with the Fire Chief. Ms Costigan seconded the motion.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be January 9, 2012 at 7:00 pm. It will be the second deliberation meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

Vice Chairman Simard made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms Greenwood seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:50.

Respectfully submitted,
Emily Hemingway
Recording Secretary