

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Approved with changes: \_\_\_\_\_  
Unapproved: \_\_\_\_\_

**Effingham Budget Committee Minutes**  
**68 School Street, Effingham**  
**September 28, 2020**  
**Live and Conference Call**

**Members Present:** Dave Strauss (chair), Leo Racine (vice chair), Chuck Fuller (selectmen's rep), David Garceau, Theresa Swanick, Tim Eldridge, Ben Eldridge.

**Members Absent:** None.

**Others Present:** Nate Fogg, Mike Cahalane (selectman), Tom Hart (selectman).

The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm.

**Minutes**

The Budget Committee (BC) reviewed the minutes from the July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting.

**A motion was made by Dave Strauss to approve the July 20<sup>th</sup> minutes as printed. The motion was seconded by Leo Racine. Roll call vote: DS- Aye, LR- Aye, CF- Aye, DG- Aye, TE- Aye, BE- Aye TS-abstain. The motion passed (5-0-1).**

**Process Instructions**

Dave Strauss noted that the BC was still following the Process Instructions as laid out. He reminded BC members that this process can be updated at any time should the need arise. Any member is welcome to propose a change to the committee.

**BC Budget**

3 BC members will be up for renewal in March, we currently have 2 new members. Chairman Strauss believes that it is important for all members to take the BC training at least once. The BC should have funds available for that training.

The 2020 BC budget includes invoices from December 2019. This is also true for the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment.

**A motion was made by Tim Eldridge made a motion to approve the BC budget request for \$1,571. The motion was seconded by Theresa Swanick. Roll call vote: DS- Aye, LR- Aye, CF- Aye, DG- Aye, TE- Aye, BE- Aye TS-Aye. The motion passed (7-0).**

Non-Profit budget request letters are beginning to arrive. They are due by October 1<sup>st</sup>. White Horse has asked for an extension.

**Selectmen Expenses**

The Selectmen present reviewed their budget expenses, and where they expected to be at the end of the year relating both to the budget and their ongoing road and bridge projects.

At 7:40 Chair Strauss noted that there was no web or email input to be discussed from any individuals. Nor anyone asking to be admitted into the meeting (via phone connection).

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**Budget Package**

2020 Outstanding Property Taxes were reviewed. The number has been decreasing, however is still at \$513,227 as of September 28, 2020. This number is larger than usual and will continue to be closely monitored.

Spread sheet for non-profit budget requests that Dave Strauss is filling in as these requests arrive. This spreadsheet will help the BC review and compare the requests.

Suggested Trust Fund to even out Avitar payments. The 5<sup>th</sup> year of the contract is always more than the first 4. Putting money aside during each year of the contract will eliminate the 5<sup>th</sup> year bump. It was also discussed to put the assessing contract out to bid to ensure that we are receiving the best price possible. It was also noted that there would likely be a cost to switching assessing companies and to consider that before making any change.

It was suggested to add a Trust Fund to spread out the cost for the PFAS testing of the full 1,000-foot circle every 5 years. Putting money aside would spread the higher 5<sup>th</sup> year cost over the length of the contract.

A Trust Fund for fire department equipment would be useful. Currently there is a trust fund for trucks and truck equipment, but not for other FD personnel equipment.

The BC reviewed a list of possible big-ticket items coming forth for the 2021 budget. Most are road and bridge work that the BoS are juggling to maximize their yearly budget. State funds to pay for the Granite Road bridge are likely out until around 2040.

Due to an increase in the number of calls, and the lack of volunteers available in-town during daytime hours, the FD is considering asking for 2 part time firefighters to be available during the day. This would run \$58k in 2021 and \$78k (min) in following years.

Possible savings include money from transfer station fees, part time police chief, police health insurance, parks & re savings, non-profits not asking for funds.

**New Police Chief**

The possible new police chief, who is retiring from another community and coming to Effingham for the part time position is well respected in the area, which should bring a good group of part times officers willing to work in town.

**October 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting Schedule**

Dave Strauss has carefully laid out the schedule for the upcoming budget committee meetings. Limiting attendance to one representative attending in person. (Other representatives can call into the meeting if needed). Each department is given a 15-minute time allotment, which will hopefully be adequate for most groups. One member of the BC will be responsible for getting the next representative into the hearing room to keep everything moving. Budget meetings start at 6pm and the February 8<sup>th</sup> budget hearing will begin at 5pm.

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Dave Strauss has prepared a letter to send to each group explaining their allotted time to come before the budget committee. It also explains options for attending via in-person or teleconference. Non-profits will receive a similar letter.

Dave Strauss also prepared a list of questions to present to the fire department relating to hiring part time personnel. These questions were reviewed and refined to make sure that the BC would get the information needed to make an informed decision.

**Budget to Actual**

The B2A was reviewed through September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Any questions that the BC has can be asked through the Chair for Brian Burke to get answers or clarification for.

The BC noted that it would be helpful to have the past 3-year revenues available to review with the budget.

Chuck Fuller noted that if we set up regular information that the BC would like to review, a report can be set up in the software to make it as simple as printing a report that would automatically populate whenever requested.

**Correspondence**

Joseph Haas wanted to know how much the illegal and unlawful school property tax was affecting our tax rate. It was noted that the GWRSD gets the funds and divides it up between the communities.

**Next Budget Committee Meeting**

The BC hearings begin for BoS on 10/13 and for the BC on 10/27. The BC meeting on Oct 27<sup>th</sup> begins at 6:00pm.

**Adjournment**

**Leo Racine made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Tim Eldridge seconded the motion. Roll call vote: DS- Aye, LR- Aye, CF- Aye, DG- Aye, TE- Aye, BE- Aye TS-Aye. The motion passed (7-0). The motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 8:08pm.**