

1 CONWAY MUNICIPAL BUDGET COMMITTEE AGENDA
2 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER
3 KENNETT MIDDLE SCHOOL
4 CONWAY, NH
5

6 October 18, 2023, AT 6:30 PM
7
8

9 The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM. The following Budget Committee members were
10 present: Ryan Shepard, Michael Lacey, Ellin Leonard, Randy Davison Jim LeFebvre, Chair Peter
11 Donohoe, Vice-Chair Frank Jost, Bob Drinkhall, Quentin Lewis, Steven Steiner, Bill Marvel. Also
12 present were John Eastman, Kathleen Golding and Kevin Richard.
13

14 **Absent-** Terry McCarthy, Steve Angers, Stacy Sand and Dave Jensen.
15

16 **Pledge of Allegiance**
17

18 **Approval of Minutes**
19

20 *J. LeFebvre motioned to approve the minutes of August 9th and August 16th; seconded by B.*
21 *Marvel.*

22 *Vote in favor 9-0-2*
23

24 **Town and School Quarterly Annual Budget Reviews**
25

26 J. Eastman- we are at 30.53% left we are in pretty good shape for the rest of the year.
27

28 K. Golding- nothing exciting or surprising in expenses so far this year. We do sit at 30%. All the
29 department heads can log on and see this and see if anything is out of order. Department heads
30 are responsible for their budgets.
31

32 F. Jost- you talked about the software you folks are using has enabled department heads to do
33 a lot of things they presumably couldn't do before or couldn't do easily. This has been how
34 long? A 3-year transition period.
35

36 K. Golding- yes, it is, last year we switched over to the cloud version and it has been a
37 transition. It allows the department heads to enter their own budgets in, it is all live, no more
38 budget sheets running around. It allows them to enter footnotes in and add in quotes for
39 certain items.
40

41 J. Eastman- when we do future budgets I can review it, Kathleen can view it, and once we get to
42 it and start picking it out a bit, I then get to submit it and then that locks out department heads.

43 Once I lock it out, then it moves to the Selectmen and once they approve, it then locks me out
44 so that I can't even go in and make changes.

45
46 J. LeFebvre- are all the budgets under budget? If not, how are you going to manage that?

47
48 J. Eastman- the General Assistance office is overspent, and we are probably over that right now
49 \$4,000. The ERAP program was a federal program that gave hundreds of thousands of dollars
50 out, and when that ran out that then went to the Town to cover. I have numbers from other
51 towns that have exceeded their welfare budgets by over \$300,000. In 2022 we may have spent
52 very little. The welfare budget is the only line that can be overspent.

53
54 J. LeFebvre-what is your plan for adjusting the budget of that particular line to accommodate
55 the actual need that you have?

56
57 J. Eastman- I can tell you that we have doubled the budget for 2024. If we don't have to spend
58 it, we are not going to. It is not an exact science. We have quite a homeless population. We
59 cannot predict what they will do. Some will come for assistance, and some will not. There is a
60 strict intake process. I would like to think we will be way under 60k we follow the trends, but it
61 has been so unstable.
62 We had a department head meeting last week. Mrs. Parker was on vacation last week and
63 Krista and I had to sit in, we were not that busy. Our biggest issue is finding establishments that
64 want to take our money to help the clients.

65
66 B. Drinkhall- under insurance we spent double on property and liability.

67
68 K. Golding- that was posted as an error, and I have corrected it.

69
70 B. Drinkhall- what is earned benefits?

71
72 K. Golding- it is the retiree buyouts.

73
74 R. Davison- I see on the revenues side we are up 500k. I think that is a grey line we could draw
75 from to support the needy.

76
77 J. Eastman- last year we sold 3 properties and got them back on the tax rolls, and this year we
78 sold 5 properties. That number you see is accurate. One of the jobs I've been tasked with is to
79 review town properties to find the value that we can get. I'll also add that last year there was a
80 committee in charge of the bathrooms, and the taxpayers decided not to allocate the \$399,000
81 so that plus the \$521,000 will go back into the fund balance. I think we should take a lot and
82 put that fund balance to offset the tax rate.

83
84 P. Donohoe- isn't it my understanding that any warrant article that is defeated the money has
85 to go back to the taxpayers as opposed to just put it into fund balance?

86

87 K. Golding- the selectmen can choose to use that to offset the tax rate.

88

89 B. Marvel – when will the homeowners learn how rich we are from that reval?

90

91 J. Eastman- Marybeth will present on the 24th. On the revenue side if you look at the building
92 permits that have increased. We adjusted the rates in August. We are in really good shape
93 there with 3 months to go. The Planning Board fees will also change.

94

95 F. Jost- this is an environment where we have a moratorium on certain kinds of building permits
96 as well. So that number is depressed a little bit because of that. As I recall there the offsets on
97 changing the rates for the building permits was to hire another inspector. Has that been done?

98

99 J. Eastman- we always had a building inspector, and we had a part-time assistant building
100 inspector, and that assistant building inspector was also code enforcement. What we have
101 done is we've hired the assistant building inspector, we've hired a code enforcement and have
102 an administrative assistant, who does building permits and part of the code enforcement as
103 well. With the increase in the fees, it comes with more service.

104

105 P. Donohoe- can you speak to the almost overspent legal line.

106

107 J. Eastman- over the last 2 years, I did not touch the legal line of \$70,00 because I did not have
108 enough data. The short-term litigation is complete. The Levitt's Bakery which is in federal court
109 is almost complete and they told us to expect that by November 2024. We have done a bit of
110 legal at zoning at the ZBA.

111

112 Kevin Richards- the fiscal year for the school district is July 1st to June 30th. You will see that unit
113 2 which is district wide special education and that is the most difficult one to project. It is based
114 upon students with disabilities and IEP's. \$1.37 million was not get spent last year for various
115 reasons, due to staffing, students move in or out, etc. Unit 3 is the high school and we had
116 \$458,000 unspent in that. In unit 5 \$182,00 unspent. We hired some younger teachers who
117 came in under the retirees. So, you can see that 2.36 million did not get spent. We project out
118 revenue as our best estimate. So, you put that all together and you see a fund balance of
119 \$3,479,841. The school district passed a warrant article years ago that said they could retain up
120 to 2.5% of the net assessment so that comes out to that \$467,000. In August we will make a
121 determination, do we want to retain this money or not. We decided not to retain any of it so
122 that \$3.479 million will go back to offset the appropriation in the future. There is a new state
123 law that will allow schools to retain 5% and there are no strings attached to that.

124

125 R. Davison- the Board has been frugal in regard to spending. You see that dollar amounts
126 because there are so many unfilled positions, plus the bond will end and that will be a savings.

127

128 J. LeFebvre the interest shown on the revenue, why is that up?

129 K. Richards- that is attributed to the Finance Director and her seeking out high yield interest's
130 rates at the banks.
131
132 R. LeFebvre- line 2113 looks like that went unspent for student advocate.
133
134 K. Richards- it was an offset, and there was an administrative position that was reduced.
135
136 J. LeFebvre- congrats to you Kevin and Amy for your recognition coming up from the Rotary.
137
138 J. LeFebvre- I'll read off some of the questions that were submitted. There was a question on
139 the cap amount on reserves, maybe Randy can shed some light and get some more
140 information.
141
142 R. Davison- yes, we would be looking at upping the amount we probably should have upped it
143 higher in the beginning. This will help us keep up with maintenance of buildings.
144
145 B. Marvel- if we are going to increase the maximum contribution to the maintenance funds
146 does that not mean Conway will be paying all of the costs of repairing this massive physical
147 plant that we created for the benefit of Jackson & Bartlett and Albany and Eaton and Madison.
148 Just as they are bailing out?
149
150 R. Davison- the tuition agreement is 65/35. There is no way that I would be in favor of any
151 district that tuitioning kids in here to pay less than per pupil spending for Conway.
152
153 B. Marvel- I was wondering if any of the positions created under covid did they become
154 permanent?
155
156 R. Davison-that would have had to come to the School Board for approval and then to the
157 voters.
158
159 J. LeFebvre- so the question we will ask the School Board is, if a covid funded position has
160 become permanent, will it be an impact to the general budget as opposed to federal funding.
161
162 Q. Lewis – how do they come up with the mechanism they do to come up with the curriculum?
163
164 R. Davison- Rye is one of the schools that I look at because of their high scores. I think it is
165 helpful to look at schools that have high scores and see what they are using for a curriculum
166 and implement that.
167
168 L. LeFebvre- we asked the question why the district was no longer providing the state average
169 in comparison to themselves.
170

171 R. Davison- we have spent a lot of time on being fiscally sound and we need to focus on
172 education.

173
174 J. LeFebvre- I have a thing about Chromebook, Chromebook in my estimation are a dramatic
175 waste of money. I addressed this with Mr. Anderson awhile back and I believe he said he had
176 the information showing the various dates that Chromebook can no longer be updated. Google
177 says as far out as 20230, and I hope the books they are buying have those dates with them.

178
179 **Old Business**

180
181 P. Donohoe- it was asked at the last meeting if it was going to be meaningful for me to reach
182 out to John and Kevin to ask if there were any pertinent news to pull together a November
183 Meeting. My thoughts are there are budget meetings going on at the school. The Town is
184 having budget meetings. With that said I think we should not have a November meeting, but I
185 encourage you to go to one of the other Budget meetings at either the school or the town.

186
187 **New business**

188
189 J. LeFebvre- Kit resigned and we have a new member, can we get an updated roster?

190
191 P. Donohoe- tomorrow is the 2nd public hearing for the Charter Commission. I heard they are
192 heading towards a SB2 light. I encourage you all to stay close to that process and pay attention
193 to the outcomes and where they land on the Budget Committee.

194
195 **Public Comment**

196
197 Evan Lucy- you indicated that some of the revenues have increased due to the building permits
198 fee increase. Is that something the state initiated or us?

199
200 P. Donohoe- my understanding is that town staff put together a plan to increase staff and
201 increase fees to cover that.

202
203 Evan Lucy- Randy has mentioned a couple of times a 1.8 million bond payment that won't need
204 to be paid anymore. Yes, the bond is going to be paid off but building maintenance will
205 continue to go up.

206
207 **Adjournment**

208
209 ***B. Marvel motioned to adjourn the October 18, 2023, meeting; seconded by F. Jost.***

210
211
212 ***Vote in favor 11-0***

213

214
215 Respectfully Submitted,
216
217
218 *Alicia Jipson*
219 Recording Secretary