

Pownal Budget Committee

March 8, 2022 Public Proceeding Minutes Approved

Members Present:

Bo Chesney, Gennifer Giuliano, John Green, Brian Stornelli, Andy Wyatt

Guests:

Heidi Curry and Andy O'Brien of the Select Board, Town Administrator Becky Taylor-Chase

1. A quorum was established (all committee members present). The meeting was called to order by Chairman Green at 6:36PM. It was noted that Matt Roy had resigned from the committee due to family obligations.
2. Chairman Green noted that as of March 4 this year, the Pownal Budget Committee is 90 years old! He also amused the attendees with anecdotes about the 1932 Pownal Budget, including the townwide valuation of \$279,668, of which land was \$108,313. Taxed personal property included radios and musical instruments. The Tax commitment for 1932 was \$15,823.
3. The committee reviewed a draft of minutes of the April 29, 2021 meeting. Mr. Chesney moved to approve them as written. Mr. Stornelli seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Green had provided a draft of minutes of the February 24, 2022 meeting. Mr. Chesney moved to approve them as written. Ms. Giuliano seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
4. The Public Comment period was skipped as no members of the public were in attendance.
5. The Town Officials Comment period was skipped as none of the Town Officials present had any comment.
6. Mr. Chesney nominated Mr. Green to be the committee chair for this budget season. Mr. Stornelli seconded. Mr. Green was elected with all in favor. Mr. Chesney nominated Mr. Wyatt to be the committee secretary for this budget season. Ms. Giuliano seconded. Mr. Wyatt was elected with all in favor.
7. Chairman Green initiated a discussion on Pownal's financial health and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

Mr. Green noted that Maine Municipal Association (MMA) recommends a ratio of Surplus to Operating expense at 20% to be a 'high adequate' amount. Pownal's surplus is considerably higher than that. Mr. O'Brien noted that recently surplus has been used to stabilize the mil rate. Mr. Wyatt added that the Capital Improvement Plan committee will be asking the Select Board to include an article on the next Town Meeting warrant to transfer some money into the capital reserve account to provide some buffer for an anticipated 'thin spot' in fiscal 2028. Mr. Green noted an increasing variance between revenue projections and actuals. Ms. Taylor-Chase responded that excise revenues are above projections largely because of recent significant increases in vehicle MSRP.

Ms. Taylor-Chase provided information on ARPA funds to be received by the Town:

- Pownal expects to receive \$160,000 from the federal government. A spending plan must be completed by end of 2024. The spending must be complete by the end of 2026.
- Ms. Taylor-Chase had attended a meeting that provided guidance on what is and is not appropriate spending for these funds.

* Bo Chesney * Gennifer Giuliano * John Green *
* Brian Stornelli * Andy Wyatt *

- Some ideas that are open for consideration are improvements to acoustics in the DeWitt room, upgrades to the windows on Mallett Hall, and a solution to enable remote access to public meetings at Mallett Hall.
8. Chairman Green provided a view of Lapsing accounts advice from MMA and noted that this Town's practice does not follow that exactly. Mr. Green shared an email discussion thread indicating that some decision that were made at Select Board meetings perhaps should have been made by vote of the Town at Town Meeting.
 9. Town Administrator Becky Taylor-Chase led the committee through a review of the proposed budgets for:
 - i. General Government

The bottom line for General Government is increased by about \$16,000 (4%). The exact increase is not known at this time, because the compensation budget is awaiting completion of performance reviews. For this examination, Administrator Taylor-Chase provided two estimates for compensation where the differences were minimal. This will be revisited once the compensation portion is complete.

Other changes:

 - a. The ProfessionalServices/Audit line is reduced by \$4,900, in part because the expense for printing the annual town reports is being moved to a line specific to printing.
 - b. A new \$3,000 line for ProfessionalServices/Payroll appears to cover services provided by Bangor Payroll processing.
 - c. Property and Casualty insurance cost is up \$4,104 (18%).
 - d. The Supplies budget (Copier, Office Supplies, Election Supplies) is up \$250 (3%).
 - e. The Utilities budget is up \$200 (4%). Telephones are up slightly. Cable fees are down slightly.
 - f. The Technology line is up \$1,368 (5%) due to increases in software licensing, network monitoring fees, website hosting fees.
 - g. The Animal Control lines are up \$100 (5%), due to an increase in fees charged by Midcoast Humane Society.
 - ii. Planning Board

The proposed Planning Board budget is increased by \$19,000 (67%) over current year, due to increased use of NorthStar Planning's services. The Town will continue to use NorthStar to assist the Planning Board, but they will also be tasked with ordinance review and recommended edits in order to facilitate the Planning Board's work.

Mr. Chesney asked what the timeline is for this work, and whether or not we should make this clear to the Town that this is a time-limited expense which should diminish as the work gets completed. Ms. Curry of the Select Board stated that we don't know when the ordinance review will be done.
 - iii. Mallett Hall

The janitorial supplies line was reduced by \$250, since much of that is now covered by our contracted janitorial service provider.

Costs for electricity and natural gas are up substantially. Projected electricity cost is \$3,800 (from \$2,200). Projected natural gas cost is \$4,560 (from \$3,200).

The total budget for Mallett Hall expense is increased from \$23,230 to \$26,110. The increase is \$2,880 (12.4%) over current year.

Mr. Chesney suggested alternatives to the current energy solutions for Mallett Hall, noting that the roof has great solar exposure. Perhaps the cost of heat pumps could be subsidized by Efficiency Maine rebates.

Mr. Wyatt noted that expense for Mallett Hall exterior painting needs to be budgeted here, since the Select Board and Capital Improvement Plan Committee agreed that this is not a capital expense.

iv. **Human Services.**

The proposed budget for 2023, at \$10,850 is unchanged from current year budget. Mr. Chesney noted that administration at the Teen Port Center may be weak, and that the Town should send the \$350 contribution without waiting for an invoice.

10. The next meeting of this committee will be on March 22, 2022 at 6:30 PM. The Capital Improvement Plan Committee and Road Commissioner will attend to present those budget proposals

11. Ms. Giuliano made a motion for adjournment. Mr. Chesney seconded. The motion passed with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Andy Wyatt