

Approved: \_\_3/18/2020\_  
Approved with changes: \_\_\_\_\_  
Unapproved: \_\_\_\_\_

**Effingham Budget Committee Minutes**  
**2020 Budget Hearing**  
**68 School Street, Effingham**  
**February 10, 2020**

**Members Present:** Dave Strauss (chair), Theresa Swanick, Leo Racine (vice chair), Tom Hart, Jory Augenti, Chuck Fuller (selectmen's rep), Tim Eldridge.

**Members Absent:** None.

**Others Present:** Nate Fogg, Mike Cahalane (selectman), John Meisner (selectman), Randy Burbank (fire chief), Cheryle Feirick (library trustee), Deanna Amaral (town clerk/tax collector), Westie Krysa (deputy town clerk/tax collector), Grace Fuller (library trustee), Susan Slack (town moderator), Linda Edwards, Lawrence Edwards, and Ruth Sanborn.

The meeting was called to order at 5:15pm.

**Minutes**

The Budget Committee (BC) reviewed the minutes from the February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting.

**A motion was made by Dave Strauss to approve the February 4<sup>th</sup> minutes as printed. The motion was seconded by Tom Hart. The vote was 6-0-1 in favor of the motion with Tim Eldridge abstaining.**

**New Business**

The MS-737 is completed and ready for the BC to review this evening. Copies will need to be made and signed by the BC members this Friday (2/14/20). If unable to get to town hall on Friday, Monday (2/17/20) will also be available for members to sign the form.

**2020 Budget Hearing**

Chairman Strauss called the 2020 Budget Hearing to order at 5:30pm.

He noted that the budget committee (BC) had met 14 times over the past year and members had put in 90 plus of hours reviewing the 2020 budget requests and the 2019 actual expenditures.

Chuck Fuller noted that Chairman Strauss had put in 100's of hours himself to make sure that the BC had the best data available to act upon.

Chairman Strauss also noted that the budget as presented represented a \$0.35 increase for next year. The school increase is shown to be a \$0.07 increase, which is lower than expected.

The BC reviewed the complete package of the individual budget sheets and a copy of the approved warrant articles. Each page was previously approved by the BC and the Board of Selectmen (BoS). The following budget sheets/warrant articles had questions from the public or details were provided.

**4150 Treasurer**

What bank charges does the town incur? Bank charges occur when checks written to the town bounce and the bank charges the town a fee. This fee is recouped from the individual taxpayer involved.

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**4191 Zoning Officer**

Why was the salary line decreased?

In an effort to help with keeping the budget in check, the Zoning Enforcement Officer met with the BoS and determined that the same services could be provided with slightly reduced hours.

**4210 Police**

The decrease in the Police line was not a decrease, but a transfer of Animal Control Officer to a separate budget page. These services are now contracted out to free up officer time for other patrols.

**4220 Fire & Rescue**

It was noted that while a small decrease is shown, the Ambulance Service has been moved to a warrant article.

**4290 Emergency Management**

Why the increase in the Generator Maintenance line? The increase in the line is caused by a new generator maintenance contract.

**4290 Forest Fire Warden**

With the decrease, are we still paying to fight forest fires? Yes, we are, 50% by the town and 50% by the state.

**4312 Highways & Streets**

Why such a decrease in Highway & Streets? The Green Mtn road paving and road construction are shown in warrant articles and last year was in the operating budget.

**4323 Solid Waste Collection**

Why such a large increase in the Repairs/Maintenance line of this budget? The compactors are getting old and require more maintenance.

**4325 Solid Waste Cleanup**

Why the large decrease? The most recent monitor well testing allowed for less stringent monitoring, requiring less time and money to collect and test.

**4415 Health Agencies & Hospitals**

Flat funded most of the agencies. The decrease in VNA-Hospice was to keep the overall budget flat funded. They have very large budget/personnel salaries and would be impacted the least by our cut.

**4445.2 Meals on Wheels**

Why was this a separate budget from the other non-profits? The Division of Revenue Administration (DRA) tracks them separate from other non-profits, so we give them their own budget page.

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**4583 Patriotic Purposes**

Why the increase? A labor fee was added to our cost for placing flags in town cemeteries on veteran's graves.

**4901 Other Warrants**

**Article 10-** Why \$900 for the Baily Road Culvert Grant? The \$900 covers the first year's interest on \$75,000, which will be reimbursed, to design the Baily Road Culvert.

**Article 12-** What is the current balance in the Municipal Buildings Expendable Trust Fund? All trust fund and expendable trust balances will be available at the town meeting.

**Articles 24, 25, & 26-** These three articles all relate to rescinding the Public Safety Buildings Capital Reserve Fund created in 2003 and place the \$51,000 balance plus any interest back into the town's general fund. The balance returned to the general fund will be used to reduce the amount needed to be raised through taxation for the replacement of the Snow Road Bridge.

**Articles 30, 31, & 32-** There is an anticipated \$80,000 surplus to be returned to the general fund from the 2019 budget year. These three articles would use a portion of those monies to replenish trust funds from 2019 expenditures. For example, in 2019 Chief Burbank from the Fire Department out of Fire Department Equipment Expendable Trust Fund and received \$160K in grant funds to use towards various equipment.

**Article 33-** Will fund the new ambulance contract. The new service will have 2 locations, including one on Route 25 which will reduce response time. They also staff the ambulances with paramedics verses EMTs, which allows more treatment to be administered in transport when necessary.

**Article 34-** If article 34 passes a special town meeting will be required on April 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm to finalize the provisions of this article.

**Article 35-** This article allows police to ticket for parking violations.

**Article 36-** This petitioned warrant article was not recommended by the BoS or the BC. Several reasons were given, including that \$1,750 was not needed to replenish the Library Equipment Expendable Trust Fund which has more than a \$4,200 balance. The examples of possible projects were not equipment related. Trustee Grace Fuller noted that a TV had just failed and will need to be replaced at a cost of \$2,400.

Back to:

**4140 Election & Registration, Town Clerk**

Why is the Salary- Ballot Clerks going from \$500 to \$5,220? The answer is that there was one election in 2019 and there will be 4 elections (one major) during 2020.

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**Recognition**

Chairman Strauss noted that this was Jory Augenti's final meeting on the BC. Mr Augenti has served in numerous positions over the past many years and his dedication to the town has been much appreciated! A round of applause was given to Mr Augenti for his lengthy service to the town!

**A motion was made by Dave Strauss to close the public hearing for the Proposed 2020 Town Budget at 6:45pm. The motion was seconded by Tom Hart. The vote was 7-0 in favor of the motion.**

The public in attendance was thanked for their participation and most left the meeting.

**New Business**

The BC reviewed the MS-737. The bottom line in the MS-737 matches the bottom line of the operating budget of \$1,707,314. The numbers have been checked by several BC members and they are comfortable with the numbers.

The MS-434-R is used to populate the estimated revenue section in the MS-737. These numbers are used to set the tax rate not the estimate revenues in the MS-737.

The printout of the 2020 Warrant Articles from the MS-737 had fairly cryptic (unclear) headings. These will be changed prior to the MS-737 being finalized for signatures.

**Next Meeting Date**

The Town Voting will take place on March 10<sup>th</sup> and the Town Meeting will be held on March 14<sup>th</sup>.

The next regular BC meeting will be on April 14<sup>th</sup> to elect officers.

**Adjournment**

**A motion was made by Tim Eldridge to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Dave Strauss. The vote was unanimous in favor.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:35pm.