

Pownal Budget Committee

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Gennifer Giuliano, Brian Stornelli, Donna Watson. Excused: Bo Chesney

Additional Attendees: Becky Taylor-Chase - Town Administrator, Kathy Hogue – Chair, Recreation Committee, Andy O'Brien- Selectperson

The meeting began at approximately 6:35pm.

1. **Minutes** – It was moved and seconded to approve minutes of the 2.27 meeting. Brian Stornelli suggested two amendments, and all agreed. All voted in favor of the minutes as amended.
2. **Recreation Committee** — Chair Kathy Hogue asked that the budget committee consider a revised total request of \$2500, an increase of \$220, to provide a small buffer for any unforeseen upfront expenses in the planning of the Pownal Pumpkin Festival. Chair Hogue explained that the committee sees this initial investment as essentially start-up money with the goal of the festival becoming self-sustaining in future years. *All present agreed and supported the revised request.*
3. **Solid Waste** - Becky Taylor-Chase presented the solid waste budget request on behalf of Chair Heidi Richards. *No changes were recommended.*
4. **Select Board Stipend** – Becky Taylor-Chase recapped that last year, following a detailed review that included comparisons with similar roles in neighboring towns, the stipends were adjusted by 20% after many years of remaining flat. Gennifer Giuliano commented on how much appreciation we have for the work of the select board, the time committed and their dedication to the town. All agreed. It was proposed to increase the stipend by 7%, keeping the stipend aligned with the cost-of-living adjustment included in other 2024 compensation budget requests. The committee discussed that keeping the stipend aligned with cost-of-living increases each year is a fair and responsible way to avoid future large adjustments. It was moved and seconded that the committee recommend a 7% stipend increase on par with the cost-of-living increase proposed for other positions. The motion passed with all voting in favor.
5. **Review Budgets and Budget Committee Recommendations**
Brian Stornelli provided the updated FY 2024 Budget Comparison Spreadsheet for the committee to use as a guide for voting on budget recommendations.
 - i. General Government: Becky Taylor-Chase explained that there were adjustments coming on the General Government budget proposal. It was agreed to hold off voting until those changes are made – likely by the next meeting on 3.14.

- ii. Human Services: Ms. Watson moved that the committee recommend an appropriation of \$12,350 for Human Services expense. Mr. Stornelli seconded. The motion passed with all voting in favor.
- iii. Mallet Hall: Becky Taylor-Chase presented a change to the Mallet Hall budget increasing the Alarm System request from \$400 to \$2400 to cover the one-time cost of equipment needed to modernize the system. Brian Stornelli suggesting comparing pricing of the current service provider with others to be sure the price is competitive. There was discussion about the painting estimate being high given that the scope of work is limited to the front of Mallet Hall. Mr. Stornelli proposed that the painting request be adjusted down by \$2000 to \$10,000, a more realistic estimate. This change also covers the increase in Alarm System maintenance. All agreed. Ms. Watson moved that the committee recommend an appropriation of \$40,330 for Mallet Hall expense. Mr. Stornelli seconded. The motion passed with all voting in favor.

In advance of voting, Selectperson O'Brien complimented the work done by Chief Peters and Road Commissioner Nielsen on their respective budget requests. All agreed that both budgets reflected scrutiny of past expenses, well researched projections, and an overall thoughtful and detail-focused approach.

- iv. Public Safety: Ms. Watson moved that the committee recommend an appropriation of \$160,092 for Public Safety expense. Ms. Giuliano seconded. The motion passed with all voting in favor.
- v. Public Works: Ms. Watson moved that the committee recommend an appropriation of \$879,604 for Public Works expense. Mr. Stornelli seconded. The motion passed with all voting in favor.
- vi. Solid Waste: Ms. Watson moved that the committee recommend an appropriation of \$128,461 for Solid Waste expense. Ms. Giuliano seconded. The motion passed with all voting in favor.
- vii. Pownal Center Water Association: Ms. Watson moved that the committee recommend an appropriation of \$3,400 for Pownal Center Water Association expense. Ms. Giuliano seconded. The motion passed with all voting in favor.
- viii. Cemeteries: Ms. Watson moved that the committee recommend an appropriation of \$5,000 for Cemetery expense. Mr. Stornelli seconded. The motion passed with all voting in favor.
- ix. Debt Service: Ms. Watson moved that the committee recommend an appropriation of \$279,229 for Debt Service expense. Mr. Stornelli seconded. The motion passed with all voting in favor.
- x. Capital Projects Fund: Ms. Watson moved that the committee recommend an appropriation of \$144,000 for the Capital Projects Fund appropriation. Mr. Stornelli seconded. The motion passed with all voting in favor.
- xi. Recreation: Ms. Watson moved that the committee recommend an appropriation of \$2,500 for Recreation Committee expense. Ms. Giuliano seconded. The motion passed with all voting in favor.

6. Other Funding Requests

- Future Facilities Committee – budget request amount is not yet finalized.
- Economic Development and Sustainability Committee - is asking that the \$25,000 raised last year but not yet expensed be carried forward to 2024, and they expect to be requesting an additional \$25,000 for proposed work on defining options for a “village district”. Selectperson O'Brien spoke generally about the vision for a village district and the focus on providing benefits to the town and its residents.

7. **Cash Management Review** - Becky Taylor-Chase provided copies of Maine's state requirements for deposit and investment funds. Brian Stornelli provided examples of high yield savings accounts

available today. Ms. Taylor-Chase reported on her meeting with the town attorney regarding recommended steps to take when establishing a proactive cash management strategy. The attorney recommended that clear parameters be established, and the town adopt a practice of recording action taken by placing decisions on the Select Board agenda for discussion and vote. The attorney also recommended that the original article establishing the capital account be researched and reviewed. Donna Watson agreed to do the research beginning with outreach to Chair Schumann. Selectperson O'Brien suggested that the incremental interest earned through a cash management strategy could be used to mitigate tax impacts. It was agreed that recommendations should cover both the CIP and Unassigned Funds accounts. Brian Stornelli recommended the committee take a second look at the policy for unassigned funds which may offer more flexibility than originally thought. *This conversation will be continued at the next committee meeting.*

8. **Carry Forward** – Becky Taylor-Chase explained the need for clear criteria on what events qualify for “carry forward” and a standard set of guidelines that all departments would follow to ensure consistency and transparency. *Ms. Taylor-Chase will propose a process and bring it back to the committee for discussion.*

9. **Budget Committee Report for Annual Town Report** – *to be discussed at next meeting.*

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by: Donna Watson