

Town of Andover
Board of Finance
Wednesday, April 7th 2021 at 7:00 P.M.
Virtual via Zoom Platform

Special Meeting Budget Workshop Minutes

1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Marc Brinker called the Special Meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Members: Chair Marc Brinker, Vice Chair Diane Choquette, Louise Goodwin, Linda Fish, David Hewett, Curt Dowling, Rob England.

Town Administrator: Eric Anderson, Board Clerk/Administrative Assistant: Amanda Gibson

Board of Selectmen: Scott Person, Jeff Murray.

Board of Education: Chair Shannon Loudon, Chris Bernard, Gerry Crème.

Town Clerk: Carol Lee, Finance Director: Sherry Holmes, AES Superintendent: Valerie Bruneau

Public: Dianne Grenier, Mike Palazzi, Cathy Palazzi, Anne Crème, Joanne Hebert, Leigh Ann Hutchinson.

2. Public Speak

Scott Person expressed concern for condition of trees throughout town.

Shannon Loudon thanked the BOF. Announced support of the AES Board of Education proposed budget. Stated that the BOE did not provide reduction scenarios to the BOF as the AES budget needs the proposed \$219k increase.

Recommended for any questions to be directed to the BOE. Expressed desire for the town boards to get along.

Chris Bernard shared support of the AES BOE proposed budget. Commended the AES Superintendent Valerie Bruneau on a phenomenal job.

Joanna Hebert: *See included.

Leigh Ann Hutchinson expressed dismay to have the snow removal budget reduced and relieved it will be allocated from contingency if necessary.

Marc Brinker thanked everyone for their input.

3. Budget Workshop

a. Discuss and act upon the Proposed FY 2021-22 Budget

Marc Brinker explained the budget process and announced upcoming meeting schedule:

Wednesday, April 21st at 7:00 P.M. Town Budget Public Hearing to receive public input.

Thursday, May 6th at 7:00 P.M. Town Budget Meeting for Board of Finance to confirm final budget and schedule the Referendum for residents to vote.

Members discussed various aspects of the budget including the Andover Elementary School Board of Education proposed budget, tree removal budget, capital projects, etc.

Diane Choquette MOVED for the Board of Finance to request a \$44k reduction in the Andover Elementary School Board of Education proposed budget for a total Andover Elementary School budget of \$4,780,000, which is an increase of \$175k from last year.

Curt Dowling SECONDED

Discussion: Rob England explained the need for the Board of Finance to understand the budget cut scenarios from the AES budget in order to see the impacts of possible reductions. Valerie Bruneau shared reasoning for not explaining potential AES budget cut scenarios as the \$219k increase is essential. Curt Dowling, Louise Goodwin and David Hewett expressed disappointment in lack of AES scenarios and recognized that other departments and boards have cut their budgets.

MOTION CARRIED 5:1:1

Diane Choquette, David Hewett, Louise Goodwin, Linda Fish, Curt Dowling voted in favor of.

Rob England voted not in favor of. Marc Brinker abstained.

Rob England MOVED to restore the \$25k that was previously cut by the Board of Selectmen for tree work back into the Tree Removal Fund.

Louise Goodwin SECONDED

MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0

Marc Brinker MOVED to reinstate \$2,500 for the Board of Finance legal fund that the board opted to remove from the proposed budget at last budget workshop.

Curt Dowling SECONDED

Discussion: Louise Goodwin inquired on clarification for affects.

MOTION CARRIED 6:0:1

Rob England abstained.

Rob England MOVED to remove the Resident State Trooper position of \$176,450 in salary.

Linda Fish SECONDED

MOTION NOT CARRIED 2:4:1

Rob England and Linda Fish voted in favor of.

Curt Dowling, Marc Brinker, Diane Choquette, David Hewett voted not in favor of. Louise Goodwin abstained.

Marc Brinker summarized the board's agreements and motions from the budget workshop.

Marc Brinker MOVED to accept the recommended proposed Town Budget to continue to the Public Hearing on Wednesday, April 21st at 7:00 P.M.

Rob England SECONDED

MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0

4. Public Speak

Cathy Palazzi thanked the Board of Finance for not removing the Resident State Trooper position, shared both support and concern for Andover Elementary School budget, and expressed concerns on the tree safety issue.

Joanne Hebert: *See included.

Leigh Ann Hutchinson inquired on the format for the Public Hearing and Budget Meeting. Eric Anderson stated that the meetings and format will be shared with residents soon.

Shannon Loudon thanked the Board of Finance for a considerate discussion. Encouraged all to attend the upcoming RHAM Board of Education meeting on Monday, April 12th. Reiterated comments from her first Public Speak.

Jeff Murray thanked the Board of Finance for considering the tree work. Expressed disappointment in lack of scenarios and transparency from the Board of Education.

5. Adjournment

Rob England MOVED to adjourn the Special Meeting.

Louise Goodwin SECONDED

MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0

Marc Brinker adjourned the Special Meeting at 9:45 P.M.

Marc Brinker announced that the proposed budget is a preliminary recommendation for the town. The Public Hearing and Budget Meeting will help to finalize the budget prior to the Referendum for residents to vote on the budget.

*Please visit our town website at www.andoverct.org for upcoming VIRTUAL meetings with instructions on how to join. The following boards/commission Zoom Video Recordings are posted to the NEW Town of Andover, CT YouTube Channel: Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Board of Assessment Appeals, Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, Planning and Zoning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals. Like our www.facebook.com/townofandoverct page for community updates!

Helpfully submitted by the Board Clerk/Administrative Assistant, Amanda Gibson. *Amanda Gibson*

Please see the minutes of subsequent meetings for the approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.

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PUBLIC SPEAK

Public Speak #1:

First, I would like to agree with Scott Person in mentioning that trees need to be addressed in Town asap. I took a walk this weekend and there is a real danger there of limbs or full trees falling on cars as they drive by. Also, I will quickly refer to what

I brought up last week in standing by my opinion that the AES budget needs to be reduced due to lowered enrollment and comparables. I say this in hoping to keep the school operating well into the future, but I fear if we have a high tax increase, it

further limits young families with school-aged children moving to Town. We don't have other amenities to offer for high tax dollars, so they will choose other Towns that do. I am so disappointed that options were not given as requested by the BOE to what reductions would look like. I have watched the Town Administrator week after week put in the work, give the requested information, and be present at the meetings to provide additional information. At the very least, the BOE should have done the same.

Public Speak #2

I want to say that I will always stand by my opinions on what should be done, even if they are unpopular. I have never been afraid to speak up. In the future, I would like to hear what the dollar tax increase percentage would be with the budget and not only the mill rate increase, which are two different things, so I like to hear that info presented.

Again, I feel this meeting was hampered by the fact that the BOE did not provide the info on cut scenarios that was requested of them by the BOF in order to help them make important decisions. The BOF was forced, in an important meeting, to

figure it out on their own and they did try. I feel that this was a definite strategy on the part of the BOE and our Superintendent to diminish whatever cuts might have been requested. I think their strategy worked because it resulted in a tiny cut to the budget. I support education for all of our children in Town, but we need to get this budget in line with where it should be in order to continue to operate a school in Town. Thank you.