

**ADVISORY BUDGET COMMITTEE
TOWN OF MADISON
December 6, 2022
MINUTES**

Members Present – Chairman Tino Fernandes; Ron Force; Ned Rogerson; Doug McAllister; Sharon Schilling; Selectman John Arruda; School Board Member Michael Brooks; Alternate Adam Price

Others Present – Town Administrator Linda Shackford; Principal Heather Woodard; Videographer Aysia Morency

Where and When Posted – Town Hall upper & lower bulletin boards and Madison & Silver Lake Post Offices on August 10, 2022.

Meeting Called to Order – By Fernandes at 6:00 p.m.

Elevation of Alternates – There is a full committee with no need to raise alternates.

Approval of November 21, 2022 Minutes – These minutes will be approved at the January meeting.

MES Budget – Fernandes began with a recap of the School Board meeting of the night before. The proposed \$7,440,417 budget is 1.72% higher than last year. Force expressed his thankfulness to the School Board for their work at bringing the budget down from its first proposal. Fernandes stated that the lower number of students being sent to the Middle and High Schools is a major savings.

The School's public hearing is scheduled for January 9, 2023 and the Committee usually meets after that to do their votes in anticipation of the report for the school. Woodward has a deadline for submission of the report at January 18th noting that voting at this Committee's meeting on January 17th may be cutting it close. The Committee agreed to make their vote after the meeting on January 9th with a **Motion** by Fernandes, seconded by McAllister to make the vote on January 9th after the School Board meeting. The motion passed **unanimously**.

Fernandes commented that as Budget Committee members there are not a lot of choices for changing the school budget; it is hard to make recommendations for changes short of changing staff.

Woodward noted that there are four school warrant articles that include:
\$30,000 for Special Ed;
\$50,000 for the Building Fund;
\$375,000 for the SAU Budget; and
The school operating budget.

Current Drawdown of Town Budget Status – Arruda gave a brief update on the drawdown with nothing remarkable to report.

Preliminary Town Warrant Articles for 2023 – Arruda noted that there are several proposed warrant articles that do not have amounts yet. They included the dam repair, dry hydrant, ballfield repairs, DPW truck and full-time rec director.

Force asked for details on the rec department. Price explained that their intention is to involve all age groups adding it is not something that can be done with just volunteers, they need someone every day. The five people on the rec committee are burnt out. Price stated that the previous part-time positions were a revolving door and that this has to be a full-time position at a salary of \$55,000.

Brooks offered some history on how the school gained the rec department explaining that the responsibility was not dumped on the school by the Town. There was a 20th Century Grant Program that would cover the program but a stipulation was that it must be under the school, not the Town.

Force asked for any opinions of the Selectmen. Arruda answered that he is not opposed to the program but feels it is going from 0-60 too quickly. Price wants to be at par with other town and without a full-time person there would be no way to sustain new programs.

McAllister made a suggestion, supported by Force, that a goal be made to collect 50% of the budget in fees. Force would like to see this move one step at a time. Schilling sees a phase approach being more successful suggesting it be over five years. Price does not see that happening with a part-time director.

Force asked for the rec to submit to the Selectmen something in writing that after review can be given to this board; Force is in favor of the idea but needs to see some solid numbers. Schilling would like to see some prioritization and documentation. Fernandes and Force asked to see some supporting documentation for the January 17th meeting.

Force asked for the Selectmen to consider a column on the Warrant Article summary sheet that has the articles prioritized by the Board.

Review of 2023 Town Budget – The Committee reviewed each department with comments noted:

Ambulance – The number will be checked to see that they are in line with the expected 3% increase;

Fire – testing of SCBA gear annually is a new expense and Brooks plans to ask the Selectmen to encumber the dry hydrant funds;

Legal – The legal line is a guess as it depends on how STRs evolve, the suggestion of establishing an ETF is a consideration.;

Patriotic Purposes – The fireworks line is new to the budget versus as a warrant article and a line for \$1,500 was added for the veteran’s support committee;

Rec Department – The \$38,000 will be explained in a report to be submitted by Price. Schilling asked how much of it is for stipend positions with a response of \$13,600.

Schilling hoped that the Police department could return to the Board and explain the justification for their increase in wages. It was decided that four department heads will be invited to the January 17th meeting which will include Library, Police, DPW and Rec.

Such Items as Properly Presented to the Committee – There were none

Public Comments – Nicole Nordlund implored the Selectmen and this Committee to change their leasing of large purchases to saving for them with the use of ETFs. Nordlund feels it is the charge of this committee to ask the department heads to plan ahead for large purchases, leasing is foolish.

8:20 PM –McAllister made a **motion** to adjourn, seconded by Force. The motion passed unanimously.

NEXT ADVISORY BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING – The next Advisory Budget Committee Meeting will be on Tuesday, January 17, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Meeting Room.

Respectfully Submitted,
Linda Shackford,
Town Administrator
Recording Secretary