

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 2019

**** For further / detailed information refer to video recordings on the SRC-TV website – Choose “Click Here to activate the PEG Media player” (middle section of webpage), Choose “Limerick” in SRC-TV Playlist Box. Allow time to download, “May begin later than actual starting time - may take a little while to begin.”*

Presiding: Ed Morgan, Chairman

Members Present: Paul Donnellan, Bill Jones, David Lancaster, Steve McLean, Sue McIntyre, Ed Morgan

Members Absent: Justin Reinhartd

Selectmen Present: None

Guests: John McIntyre, resident

1. Call to order – count for quorum

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.
A quorum was established

2. Accept Minutes from Previous Meeting

Paul Donnellan motioned to accept the February 14th, 2019 meeting minutes, seconded by Bill Jones. Vote taken. Motion passed with all in favor.

Ed welcomed the Budget Committee’s newest member, David Lancaster.

3. Review of 2018 budget process and results.

It was felt that the Budget Committee had done the best that it could during last year’s budget process. However, only 35-40 people turned out at the Annual Town Meeting on Saturday, March 9th, 2019, to vote on the bulk of the Annual Town’s Budget. (35 -40 out of 2,100+ registered voters). The Budget Committee’s recommendations were not accepted by the few that did attend the Town Meeting. Of most concern, were those Articles where the Budget Committee had recommended that “all work go out for bid”. This would provide the best opportunity for getting the most cost-efficient prices.

Some positives noted was that the Budget Committee’s process worked well, and the group did ask many questions. However, it was quickly pointed out that we did not always get the information requested and/or needed.

In moving forward, the Committee discussed ways for improving the process. An immediate concern is the lack of participation at the Annual Town Meeting. Advocating for referendum-style voting, secret ballot voting of all Articles is an option to consider. Another concern was a lack of response from the Select Board with regards to some questions that had been directed at the Board. Some questions pertained to scheduling a joint meeting, along with the Board of Selectmen with the Town’s Auditor. This request was made on several fronts and on several occasions. It was consistently met by a general response of “yes, we will”, and always without a concrete scheduled time and date. We are now in March and still no meeting with the Auditor. Meeting with the Town’s Auditor should also occur prior to completing the Budget review process. Perhaps sending out a formal written request to the Town’s Auditor from the Budget Committee might produce better results.

Steve McLean motioned to have the Budget Committee draft a formal letter to the Auditor requesting a meeting. Motion was seconded by Sue McIntyre. Vote taken. All in favor.

A continued discussion took place on this topic. It was noted that all Town audits can be found on the State of Maine government website. The Committee strongly felt that it should, at the very least, have an opportunity to ask the Auditor questions that it felt needed clarified and to request any recommendations that he may have that could decrease expenditures and/or improve revenue.

The topic of discussion then moved to whether the Town had a bidding / purchasing policy. Joanne Andrews, selectwoman, had recently sent out to both the Select Board and Budget Committee members a copy of a purchasing / bidding policy that had been produced in 2007 but had not been adopted. The group was reminded that a policy, is just a policy. For policies to be effective they need to be enforced. The best way for a policy to be enforced is for it to become an ordinance. Perhaps an Article could be composed and presented to the Town's people for a vote. Other questions on this pertained to timelines and process for proposed warrant Articles. It was agreed that the topic should be presented to the Select Board and that perhaps a workshop comprised of members from both the Budget Committee and Select Board could be established to put together the wording for a proposed ordinance. However, it was brought to the group's attention that the wording of the policy had pretty much been drafted by Joanne Andrews as emailed to all of us a few weeks back. Subsequently, Ed stated that if the Select Board and the Budget Committee can agree that the policy drafted by Joanne Andrews will suffice as the wording for the proposed ordinance, then this could move forward to be voted upon either in June or November of this year. Ed will follow-up and request for any updated copy of the purchase and bidding policy to be emailed to Budget Committee members.

4. Election of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary, etc. (Item added to agenda)

A motion was made by Paul Donnellan to nominate Ed Morgan as Chairman, motion was seconded by Steve McLean. Motion passed with all in favor.

A motion was made by Paul Donnellan to nominate Bill Jones as Vice-Chairman, seconded by Steve McLean. Motion passed with all in favor

A motion was made by Paul Donnellan to nominate Sue McIntyre as Secretary, seconded by Steve McLean. (Vote not taken)

The topic of low voter turn-out at the Town Meeting re-surfaced and a discussion ensued on how to improve voter participation. Ideas were shared and options considered.

One option could include grouping Articles such as those with no increase or hardly any increased amount, could be condensed into one group, whereas, another condensed group could include routine housekeeping articles as another group. Articles such as those requesting funding could be voted on in a referendum-style vote / secret ballot voting, while articles with no funding requests could be voted on at the open Town Meetings.

5. Upcoming issues: Main Street Sewer / Water Costs, School Budget, etc. (Item taken out of order)

Discussion took place about the proposed School budget and what impact this will pose on the Town's budget. It was felt that the Budget Committee in conjunction with the Select Board had, in general done a pretty good job with the Town's 2019 Annual Budget. Now, it is unknown how the newly proposed School Budget's increase will impact Limerick's annual budget. The proposed school budget, as now written, would increase the Town's annual budget by 5.87%. Limerick's school budget share last year for 2018-2019 was \$3,242,453. The newly proposed Town's share for 2019-2020 is projected at \$3,432,791, a \$190,000+ increase. Limerick's school student enrollment is 432.50.

Other potential unanticipated increase in expenditures that the Town may be facing this year includes the water/sewer line work that is scheduled to be done on Main Street this Spring. According to statements made last February by the engineer of this project, there may be an additional \$150,000 needed for completion. The Town did receive a grant of \$197,000 for this project and had also transferred \$100,000 a year ago from the unassigned account to the Capital Project Reserve Account earmarked for this. It was pointed out though, that this is the engineer's assessment, and not from any contractor. Bids for the work will be going out in April. We will know more then. Another potential increase in expenditures pertain to the Brick Town Hall's handicap parking project where requests increased funds may occur.

All in all, when combining all these unanticipated potential increases, the Town could be facing a total increase nearing \$400,000.

6. Other Business (taken out of order)

Discussion turned to meeting with the Town's Auditor. A formal letter to the Auditor from the Budget Committee will be drafted. The Select Board will be asked if they would like to be included in this formal request.

Other discussions focused on oversight, the bidding process, and getting more than one quote / estimate for work and/or services pertaining to Town owned buildings. Treating all vendors fairly when requesting work could go a long way in promoting trust and respect for the process.

Topics to be addressed at upcoming Budget Committee meetings: Working on condensing some of the Warrant Articles into groups; Exploring the idea of referendum-style voting (secret ballot voting) as an option, and, Setting policies/procedures for budget reviews.

The group agreed that meeting once a month would be beneficial. Ed will send out the 2019 final version of the excel "green sheets" to everyone. A short discussion continued pertaining to a referendum-style voting, secret ballot process, as well as a discussion on a cost efficient and fair bidding process for road paving / sweeping services, etc.

5. Adjourn

Steve McLean motioned to adjourn, seconded by Paul Donnellan. (Vote not taken).

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Next Meeting: April 25, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Suzanne McIntyre
Recording Secretary