

Approved: _____
Approved with changes: _____
Unapproved: _____

Effingham Budget Committee Minutes
68 School Street, Effingham
February 07, 2024

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

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Chris Seamans (BoS) Lenny Espie (BoS) Ruth O’Neil, Lawrence Edwards, Linda Edwards, Grace Fuller, Chuck Fuller, Goran Romanovic, Susan Slack, Tyler Eldridge, Maureen Hilsman and Randy Burbank.

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm. A roll call confirmed those present.

Minutes

The Chair made a motion to approve the January 30th minutes and Vicki stated under the minutes paragraph it should read we approved January 19th minutes and not January 30th.

Steve made a motion to approve the amended minutes and Dave seconded the motion.

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

Board Business

Chair Strauss asked if everyone had their packets ready for the public meeting. A brief discussion on signing the MS-737 after hearing and discussion on the next meeting dates.

Budget Public Hearing

The Chair called the public hearing to order at 5:15 p.m.

Chair Strauss went over the procedure for the public hearing, asking the public to state their name and question. The Chair stated the current budget they are projecting that has been approved by the Budget Committee is approximately 46 cents per thousand and with what is known from the School and County, that will increase by 52 cents per thousand, expecting the December 2024 to be estimated at \$0.98 cents per thousand. The school is a moving target and this the best estimate the chair has received.

Chair Strauss stated you will hear numerous times in this Hearing “unassigned fund balance usage,” and the total unassigned fund balance usage in this budget is \$186,500.00. Major items are Ryefield Road and Refurbishment of the Pumper. After usage we will still have an approximate amount of \$800,000.00 in the unassigned fund balance. Chair Strauss explained that

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there has been an issue the last two years in December with the amount dropping below \$300,000.00 due to delinquent taxes not coming in. This past July delinquent taxes were over \$800,000.00 this is the highest he has ever seen in all his years. It has caught up some but is still behind, delinquent taxes drive a lot of the increases we see, and the school payments are in the \$100,000.000's. Chair Strauss explained when you have a project going you need to keep a healthy fund balance to cover those projects and what has been contracted for the year.

Ruth O'Neill asked if the \$800,000.00 had been recovered before the tax year ended or are they still delinquent. Chair Strauss explained that the \$800,000.000 is our unassigned fund balance amount after the \$186,000.00 is used and that is what we will have for a cushion in our town to back us up in the bank in case we have a school/contract payment. December you hardly have any funds coming in and you need to have an unassigned fund balance to offset that.

BUDGET SHEET REVIEW:

The Chair directed everybody to the budget sheet packet and explained they would go sheet by sheet. Chair Strauss explained what they have done every year with salaries is negotiated with the BoS and provided them with statistics. The Board of Selectman (BoS) use that money to supplement the salaries as they see fit also using the provided statistics. The board and Budget Committee agreed on 3% and as long as they did not exceed that 3%, we let the selectboard handle the salary ranges. The Chair explained that you will see differences in the budget sheet in what the selectboard gave and what the Budget Committee gave, and that is the BoS is based on a full year and the Budget Committee knows that the increases cannot be given until after the town meeting is approved, they went by the 13/39 rule that applies where the pay is from April to April. The Chair explained that is the differences you will see.

(4130) Executive Budget Committee approved \$167,875.00. Linda Edwards questioned the website salary. Chair Strauss and Jim stated that was the same as last year. Linda questioned in 2022 there was quite a jump to 2024, explain why. Chair Strauss explained that was the 2022 actual amount spent and not the budgeted amount. and 2022 was budgeted at \$3,000.00 and only \$1,500.00 was expended, and what you see on the line as per the state, the amount we actually spent. Chair Strauss explained that was all that was used, and the web is being used a lot more by the different boards and that is the difference between 2022 and 2023/2024. Linda Edwards questioned what was the amount used for 2023 and Leo stated it was \$1,584.00. The Chair also explained that they have increased their usage of the website and there is talk about using a private contractor to do our web updates, entering into a private contract.

(4140) Town Clerk Budget Committee approved \$48,324.00. There were no questions.

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(4141) Supervisors of the Checklist Budget Committee approved \$3,130.00. Chair Strauss explained the reason for the increase was that there were 4 elections opposed to 1 in the previous year. There were no questions.

(4150) Financial Administration Tax Collector Budget Committee approved \$46,319.00. There were no questions.

(4150) Auditing Budget Committee approved \$11,400.00. There were no questions.

(4150) Treasurer Budget Committee approved \$4,650.00. There were no questions.

(4151) Budget Committee Budget Committee approved \$1,377.00. There were no questions.

(4152) Assessing Budget Committee approved \$39,250.00. The Chair stated that the town voted they wanted to see this out for a contract and the BoS would need to put this out for bid this summer to be able to put this on a warrant article for the next town meeting in order to enter into a contract with the bid process. There were no questions.

(4153) Legal Budget Committee approved \$50,000.00. Ruth O’Neil asked what the actual amount was spent for 2023 and BoS Chris stated \$70,856.04. The Chair stated this is a best guess estimated amount based on known future items.

(4155) Payroll Expenses Budget Committee approved \$104,501.00. The Chair stated this is for your FICA (Social Security and Medicare) and Retirement for full-time employees. There were no questions.

(4191) Historic District Commission (HDC) Budget Committee approved \$460.00. There were no questions.

(4191) Planning Board Budget Committee approved \$11,873.00. Linda Edwards asked why the Secretary salary amount jumped from \$2,100.00 to \$6,000.00. The Chair explained that they were presented with an increase for using their secretary full-time due to having problems with minute taking, and this would be for two positions being one. BoS Chris stated that the idea behind it was that historically it was hard to find someone to fill the secretary role, so the BoS decided to advertise it as a “land use board assistant” role and would warrant more money up to \$25.00 to fill the position. Grace Fuller stated the position is currently an open position and Linda Edwards questioned if it was just for the Planning Board and the Chair answered yes. Ruth O’Neil asked what the actual expenditure was for 2023 and The Chair stated it was \$6,531.28 with the salary being the increase. No further questions.

(4191) Zoning Board Budget Committee approved \$3,131.00. There were no questions.

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(4191) Zoning Officer Budget Committee approved \$27,224.00. Ruth O’Neil questioned why Rebecca’s salary decreased from 2023 and Chair Strauss stated that Rebecca went down to 11hrs opposed to 12hrs. No further questions.

(4194) Municipal Buildings Budget Committee approved \$75,600.00. There were no questions.

(4195) Cemeteries Budget Committee approved \$2,000. There were no questions.

(4196) Insurance Budget Committee approved \$103,152.00. The Chair explained the breakdown is at the bottom for the cost of the plans and that the dental plans actually go back into the general fund afterwards, reimbursed to the town. There were no questions.

(4197) Advertising & Dues Budget Committee approved \$3,500. There were no questions.

(4210) Police Budget Committee approved \$236,113.24. Chair Strauss stated there is a difference in our police department now, we had a change and Joe the part-time police chief has retired. Tyler, who was the Sargent has taken over and moved up, Mr. Baker has moved up to Sargent and we now have a part-time patrol officer, with multiple ones covering. Chair Strauss asked Tyler if he still keeps the dog, and he stated yes. Lawrence Edwards asked if the part-time was going to be full-time and Tyler stated we are currently utilizing two part-time officers, one now and BoS agreed to bring on another, so that will give 7 days complete coverage all day double coverage with the exception of two, I split the days between a day and a night so I work half a day shift and half a night shift to maximize the coverage. Linda Edwards asked the name of the part-time officer and Tyler stated his name was Brandon Jendrock, he’s a full-time Sargent in Wakefield but lives in Lost Valley and brings knowledge to the department.

(4215) EMS Contract Budget Committee approved \$125,636.00. The Chair states this is with Action Ambulance, this is an agreed upon contract price and we do get an offset from Green Mt. Center because of the runs, which typically run into the \$30,000.00 range and it comes back into the general fund, they provide us this in quarterly payments. Linda Edwards asked how long before this ends and Chuck Fuller replied in 2030. Steve Regal asked to clarify how the payments are received and Chair Strauss stated that they get the \$30,000.00 in quarterly payments.

(4220) Fire & Rescue Budget Committee approved \$180,575.00, The Chair asked if any questions. Linda Edwards asked to explain why in 2022 we gave the Fire Chief \$20,540.00 and the rest of it was zero, can you explain that. The Chair explained that the Fire Chief was being tracked separately, he was never approved as a Fire Chief at the town meeting. What was

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approved at the town meeting was he could do two shifts minimum of the daytime job. His contract had him do two 10 hr. shifts, he could do more so what we did is pulled the money out of that line item because he was not approved at the town meeting but he was in the budget to actual for 2022, that is what he actually earned and that will go away after this budget season and be zero, the line item will go away. Linda Edwards asked what is the off-duty member pay and Chair Strauss and BoS Racine explained that is a stipend that is received for attending fires, calls and training.

Linda Edwards asked to explain what the part-time coverage is, and Chair Strauss explained that is the day shift coverage that the town approved to have two men a day, five days a week and Linda Edwards asked if we always have two and Chair Strauss stated, we never have that we are lucky to get one and some days we do have two, and we agreed to give the Chief one more chance because he felt he could get more when he came in before the board/committee. The committee felt he gave us a good reason to believe he could get more fire fighters this time to man the shifts, so we gave him one more year before we would actually turn this around and say we are not getting what we want. BoS Racine stated last year we used \$47,498.00 and Chair Strauss stated we were getting 55% coverage on average. Lawrence Edwards asked where did the rest of the money go and Chair Strauss explained that the BoS can move that money around, for example this year we had a lot of road damage and they ended up putting out a notice to hold tight on your budgets and this was a line item we asked the Chief not to spend any more than you had to and the BoS can move money around in the operating budget per the RSA and they took some of this money to handle the road budget and even after the dust cleared we just barely made it in the good on the operating budget for the end of 2023. Chair Strauss stated it was a good thing they put a hold on spending as we needed it, and it was done for all departments.

Susan Slack asked if there was any emergency money available from FEMA and Chair Strauss stated the Chief submitted to FEMA and the BoS could speak on this and BoS Racine stated there was three submitted to FEMA and are still in process, Chair Strauss explained this is how you will see the unassigned fund balance float with receiving funds. Public statement from Randy Burbank that when he was Fire Chief there was always two men manning the station five days a week.

(4290) Emergency Management Budget Committee approved \$2,500.00. The Chair stated we have 3 generators. Linda Edwards asked where are they and the Chair stated the school, Fire dept. and the town office bldg. The Chair also stated that there is a trust fund we are adding to for replacement. No further questions.

(4290) Forest Fire Warden Budget Committee approved \$2,000.00. There were no questions.

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(4312) Highways & Streets Budget Committee approved \$601,000.00. The Chair stated the top line is a warrant for Ryefield Rd. Susan Slack questioned that she sees the cost of the calcium chloride has increased and has there been any attempt to participate with the state for any reduce salt programs to be a little more calculating in where the salt is spread and how much. Chair Strauss explained that we did not have enough calcium chloride this year due to the rise in cost and the amount would almost be triple the price if we did all the town roads and this amount was calculated out with the BoS to cover enough for only in front of homes. Susan Slack stated there are training programs that help highway depts reduce their salt use and BoS Seamans explained that those training programs are for winter applications, however there are some alternatives coming down the pike for dust control and Susan Slack questioned this is for dust control and the Chair stated yes. There were no further questions.

(4313) Bridges Budget Committee approved \$1,000.00. Chair Strauss stated this is washing the bridges and minor repairs on the guardrails, bridge maintenance. There were no questions.

(4316) Street Lighting Budget Committee approved \$4,000.00. Chair Strauss stated there are 13 streetlights. There were no questions.

(4323) Solid Waste Collection Budget Committee approved \$100,830.00. There were no questions.

(4324) Solid Waste Disposal Budget Committee approved \$80,507.00. The Chair made mention that there is a special fund for anything major that may happen. There were no questions.

(4325) Solid Waste Cleanup Budget Committee approved \$13,000.00. Linda Edwards who monitors this and the Chair stated HEB monitors. There were no further questions.

(4411) Health Administration Budget Committee approved \$4,050.00. There were no questions.

(4414) Dog Officer Budget Committee approved \$11,025.00. Linda Edwards asked if this was Tyler doing that and Chair Strauss stated there is another person doing it, but Tyler is responsible for it. The Chair explained the pay went up because the average of calls being 7-10 a week and he is on call 24/7. The Committee felt it was something we needed to fund due to the amount of calls we have had in town. Linda Edwards asked if there was a leash law and the Chair stated yes. There were no further questions.

(4415) Health Agencies Budget Committee approved \$28,121.00. Linda Edwards asked why such a bump up in the meals on wheels, and Chair Strauss explained that they had requested \$13,521.00 and all the years we have been here and have not gone over \$4,000.00 a year and last year they changed the organization and increased the plate cost from \$2.00 to \$3.00 and bumped

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up there salaries by 20%, they did not have any increase in the amount serviced and do not estimate an increase here but they felt they needed to increase their pay. The Chair explained further that they looked at the budget with the BoS and because there were two groups who did not ask for funds this year additional funds could be used. It was felt this was worthy and the BoS/Committee decided to give them \$8,600 and will revisit on the next budget cycle.

Lawrence Edwards questioned if there are more people on meals on wheels and Chair Strauss stated based on the data submitted to us, it was between 14-15 people and the data presented estimated it will be about the same this year. Linda Edwards asked if there was one driver and BoS Racine and Chair Strauss explained it by volunteer and Steve stated there are about 4-5 people in the town that delivers the meals. Rosemarie stated that to clarify that it also encompasses the Ossipee Concerned Citizens (OCC) luncheon which are all included in meals on wheels request. Linda Edwards asked if they charge \$3.00 per person if you go to eat at OCC and how many do they service from Effingham and the Chair stated they did not give a number because they do not keep track of the people who eat at OCC only the delivered meals. Linda Edwards asked if there is an age limit to receive meals and how old do you have to be and BoS Seamans stated a senior citizen will get lunch for free, but anyone can go there for lunch and pay the \$3.00. Linda Edwards clarified that she could go there and have lunch for \$3.00 whether she was a senior citizen or not and Chair Strauss stated that it was \$3.00 for a delivered plate and cannot say it is that amount to eat at OCC. Steve states they ask for suggested donations and BoS Seamans also explained that just like Mountain View Nursing, anyone can go there and buy lunch, and also explained much like a school district who base their figures on an equation on the numbers on students enrolled as of 2 yrs. ago the figures are behind, 2 yrs. ago we were in Covid so the numbers dropped and they only received a third of the governments supplement for this program which is another factor is this big jump for these towns across the board. Steve also mentioned that the government has stopped some funding for some of the programs like Freedom Food Pantry, Meals on Wheels because they say were not dealing with Covid anymore. There were no further questions.

(4442) General Assistance Budget Committee approved \$12,600.00. The Chair explained that the difference on this is the BoS did not find out until the budget meeting that they needed cell phone coverage for our welfare officer, so we approved the \$600.00 because instead of receiving phone calls on a personal account. The Chair also stated that instead of hourly pay they changed it to a stipend for the welfare officer. There were no questions.

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(4520) Parks & Recreation Budget Committee approved \$40,000. The Chair explained that this is a contract and will increase by \$5,000.00 until we ~~reeeive~~ reach the \$50,000.00 and once reached in about 2 yrs., we can renegotiate. Lawrence Edwards asked if we received a breakdown on Ossipee Rec Center and Chair Strauss stated we do get a breakdown yearly and it shows the town usage. There were no further questions.

(4550) Library Budget Committee approved \$66,213.00. There were no questions.

(4583) Patriotic Purposes Budget Committee approved \$750.00. There were no questions.

(4611) Conservation Commission Budget Committee approved \$4,405.00. There were no questions.

(4619) Town Forrester Budget Committee approved \$1,000. There were no questions.

(4619.1) Other Conservation Budget Committee approved \$3,000.00. The Chair stated this is to check all boats for milfoil. There were no questions.

(4711) Debt Service Budget Committee approved \$1.00. There were no questions.

(4723) TAN Interest Budget Committee approved \$1.00. There were no questions.

The Chair detailed that all budget items covered to this point are the operating budget total which is the warrant in the published package totaling \$2,222,093.24. Chair Strauss stated the overall budget is about a 46-cent increase.

4901 Other Warrants:

Ryefield Road Paving: \$250,000.00. The Chair explained this is the normal amount we take out every year to do our road and we expect Ryefield to be done sometime this summer. Susan Slack asked why Ryefield road? BoS Espie stated this is the road they choose to complete this side of Green Mtn, and the next road will be Pine River Road and that will be a bigger project. BoS Racine explained this will give us a cost break before that next big project.

The Chair made a note that behind this sheet is the written articles, which is similar to what you see but the amounts are exactly what you will see here, and he will not be going over the written warrant articles, just be going down thru the line items.

68 Hours of Hunger: \$2,500.00. Linda Edwards asked if we know how many children, and Chair Strauss was not sure, but Susan Slack stated that it is about 25% of total kids enrolled, Linda Edwards asked how many are enrolled, BoS Racine stated about 108 and BoS Seamans

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stated serviced children fluctuates between 26-35 kids, Linda asked if the school asks permission from the parent to sent home the food, and the Chair stated that from what he believes the school counselor works with the parents and if the child is out they make every effort to get the bag to them. Linda Edwards questions this because she was sent information stating that a parent stated the child did not like the food and asked if anyone needed it, and that is why she is asking if they ask permission of the parent if the food is going to be used or if the child, they do not like the food are they going to try and give it to someone else. Jim stated that from being involved with this program in the past, they make every effort to get food the kids like. Linda question if he had any idea what that is and Jim stated things like Kraft macaroni and cheese, which Linda responds with “high sodium food”, Jim states realistically if they get it from the school or a food pantry and they do not like it, it will be recycled back thru. Chair Strauss explained that what they were presented with is that they work with the parents and the school. This program has been going on for a long time and was covered by a trust that ran out and we are now trying to cover the expenses of this program. Susan Slack further explained that when the non-profit money ran out, they were looking for donations to cover it. Jim stated that what they were presented with is if a child was out the parents could go pick up the food, and Susan stated it is not a school program, but they help facilitate it but its non-profit work. Vicki questioned the child not liking the food and Linda just wanted to ask if the parent is asked permission for the child to bring the food home.

Antenna Repeater: \$19,000.00. The Chair explained this comes from the UAFB and there are no tax implications, it will put an antenna at the top of the Historic Town Hall, will not be visible and will allow the Police and Fire to communicate which they are not able to currently. Lawrence Edwards questions if this will be a one-time fee and Chair Strauss answered yes.

Heritage Commission: \$500.00. The Chair explained you will see a warrant article to establish a Heritage Commission and this article is to establish a Heritage Fund, which they need to open a checking account. There were no questions.

Susan Slack asked to go back to the 68 Hours of Hunger and questioned the wording in the warrant and Chair Strauss stated that this was not the exact wording, but what should it say which Susan stated that one should read “Warrant Article” and the other should read “Petition Warrant Article”, and the Chair/Leo will have Caitlyn the town admin. make sure it is written right.

Fire Engine 2 Refurbishment: \$250,000.00, The Chair explained this comes from the Capital Reserve Fund with no tax impact, that the Chief presented three estimates of work for this pumper truck to get at least 15 more years of life out of it, and they were able to break that down

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by line item and not do some of the work, and the BoS was presented, that it would be no more than \$250,000.00 to refurbish this pumper. Linda Edwards asked how long the work will take and the Chair explained it would be one year, once the contract is signed and payments start with the company picked it could be up to 2 years. BoS Seamans explained that it is 1 year to commit before they take the truck and 1 year to work on the truck. Chair Strauss stated that mutual aid would help during this time. Steve explained that there are not a lot of places to do the work and they found two that are the closest, one in Maine and one in Illinois so trying to cut the cost by using someone close, Chair Strauss explained we can get 15 years this way. BoS Racine stated this is just an estimate and it could be more or less, Chair Strauss stated only the \$250,000.00 would come from Capital Reserve Fund. Randy Burbank stated we need this truck with the 3000 gallons; it is our highest load rating and if not, our ISO rating for insurance would go up. Lawrence Edwards asked is there a grant to fix it. The Chair stated that the Fire Chief only presented replacing this truck not anything about fire truck refurbishment grants.

The Chair explained the total is \$522,000.00 and total tax impact is \$253,000.0, some funds will come from the UAB and the \$253,000.00 will come from the Capital Reserve Fund. The Chair explained that on pg. 45 you will see the wording, but the amounts will not change, and we will check that wording. BoS Seamans stated that Tyler pointed out a clerical error that under the first article it should say rte. 25 and not rte. 16, BoS Racine will verify with Caitlyn that it will be correct before being finalized.

4915 Capital Reserve Funds: \$35,000.00. The Chair went over the budget sheet by line item giving a brief explanation of each line. Chair Strauss stated the budget committee approved \$136,500.00 with total tax impact of \$35,000.00. He noted the BoS difference of \$2,500 was due to the Bridges and the BoS agreed on this difference but did not re-vote. There were no questions.

4916 Expandable Trust Funds: \$20,000.00. The Chair went over the budget sheet by line item, giving a brief explanation of each line. Linda Edwards questioned if the school pays anything towards the generator and Chair Strauss stated no, they do not. Chair Strauss stated the amount approved was \$86,000.00 with the tax impact of \$20,000.00. There was no further questions. He noted the BoS difference of \$2,500 was due to the Aquatic and the BoS agreed on this difference but did not re-vote.

The Chair asked if there were any further questions and if anyone sees anything on the verbiage, please let him know. The Chair stated he will ask the moderator not to go over the details of the operating budget unless there is a question. Susan Slack stated she disagreed and felt that the moderator should read the totals for each department, ask if any questions before moving on, and

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Chair Strauss explained that the logic is that is what the Public Hearing is for, but that it is duly noted. Grace Fuller just wanted to thank the board for all their work.

Chair asked the Public if there were any further questions. Hearing none he called the Public Hearing to a close at 6:30 pm

Other Budget Committee Business

Chair Strauss asked if there were questions from the Public Hearing and had a brief discussion on questions that had been raised.

MS-737

Chair Strauss went over the line amounts that need to be verified on the MS-737 before signing. BoS Leo will verify with Caitlyn when the finally copy of MS-737 will be ready to sign. Chair Strauss will send an email with her information to set up an ~~appoint~~ **appointment** to sign by the end of next week, we need the majority of the board to sign and he would like to have everyone sign if possible.

Chair Strauss stated the Town Meeting Presentation attendance, March 12th are the elections at 11:00 am and March 16th is the Town Meeting at 9:00 am. Please bring the answer packet and help answer any questions to defend the budget before you.

Chair Strauss directed the board to the Process Instructions paragraph 4.7 which states that a meeting shall be held after the Public Hearing and before the state required deadline to sign. Chair Strauss explained that we are calling to sign and not having a full meeting, we still have to approve the meeting minutes for this meeting and will do that at our next meeting on March 26th at 6 pm. The Chair explained that they are still working on the 4.7 Governor Wentworth School enrollment letter of the process instructions, Caitlyn is working with the school getting the numbers and sending out the letters per policy, that every student not on the list is a \$15,000 savings for the town, assist BoS to validate enrollment. The Chair directed the board to the last page paragraph 4.1 and explained this is what was just agreed to do on March 26th, select officers and ~~approved~~ **approve** the minutes. The Chair stated the process instruction is a tool for the Budget Committee to use, so if you see anything to modify let him know.

The Chair asked the board if there is anything that they would like to see different. Scott stated he would like to see the non-profit sheet more granular and more visible. BoS Seamans would like to facilitate that for next year to have this meeting on zoom. The Chair stated several factors would have to happen and if the BoS would want to pay Caitlyn to be here, plus it is not required

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by RSA. Steve would like it to be clearer on when things are sent out what are they responsible to print out.

The Chair thanked everyone for the year.

Next Budget Meeting

03/26/2024 @ 6pm

Adjournment

Dave Strauss made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 pm and the motion was seconded by Jim Giguere.

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