

Town of Newington, NH  
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, December 11, 2019 Town Hall

Chair John Lamson called the meeting to order at 6:30pm

**Present:** John Lamson, Chair, William Wright, Alan Wilson, Jamie Belanger, Jennifer Kent Weiner, John Chamberlain, Emily Savinelli, Selectmen's Rep, Ken Latchaw, Jack O'Reilly, School Board Rep, Library Director, Lara Croft, Library Trustees; Lillian Wilson, Cathy Hazelton, Peter Welch, Board of Selectmen Chair Ted Connors, Selectman Mike Marconi, Fire Chief, EJ Hoyt, Police Chief, Mike Bilodeau, Economic Development Committee (EDC) Chair Jeff Hiatt, EDC Vice-Chair, Mike Donahue, Special Projects Coordinator, Karen Anderson, Cemetery Trustee Margaret Lamson, Historic District Commission members; Lulu Pickering and Chris Cross, Planning Board Chair Denis Hebert, Recreation Committee Co-Chair, Rebecca Navelski, Martha Roy, Town Administrator and Eleanor Boy, Recorder.

**J. Belanger moved to approve the minutes of October 2nd, 2019. J. O'Reilly seconded the motion with all in favor.**

J. Belanger was pleased with the amount of detail in the minutes.

**Economic Development Committee Budget Review:**

Jeff Hiatt and Mike Donahue presented the EDC budget to the committee.

J. Hiatt explained that the Economic Development Committee's goal is to retain the businesses that are currently in Newington and attract new businesses to town. The main concern of the committee is the loss of tenants at the mall and the loss of value of the energy plants. M. Donahue pointed out that Newington's forefathers planned a good layout of town, but a new plan might be needed. J. Lamson asked which surrounding towns had aggressive Economic Development Committees. J. Hiatt responded that most surrounding towns have them; Rochester, Durham, Dover, Portsmouth and Exeter. W. Wright asked if the town was doing enough. J. Hiatt explained that the committee is doing everything they can. The committee is all volunteers, compared to the surrounding towns that have a full staff dedicated to Economic Development. The Newington committee concentrates on reaching out to brokers because they are the drivers of who might be coming to town. The last event was at Cars and Coffee at the mall to showcase the available space there. Pease is almost completely full, so the committee is trying to steer the overflow of business to Newington. J. Belanger asked about what the committee's vision is for the mall. J. Hiatt

explained that the Planning Board is working on a multi-use study for the mall. The Economic Development Committee is trying to get tenants in the current mall.

K. Anderson told the committee that the new business portal on the website will have a map showing the different zones and the properties that are available in town, with details of these properties.

J. Kent Weiner stated that this initiative is critical for the town but wanted to know why the consultant for the committee is paid \$75/hour. M. Roy explained that the current Town Planner is the consultant and he has been visiting Newington business and industry leaders with members of the committee. They ask if the company has any concerns or suggestions for the town to insure the company remains in Newington. M. Donahue explained that G. Coogan is very effective in this roll and has over 30 years of experience.

J. O'Reilly thought that the EDC would have to bring in \$2,218,000 in new business to town to justify its budget and asked if the town was getting its money's worth. J. Belanger pointed out that this committee is looking at the long game not the short game. E. Savinelli asked about the wages line and the consultant line. M. Roy explained that one person, the Special Projects Coordinator, Karen Anderson, was listed under wages and G. Coogan was the consultant. M. Donahue explained that last year the town hired an intern for the committee, but this year they needed more time and the intern couldn't commit to more time, so the town assigned K. Anderson the duties for the Economic Development Committee.

J. Kent Weiner questioned whether the town should be paying the Town Planner \$75/hour, she thought it was high. She stated that she was an Economic Development Consultant and this hourly rate was not consistent with her experience. M. Donahue stated that the EDC is working with K. Anderson instead of an intern and G. Coogan for one year and then will revisit the conversation. J. Lamson thought that \$75/hour was not too high for a consultant with 30 years of experience in the field.

J. Belanger asked who the Economic Development Committee reported to. T. Connors explained that the committee reports to the Board of Selectmen. T. Connors and M. Roy both attend meetings.

M. Donahue plans on writing a report for the town report about the EDC to let residents know what the committee does to help residents understand the committee's value.

J. Lamson asked for a motion on the Economic Development Committee budget of \$20,725.

**Alan Wilson moved to tentatively approve the Economic Development Committee budget of \$20,725. William Wright seconded the motion.**

J. Chamberlain opposes the funding of the events line for the EDC.

**J. Chamberlain moved to deduct \$5,000 from the Economic Development Committee events budget line. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.**

Ken Latchaw asked to speak against this motion. The power plants in Newington currently pay half of the taxes for the town. The plants are losing value every year, \$70 million in value has been lost in recent years. The ED committee is working to try and bring in new businesses to keep Newington's low tax rate by offsetting the loss in value of the power plants. These events are part of that effort and are very important for the future of Newington.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Economic Development Committee budget of \$20,725. J. O'Reilly, J. Kent Weiner and J. Chamberlain opposed with all others in favor.**

**Cemetery Budget Review:**

**J. O'Reilly moved to tentatively approve the Cemetery budget of \$23,490. K. Latchaw seconded the motion.**

Cemetery Trustee Chair Alan Wilson presented the budget to the committee. The 2020 budget is 14.78% lower than the 2019 budget. The trustees decided not to clean the monuments in 2020. A. Wilson also presented a warrant article the cemetery trustees have proposed. They would like to set up a perpetual care capital reserve fund using the money for cemetery plot purchases. They would also like the interest from the trust account to go into the new capital reserve fund.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Cemetery Budget of \$23,490. All were in favor.**

**Historic District Committee Budget Review:**

**J. Kent Weiner moved to tentatively approve the Historic District Committee budget of \$7,830. A. Wilson seconded the motion.**

The Board of Selectmen moved \$12,000 from the care of trees expense line to the care of trees expense line in the land management budget.

L. Pickering explained that the \$12,000 is for 2019 projects that didn't get done and 2020 budget items. J. O'Reilly asked if the projects were all cutting trees. L.

Pickering explained that stumps needed to be moved and other projects. J. Kent Weiner asked if this cutting was just in the Historic District. L. Pickering responded yes.

J. O'Reilly pointed out that the year end encumbrance amount of \$3,030 should not be included in the 2020 budget. M. Roy agreed and asked the committee to now have a bottom line for HDC of \$4,800.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Historic District Committee Budget of \$4,800. J. Belanger moved to approve the Historic District Committee amended budget of \$4,800. A. Wilson seconded the motion.**

Denis Hebert asked about the \$20,000 that Eversource gave the town. L. Pickering explained that the committee was waiting for the NHDOT. The \$20,000 will be a warrant article in 2020. The money must be used within 5 years.

**Library Budget Review:**

**K. Latchaw moved to tentatively approve the Library budget of \$249,770. J. Kent Weiner seconded the motion.**

Library Director Lara Croft thanked the Board of Selectmen for supporting the Library budget. The Newington Library is second in per capita circulation to Portsmouth. Every year the Library sees an increase in use.

J. Belanger wanted to thank the Library for doing a great job and wanted to know if the town's population increased by 50 or 100 residents would the Library budget go up. L. Croft pointed out that the Library grows due to the usage, not the population. J. Lamson pointed out that there was large interest in the children's program. R. Navelski commented that the Library is very helpful with the summer program. J. Kent Weiner asked if the Library has considered raising the rate for nonresident library cards. L. Croft said that she monitors the nonresident cards and most of them are tuition students at the Newington School. W. Wright asked about the salary and wages line increase. L. Croft explained that the program assistant was only full time for 9 months in 2019. She will be full time all 12 months in 2020. Health Insurance rates went up 7% across the board. The Library is now open 37 hours a week.

J. O'Reilly wanted to let the budget committee know that the Library will be bringing a warrant article forward for 2020 for \$80,000 for a parking lot expansion.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Library Budget of \$249,770. All were in favor.**

**Recreation Budget Review:**

**J. O'Reilly moved to tentatively approve the Recreation budget of \$51,850.  
K. Latchaw seconded the motion.**

Recreation Committee Co-Chair Rebecca Navelski explained the changes in the Recreation budget for 2020. The voucher expense line is being reduced by \$1,500 and the Septemberfest expense line is increasing by \$1,900. Septemberfest is very popular now, they had a band last year which was very popular. The Recreation Committee has also proposed a warrant article for \$12,000 to get new playground equipment for the Old Town Hall.

T. Connors thanked the Savinelli Family for their donation of fireworks for Septemberfest. R. Navelski also thanked the Savinelli's for finding the band for Septemberfest. Ken Latchaw thanked the committee for all the new activities that took place during 2019, yoga classes, the historic trolley rides and tennis lessons for the kids.

W. Wright asked about the maintenance of the tennis courts because there are cracks in the courts and weeds are growing in them. There is also a big tree that hangs over the court. R. Navelski will get together with Martha Roy and figure out a more aggressive maintenance plan for the tennis courts.

J. Belanger asked if the committee would consider selling discounted ski tickets. R. Navelski said she would look into it and thanked all the volunteers that help the committee all year.

**J. Lamson called for a vote on the Recreation Budget of \$51,850. All were in favor.**

J. Lamson presented a checklist for the departments when they are presenting their budgets to the committee. J. Belanger and J. Lamson worked on the list together. J. Lamson thanked J. Belanger for his help with the list. J. Lamson asked the committee members to look over the checklist and bring your comments to the next meeting.

J. Lamson also handed out a recent audit of the Fire Department for the committee to look over and review in the future.

**J. O'Reilly moved to adjourn at 8:06pm. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with all in favor.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Eleanor Boy**

**Recorder**