

Lyndeborough Budget Committee

Meeting Minutes

November 7, 2023

Citizens' Hall

Approved

Chair Karen Grybko called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Members present: Chairman Karen Grybko, Vice Chair Kevin Boette, John Pomer, Alyssa Lavoie, Arnie Byam, Stanley Greene, and Selectmen's Rep. Bob Howe.

Members Not present: Walter Holland, Geoff Allen, and Fran Bujak.

Present: Town Administrator Russ Boland, Finance Director Paul Hebert, Rep. Lisa Post, Charlie Post, Bob Newton, Leo Trudeau, Ray Humphreys, and Selectman Mark Chamberlain were in the audience until the Master Plan meeting started upstairs.

VOTE: Kevin Boette made a motion, Arnie Byman seconded to nominated Karen Grybko to remain chairperson for the 2023-2024 Budget Committee. Motion passed 7-0.

VOTE: Arnie Byam made a motion, Bob Howe seconded to nominate Kevin Boette to continue as vice chairman for the 2023-2024 Budget Committee.

John Pomer addressed Kevin Boette and said, "Doesn't your term expire this year? KB: "Yes". JP: "Last year you made a point of me not being able to be appointed for vice chair because my term was ending then". KB: "I never did. That does not affect your eligibility for chair or vice chair at all". JP: "That was something you, and a few others, made a big point of. I see an inconsistency". KB: "I don't think it was me". Bob Howe: "Are you saying he is not eligible?" JP: "According to what he said last year, he would not be". KB: "I never would have said that John. I have been in this job here..." Arnie Byam: "It must have been in the minutes we will have to go back and look".

John Pomer asked to put in the minutes, "I noticed an inconstancy".

It was discussed if they should hold off on a vote and review the minutes. Alyssa Lavoie had a copy of the Nov. 28, 2022 meeting minutes. She said there is no note about that conversation and read: "*VOTE: John Pomer and Kevin Boette nominated themselves as vice-chair. Motions were seconded. John Pomer received 3 votes; Kevin Boette received 4 votes. Karen Grybko abstained. Kevin Boette was elected as Vice Chairperson by a majority vote.*"

John Pomer said, "The notes are acutely incomplete". Alyssa Lavoie said, "There was a vote made, for both you and Kevin". John Pomer said, "That is the commentary of what was said but is not in the minutes."

Karen Grybko said, "I will abstain again because as chair it does not matter to me who is vice chair, you vote on it". Chair Grybko directed the Committee to take a vote for vice chair and asked John Pomer if he wants to be considered for vice chair also. John Pomer said, "No".

VOTE: Motion passed 5-1-1. John Pomer opposed. Karen Grybko abstained.

Business:

The Budget Committee packages were delivered to members. Finance Director Paul Hebert gave an executive summary. The budget is going up 6%. They went through departments and then the Board of Selectmen and it is up to you to come up with a slate of numbers. What Mr. Hebert did this year was a comparison in green so we can see where we are coming from. Inflation is at 7% so it is in line with what is going on in the overall economy. We tried to curb as much as we could and tried to in every place we could in the budget. It's a lean budget.

Chair Grybko asked if there is a significant driver? T/A Boland said in terms of asphalt we could not do as much this past year because of the cost, and we are holding that flat. Benefit increased. Health insurance went up 7.9% which sounds like a lot, but other communities have 15-25%.

Alyssa Lavoie asked if the retirement line is correct? There is a slight increase in VALIC which covers up to 12 employees. Currently, nine employees are taking advantage of it.

The question of if the insurance will be covered at 100% was mentioned. Chair Grybko asked if this includes the 6%. There is a 3% COLA on the 10th step.

The Committee asked about the fixed cost for the DPW, sand and gravel. Sand went up \$1/yard. Salt negotiated at \$84/ton. The gravel and salt is a budget driver. The road agent is looking at adding a fifth employee to the crew starting in April at the cost of \$36,000.

Soft costs: T/A Boland explained the health insurance and will carry an extra family plan. He believes the soft costs won't be impacted there but it will be close.

The police department probably will have opened positions that will not be filled. It is a problem in police departments around the country. Currently, one officer is out injured, 3-4 are retiring and left for greener pastures. Chief Deware, Officer Hervieux and Officer Murphy are doing excellent work.

Unemployment in NH is 1.7%. It is challenging to fill positions.

The fire department budget went down plus other line items in the budget went down, through negotiation pricing or doing things more economically.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is **November 21, 2023 at 6:30pm** at the **J.A. Tarbell Library** and will include a tour of the facility. Future meetings are December 5, 2023 and December 19, 2023.

Members can send questions relative to the library to the chairperson in advance of the meeting who will forward them to T/A Boland. A few questions were discussed.

Chair Grybko said the library recently sent out a survey which was posted on their website and emailed to residents on their mailing list. The chair will ask for the survey results. Some members did not receive the survey. Additional avenues to reach residents were discussed such as additional Facebook pages and the town website.

Minutes:

There are some minutes from last budget season that are not finalized. It was asked who wants to take minutes when Fran Bujak is not here.

Ray Humphreys asked if he could make a comment. He said there is only one person who does minutes and in his opinion it has become a full-time job. For example, the ZBA had 12 meetings so far this year. The minute taker tonight is attending three back-to-back meetings.

Chair Grybko said it's the Board of Selectmen's responsibility that provide a secretary to the Boards and Committees and if it's an issue to deal with.

Chair Grybko said in defense of the Budget Committee, all we are required to include is the attendees, the votes and a few brief sentences. Draft minutes can go in that night. Then Fran Bujak can get them and they can be looked at next meeting. Different opinions were discussed.

T/A Boland said it is not a funding problem, it's a recruitment problem.

VOTE: Kevin Boette made a motion, John Pomer seconded to approve the February 13, 2023 minutes submitted by Fran Bujak. Motion passed 6-0.

Adjournment:

VOTE: Kevin Boette made a motion, John Pomer seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 p.m. Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Humphreys – signed electronically

Kathleen Humphreys
Minute Taker
Audio: 231107-0049.