

Town of Amherst, NH
WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
2 Main Street
Monday, December 7th, 2020
6:00 p.m.

PRESENT

- Lisa Eastland
- Danielle Pray
- Matt Seiler
- Scott Tuthill
- Bill Loscocco
- Mike Parisi
- Lori Mix (Alternate)
- Cheryl Eastman (Finance Director)

ABSENT

- Sarah Bonnoit (Alternate)
- James Kuhnert

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Minutes of the 11/23/2020 meeting were approved as circulated
- Motion to approve by Scott, seconded by Mike, vote unanimous
- Minutes, as taken, will be formally approved and/or amended at the next meeting, with acceptance/amendments so noted in subsequent minutes.

CALL TO ORDER

- Meeting began at 8:15 PM

AGENDA

Item #1 : Citizen Comments

- No citizen comments (none in attendance)

Item #2 : Discussion of Proposed Budget and Warrant Articles

- With Jim absent, Lisa asked Cheryl whether Jim will have a chance to voter later, to which Cheryl stated that Jim can voice his votes and opinions on the Budget and Articles at the Public Session
- The “open space” warrant article has not been finalized, therefore Cheryl does not have the tax impact of that article available for the meeting. As such, Members agreed to defer voting on **Article 22**
- Cheryl confirmed that the budget numbers have not been finalized as the Town is waiting to hear what the rates for health insurance will be for the coming year. In response, Members agreed to defer voting on **Article 23**
- Members agreed to defer voting on **Article 30** (DPW CRF) until questions and concerns can be discussed with the Board of Selectmen
- The following votes were taken, with Lori voting in Jim’s absence
 - Article 24 - Contingency Fund:** Yea: 7, Nay: 0
 - Article 25 - Communications Center Capital Reserve Fund:** Yea: 7, Nay: 0
 - Article 26 - Assessing Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund:** Yea: 7, Nay: 0
 - Article 27 - Service-Connected Total Disability Tax Credit:** Yea: 7, Nay: 0
 - Article 28 - Bridge Repair and Replacement Capital Reserve Fund:** Yea: 7, Nay: 0
 - Article 29 - Fire Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Purchase Repair CRF:** Yea: 7, Nay: 0
 - Article 31 - Police Station Renovation Completion:** Yea: 7, Nay: 0
 - Article 32 - Establish and Fund CRF for Amherst Multimodal Facilities:** Yea: 7, Nay: 0
 - Article 33 - Recreation Facilities Acquisition, Construction, Maint CRF:** Yea: 7, Nay: 0
- Preceding the vote for **Article 32**, Danielle reminded Members that the CRF represents more than just the currently planned multi-modal project.
- Bill then asked if the planned multi-year re-occurrence of **Article 32** will be addressed in the Warrant Article, and Cheryl stated that it cannot be in the Article but it will be in the Voting Guide and the discussed in the Deliberative Session
- Preceding the vote for **Article 33**, Lisa stated that it is another multi-year CRF request, and that this will be communicated similarly to Article 32
- Between the vote for Articles 29 and 31, **Article 30** was discussed so that Lisa could share the sentiment of the Ways and Means Committee with the Board of Selectmen:
 - Lori stated that the initial reason for the DPW CRF was due to legal concerns surrounding the current lease-purchase method, however those legal concerns have been alleviated
 - Scott stated that he will need more information before making a final vote
 - Danielle said that she is most likely voting yes on the Article
 - Bill agreed that he will also most likely be voting yes
 - Lisa asked rhetorically if the Ways and Means vote represents “money well spent”, how does this influence the decision on the Warrant Article?
 - Cheryl clarified that this CRF is intended to transition the Town away from the lease-purchase mechanism currently in place
 - Bill stated that he believes the lease-purchase arrangements have been a show for the taxpayers, and it has amounted to a shell game. He feels a CRF would be superior
 - Matt agreed with Cheryl that the plan as explained in the DPW budget meeting was to use a CRF instead of the lease-purchase method
 - Cheryl confirmed that gaining more flexibility in purchasing due to legal constraints was the issue surrounding the CRF/lease-purchase debate
 - Lori mentioned that it appears there will be insufficient money for DPW if the CRF is voted down, and she doesn’t feel the plan as presented reflects this potential problem

- Bill conceded that the legal question surrounding the lease/purchase arrangement can be overcome
- Concerning the budget, Lisa stated that the budget from FY17 to FY22 has gone up more than 20%, and she finds this alarming. She knows that the tax burden is a perennial issue, and that some of the increases come from insurance rates, which are beyond the Town's control
- Bill said that he feels the Town is not getting competitive health insurance rates, and recommends the rates be compared to those received in the corporate world
- Matt added that the budget of FY17 didn't include the Road Rebuild project, which costs more than \$1 million per year. Scott confirmed this to be true

NEW BUSINESS

None

NEXT STEPS

- Lisa will share tonight's discussion on the DPW CRF with the Selectmen
- Cheryl will send out the draft Warrant Articles to the Ways and Means Members

ADJOURNMENT

- Meeting adjourned at 8:54 PM

NEXT MEETING

December 21st, after the BoS Meeting