

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Approved with changes: DS 10/24/23 \_\_\_\_  
Unapproved: \_\_\_\_\_

**Effingham Budget Committee Minutes**  
**68 School Street, Effingham**  
**September 12, 2023**

**Members Present:** Dave Strauss (Chair), Steve Regal (Vice Chair), Jim Giguere, Rosemarie Wissenbach, Scott Hilsman, Leo Racine (Selectman's Representative).

**Members Absent:** Vicki Kirkwood

**Others Present:** Chris Seamans (Selectman), Lenny Espie (Selectman), Chuck Fuller and Erik Jones

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm. A roll call confirmed those present.

**Minutes**

Chair Strauss made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as written for June 28, 2023. The motion was seconded by Rosemarie.

**Motion Vote: Chair Strauss-aye, Steve Regal-aye, Leo Racine-aye, Jim Giguere -abstain, Scott Hilsman-aye, and Rosemarie Wissenbach-aye (Passed 5-0-1).**

**BoS Budget Letter**

The Chair Strauss directed the board to the letter from BoS distributed to all departments, boards, and committees on August 14<sup>th</sup> regarding the operating budget limits and spending concerns. After Chair Strauss met with the BoS and covered overages. They feel with some adjustments made the budget can be brought down to the estimated \$14,000.00. Strauss stated that as the Budget committee goes over the Budget to Actual, they can watch the line items for any lines in danger of going over budget and make recommendations to BoS to move lines.

**Draft Dept Budget Sheets**

The Chair Strauss stated that no budget review sheets have been received and are due by September 29, 2023. Selectman Espie stated he spoke with Michelle, and she will work on the ones she can. Chair Strauss and Selectman Espie discussed the budget work sessions and how they were handled previously and asked to have a budget member present.

**4151 Budget Committee Budget Sheet**

The Chair Strauss directed board to sheet 3 and 3a, and the Budget to Actual. The Chair went over the budget by line item, showing the last two years and projection for coming year 2024.

The Chair discussed the averages for the secretary and that the pay has not increased in 5yrs., asking the board on requesting an increase to pay that would bring the position to an hourly rate of \$18.00. The board decided to decrease the workshop to \$157.00 and request secretary increase. This would make the operating budget of 2024 for the budget committee to be

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~~\$1378.00~~ \$1377.00. Chair Strauss made the motion to accept the 2024 4151 Budget Committee Total for ~~\$\$1378.00~~ \$1377.00. Motion seconded by Steve Regal.

**Motion Vote: Chair Strauss-aye, Steve Regal-aye, Leo Racine-aye, Jim Giguere -aye, Scott Hilsman-aye, and Rosemarie Wissenbach-aye (Passed 6-0-0).**

**2024 Projected Increases Sheet**

The Chair directed the board to page 4, the 2024 Projected Increases sheet. The Chair explained after meeting with the clerks there is an update to be made on the line for "4 Elections". The estimated increase column for 4140-Clerk Elections should read \$2589.00 and for 4141-Supr Chklist column should read \$1612.00. The Chair will make the update and resend. The Chair also made the board aware of other factors that could increase the budget such as the town being sued by Conservation due to the Meena case and the police are researching cameras for the office and cruisers. There are also two petition warrant articles for non-profits and Chair Strauss discussed the process of the petition warrant article. Discussion was on non-profits that also receive benefits from the County. The Board discussed having this information so that the board may determine what funds are given in the future. The Chair explained that with these additional increases the projected increase for the tax rate would be estimated at .53 cents per thousand. The Chair discussed all the factors and components that could come about and increase the rate, such as the \$2.55 from the school could be possible. The delinquent tax rate is at the highest it has been. The state approved a change in the school funding that the Chair is expecting could bring a decrease.

Selectman Seamans addressed the board asking if they have considered increasing the amount on page 4 for calcium chloride due to the price increase up to \$1.75 for the calcium. The Chair feels that due to the increase in price the board may suggest doing a spot calcium treatment to lower the cost and will discuss when it is brought before the board. Selectman Seamans also wanted to let the board know that with the Education Funding Bill that was passed the vouchers do not allow the child to go from one public school to another. The Chair stated that this is different from the adequacy formula previously discussed.

The Chair also explained how he would like to handle the COLA Salaries on page 4. The Chair suggests, as they have done in the past to have the board approve the line-item amount and let the selectman handle the salary amounts given to employees based on their personal policy. The Chair opened discussion on agreement with the 3% COLA raise. Selectman Seamans questioned where the information came from and due to, he is currently dealing with salary increases using the Northeast Regional increase at 8.3%. The Chair stated it was through the Federal Times/Boston Metropolitan area. The Chair asked the board if everyone was comfortable with this increase and on September 8<sup>th</sup> he gave the BoS all the salary data for their review. All agreed.

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Public Question from Erik Jones asking if the board is aware that it is guaranteed that the postage will be increasing every 6 months for next 5 years and if they have taken that into consideration for the budget.

**Unassigned Fund Balance (UAFB) review**

Chair Strauss directed the board to page 6 “Process Instruction Sheet” paragraph 4.4 and covered how they are following the process, and this is where to review the unreserved fund balance template 5, Sheet 7. The Chair explained that this information is not available yet but will be available in a week or two and they will cover once information is available.

**Budget Tracking Spreadsheet**

Chair Strauss directed the board to page 5 “Excel Spreadsheet” and covered how the spreadsheet works and how to update the information and how it will update the data.

**Budget to Actual**

The Chair directed the board to page 8 and explained these are the items outstanding and will meet with Michelle to correct them. There are also some additional items added since printed on September 5<sup>th</sup> that should not have been included and will have Michelle address these as well. The Chair also directed the board to one example 4130 Executive Other and there is no “other” when you go to their sheet. Once corrected he will reprint and send out. The Chair asked any questions and Leo questioned under 4210 Salaries for Warrant Article 4901 and why was that charged on this line. The Chair explained it was placed there by the previous Town Administrator to hold while waiting for a grant that was being applied for by the police for substance. Unfortunately, the grant had closed and the \$7,000.00 will go back to the Police dept under the individual Sargent and Control Officer. The Chair asked if there were any other questions and there were none.

**BoS 10/03 Budget**

The Chair stated the BoS are slated to start the budgets on October 3, 2023, and if the chair is unable to attend that if the backup can please have any budget that gets approved signed on the bottom of page and placed in the budget mailbox and let the chair know.

**Non-Profit Packages**

The Chair stated that no non-profit packages have been received.

**Process Instructions**

The Chair directed the board to the Process Instruction and explained a public question was raised regarding a secret ballot. That after checking with NHMA, a board cannot hold a secret ballot and all votes need to be open. Selectman Racine asked the Chair to send that information to the ZBA and Planning board. The Chair reviewed all the proposed updates to the Process

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Instructions. Making changes to add reminder for yearly report due, change to non-profit notification and the vacant seat selection process.

Chair Strauss made a motion to approve the Process Instruction for Rev 9-12-23 as written and Jim seconded the motion.

**Motion Vote: Chair Strauss-aye, Steve Regal-aye, Leo Racine-aye, Jim Giguere -aye, Scott Hilsman-aye, and Rosemarie Wissenbach-aye (Passed 6-0-0).**

**Public Question/Comments**

The chair asked if there were any questions from the public. There were no questions.

The Chair asked if there were any other questions or comments from the public.

Scott Hilsman would like his name corrected on the website; his last name is misspelled.

Erik Jones wanted to announce that there are Civics classes at the library on September 30<sup>th</sup> that cover the budget process.

Selectman Seamans wanted to make it aware that \$57,000.00 is spent on Elm Street construction by our road contractor as of today.

**Next Budget Meeting**

September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023 @ 6 pm

The Chair stated to follow the meeting schedule.

Next BoS Meeting    October 3, 2023 @ 4:30 pm.

**Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by Chair Strauss at 7:05 pm. The motion was seconded by Leo Racine.

**Motion Vote: Chair Strauss-aye, Steve Regal-aye, Leo Racine-aye, Jim Giguere -aye, Scott Hilsman-aye, and Rosemarie Wissenbach-aye (Passed 6-0-0).**