

Approved: _____
Approved with changes: __1/19/24_
Unapproved: _____

Effingham Budget Committee Minutes
68 School Street, Effingham
January 2, 2024

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

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Lenny Espie (Selectman), Chris Seamans (Selectman) and members of the public; Goran Romanovic, Erik Jones, Susan Slack, Jan Brooks, Irene Leavitt, and Kate McCarthy.

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 December 5, 2023. The motion was seconded by Rosemarie.

The Chair asked if there were any corrections to the minutes and Steve noted that the adjournment should read “seconded by Steve” and not Dave.

The Chair made a motion to vote.

Motion Vote: Chair Strauss-nay, Leo Racine-nay, Steve Regal-nay, and Vicki Kirkwood-nay, Rosemarie Wissenbach-nay, Jim Giguere-nay, and Scott Hilsman-nay (Failed 0-7-0).

Minutes Amended

Chair Strauss made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as updated for December 5, 2023, and the motion was seconded by Vicki.

The Chair made a motion to vote to approve the amended meeting minutes.

Motion Vote: Chair Strauss-aye, Leo Racine-aye, Steve Regal-aye, and Vicki Kirkwood-aye, Rosemarie Wissenbach-aye, Jim Giguere-aye, and Scott Hilsman-aye (Passed 7-0-0).

4901 Petition Warrant Article /End 68 Hours of Hunger

The Chair welcomed Susan Slack, Katie McCarthy, Jan Brooks, and Irene Leavitt. Susan gave an overview of the program and their mission to end the hunger school children experience from Friday to Monday. They are volunteer based and send home enough food to cover three daily meals and snacks.

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The Chair asked if the BoS had any questions and there were none.

The Chair had a question on the understanding that there was a private donor and Susan explained that funding was depleted, explaining that is why Wakefield Food Pantry no longer provides the food which then Chair Strauss questioned if Freedom Food Pantry would, and Susan explained that they do not provide this type of service. Jim stated that he has worked with another organization called “Gather” that picked up where End 68 Hours of Hunger left off for summer break. Steve questioned what happens if the child is not in school on Friday to take their bag home and Susan explained that it is nonperishable and will be there on Monday and Rosemarie questioned how the child would eat on the weekend and Susan stated a counselor could make any arrangements for the bag if necessary. Steve questioned the Income/Expenditure in the amount of \$63,000.00 and what they do for accountability, Susan explained how they try and plan a year in advance and each chapter has their separate monies and that amount is in an account for any overture. There is an auditor who every month goes through the accounts and reports to the director. Public statement from Erik explaining that Wakefield is no longer supplying the food due to funds no longer available, and that Freedom Food Pantry would not be able to provide this service and even if they said yes then they might come back to the town for additional funds.

The Chair asked if there were any further questions and Susan questioned if they needed to be at the hearing. Chair Strauss explained the petition warrant article process and that they are not required to be there.

The Chair directed the board to the packet with the nonprofit analysis and stated he added the End 68 hours of Hunger and went over the information on last page explaining the amounts approved and not approved staying within the \$.50 cent range. Chair Strauss directed the board to page 44 of the Budget Sheet packet for the 4901 warrant articles.

The Chair opened the motion to the BoS.

BoS Espie made a motion to approve the warrant article for End 68 Hours of Hunger in the amount of \$2,500.00 and BoS Seamans seconded the motion.

BoS Vote: Lenny Espie-aye, Leo Racine-aye, and Chris Seaman-aye (Passed 3-0-0).

The Chair made a motion to vote to approve the amount of \$2,500.00 as approved by the BoS and Steve seconded the motion.

Motion Vote: Chair Strauss-aye, Leo Racine-aye, Steve Regal-aye, Vicki Kirkwood- aye, Rosemarie Wissenbach-aye, Jim Giguere-aye, and Scott Hilsman-aye (Passed 7-0-0).

The Chair directed the board to page 44, Budget Sheet packet and explained the amounts to help the board understand the goal of staying under the \$.50 cents and that the town would need to vote for the petition warrant articles before they can be added and if approved that can increase

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the amount of \$28,121.00 for the non-profits total. Scott had a question on the scoring sheet and if there was a calculation for points to dollars and the board had a discussion. The board also discussed explaining to the public the increase if approved would bring the amount above \$.50 cents target. Public comment from Erik stating how it should be explained for the public to understand the increase if approved by voting and that other articles approved can change the total amount also.

Process Instruction Sheet

The Chair directed the board the agenda packet, page 2 for Process Instructions. Chair Strauss stated he has completed and submitted the committee report as per 4.5.1 of the instruction sheets and the board is now working on 4.6, which is to hold a meeting no later than the end of January, approve last meeting minutes, review UAFB and complete the budget sheets. The Chair explained to the board to refer to Process Instruction sheets as they are the foundation of the board and if anything needs to be changed or added the board can make those changes.

The Chair directed the board to sheet 3 for the UAFB with the warrants, stating it is at \$186,500.00 usage that has been approved.

The Chair directed the board to sheet 3 for the operating budget and the amount approved is at \$2,231,406.00. This figure will be used in the MS-737 document.

The Chair directed the board to sheet 4 circled amount. Dave received a report from the Town clerk which after this year's usage the UAFB balance should be approximately \$800,000.00.

4901 Petition Warrant Article /Ryefield

The Chair opened the motion to the BoS.

BoS Espie made a motion to approve the warrant article for Ryefield Road in the amount of \$250,000.00 and BoS Racine seconded the motion.

The BoS opened the discussion and BoS Seamans stated he will support the warrant, but he has opposition to the amount, stating the argument he has is that it was our ~~savior~~ savings to have that \$43,000.00 cushion under something else and this project already had the RFP built in and the logic behind the road projects and with the \$.50 cent goal he can see both sides of the coin and wanted to voice his opinion. The Chair explained that the town funds \$250,000.00 each year and the logic behind that is so it does not raise your current tax rate, and if you decrease it and then need to increase it for a road project that will raise the tax rate. The RFP is based on current costs on the asphalt and if the cost increases there would be no cushion and for example there were unexpected increases on the Elm Street project. Chair Strauss explained any money not used is carried over for the next project. BoS Racine questioned the money in the unreserved balance fund and how do we protect that balance, that it was previously stated we could use that

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on fire trucks etc... Chair Strauss explained that if we have a contract for the next phase of the road, we could tie it to that contract and that would be a carry over, and if there was no contract, we would have to take \$43,000.00 from the UAFB and keep track of the amount and he gave additional examples of how it would work.

Public comment from Erik explaining that you have to have a contract specific to the warrant article and to only use the funds as stated in article.

BoS Espie questioned how can the left-over funds be used for other projects unless the wording was changed and Chair Strauss explained once the project is done that money will go into the general fund and can be reallocated the next year, giving examples.

Steve made the point that the people would like to know where that extra money came from going into the general fund and Chair Strauss explained that when they go over the final budget to actual you can see those numbers of what actual was not spent and will go to the general fund.

The Chair stated the BoS motion on the table is to approve Ryefield Rd.

BoS Vote: Lenny Espie-aye, Leo Racine-aye, and Chris Seaman-aye (Passed 3-0-0).

The Chair made a motion to approve Ryefield Rd at the amount of \$250,000.00 as approved by the BoS and Steve seconded the motion.

Motion Vote: Chair Strauss-aye, Leo Racine-aye, Steve Regal-aye, Vicki Kirkwood- aye, Rosemarie Wissenbach-aye, Jim Giguere-aye, and Scott Hilsman-aye (Passed 7-0-0).

4901 Warrant Article/Antenna Repeater

BoS Espie made a motion to approve \$19,000.00 for the antenna repeater for Historic Town Hall and BoS Racine seconded the motion.

BoS Espie opened the motion for discussion and BoS Seamans stated he is not in favor of the repeater with the amount of \$19,000.00, it is not a safety feature and after seeing the antenna added to Station #2, he feels this does not belong on the HTH. BoS Espie questioned if there was information from Chuck and BoS Racine stated that Chuck was fine with the repeater in the HTH tower but BoS Racine agrees if it is outside of the cupola then LCIP would not support it. BoS Seamans explained that the antenna was 16ft tall and would most definitely show and this brought about the question that the understanding was it was a circular design that would be inside and not visible. BoS Seamans also explained that with his past experience and knowledge this would only allow for specific radio's to used and that the Carroll County has put up four antennas labeled as A, B,C and recently D to try to solve the dead area's and if that did not take care of the issue then how would this at \$19,000.00. Chair Strauss commented that when the

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Chief was in front of the board, he stated that they did tests in the HTH tower and around town that showed it worked.

Additional discussion was had on the details of the antenna/repeater being a pole or circular and that more information was necessary for the warrant article.

BoS Espie pulled the motion back stating additional information was needed to proceed.

Budget Sheet

The Chair directed the board to the budget sheet package and asked if there was anything for review or adjustment to make a recommendation. Chair Strauss directed the board to page 49 and explained that after reviewing old records for Trust Funds and the determined minimum amounts set, to bring them up to the maximum

He recommended 4916 Fire Equipment be reduced from the previous approved amount of \$50,000 to \$25,000.

He recommended using that \$25,000 for 4916 Police Safety Gear (\$7000 from \$2000) and Emergency Management Generators (\$22,500 from \$2,500).

The logic was this would provide the expected minimum balance for these 2 trust funds.

BoS Racine questioned what the minimum amounts are and what the current amounts are in the funds and Chair Strauss stated the generator fund minimum should be \$25,000 - \$30,000 and currently is at \$7,643.00 and the Police gear should be \$20,000.00 and is currently at \$15,000.00. BoS Racine asked if you reduce the Fire Dept. fund how do you plan on doing the Pumper truck and Chair Strauss explained that would come from the Capital Reserve Fund.

A public question from Erik asking what the Chair means by minimum amounts and Chair Strauss explained that you have a determined minimum amount and when you use a portion that portion should be replaced.

The Chair opened the motion to the BoS.

BoS Espie made a motion to change the 4916 Fire Department fund to \$25,000.00, the 4916 Emergency generator fund to \$22,500.00 and the 4916 Police Safety to \$7,000.00 and the motion was seconded by BoS Seamans.

BoS Vote: Lenny Espie-aye, Leo Racine-aye, and Chris Seaman-aye (Passed 3-0-0).

The Chair made a motion to vote to approve the changed amounts for the 4916 Fire Department fund to \$25,000.00, the 4916 Emergency generator fund to \$22,500.00 and the 4916 Police Safety gear to \$7,000.00 as approved by the BoS and Steve seconded the motion.

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Motion Vote: Chair Strauss-aye, Leo Racine-aye, Steve Regal-aye, Vicki Kirkwood- aye, Rosemarie Wissenbach-aye, Jim Giguere-aye, and Scott Hilsman-aye (Passed 7-0-0).

The Chair reminded the board if they would look over the budget package and if they find anything bring it to the next budget meeting.

MS-737

The Chair directed the board to the MS-737 packet and stated the goal is to complete this every budget season, to be signed after the public hearing, and to bring the packet to every meeting. Chair Strauss went through the packet sheet by sheet giving an overview of each sheet and pointing out the figures. He noted the budget sheet figures correspond to the MS-737. Public question from Erik regarding what meeting did you approve all the figures for 4916 and 4915 and Chair Strauss stated that the Capital Reserve Funds were in the meeting on December 5th, 2023.

Budget Answer Package

The Chair directed the board to the budget answer package stating to also bring to every meeting and then explained how he keeps notes for every department to answer questions at the public hearing and for others to make notes for questions from public. Chair Strauss explained how he will present the budget at the public hearing and open the floor for questions from the public. Chair Strauss also touched on the two topics that may be contentious and reminded the board to include this packet to bring with the MS-737 and Budget sheet packet.

The Chair reminded the board that the Public Hearing is on February 7nd, and he will be posting the information in the local newspaper.

Public comment from Erik stating that as far as he was aware if it was written on the calendar that was the official calendar for the use of the room and the Chair stated that the budget committee adds the dates to the calendar, and it was clarified that the town meeting was March 16th and voting is the Tuesday before.

Budget to Actual

The Chair directed the board to the budget to actual and stated that there are a few items that are still outstanding, and he and Michelle are working on the police details and grant line items. The Chair asked the board to look over the information and if they see anything that needs to be changed to let him know. The Chair explained that the information needs to be corrected in order to know how much money is rolled over from the grants because that amount affects the UAFB.

BoS Seamans stated that after meeting with Michelle they found that under 4191 for the Planning board on page 4 under professional services there were legal fees listed and he is

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questioning why they are under 4191 Planning/Professional Services and not under 4153 Legal/Planning Board. The Chair stated from his past knowledge that was put in place in case the board had to hire a lawyer to go against the BoS, and after further discussion with the BoS and Budget committee it was agreed that Chair Strauss would have Michelle move that amount from 4191 Planning board/Professional Services to 4153 Legal/Planning Board. A key point discussed was that the only two lines in a budget that can overspend are the welfare and legal due to not being able to anticipate.

The Chair stated that at the next meeting they will review the final budget to actual and on January 12th the book closes and the new budget to actual will be opened with the approved numbers.

Reminders

The Chair stated the board business that needs to be taken care of before the Public Hearing is on the 4901 Warrant Articles and BoS Seamans made a brief comment regarding the repeater possibly being placed on the Fire Station at Lord's Hill.

The Chair reminded the board that if anyone wants to sign up for a position in the next voting to see the Town Clerk as it opens January 24th and closes February 2nd.

Public Comment

Chair Strauss asked if any further questions from the Public, there were none.

Next Budget Meeting

1/16/2024 @ 6pm

1/19/2024 @ 6pm (snow date)

1/30/2024 @ 6pm (if needed)

2/7/2024 Public Hearing

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Dave at 8:05 p.m. and the motion was seconded by Steve.

Motion Vote: Chair Strauss-aye, Leo Racine-aye, Steve Regal-aye, Vicki Kirkwood- aye, Rosemarie Wissenbach-aye, Jim Giguere-aye, and Scott Hilsman-aye (Passed 7-0-0).