

**ADVISORY BUDGET COMMITTEE
TOWN OF MADISON
November 7, 2023
MINUTES**

Members Present – Chairman Tino Fernandes; Vice-Chair Sharon Schilling; Selectman John Arruda; Ned Rogerson; Doug McAllister; Joe Dame; School Board Rep Sarah DeMartino; Alternate Joy Gray

Others Present – Town Administrator Linda Shackford; Librarian Sloane Jarell; Library Trustee Cheryl Littlefield; School Board Member Jim Curran; Principal Heather Woodward; MadTV Videographer Aysia Morency

Where and When Posted – Town Hall upper & lower bulletin boards and Madison & Silver Lake Post Offices on September 13, 2023.

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

Welcome and Introduction of the Committee was made by Fernandes.

Fernandes stated that a request from Schilling has been made to add the Pledge of Allegiance to the Committee's agendas. Fernandes asked Schilling to consider making a motion.

Motion by Schilling seconded by McAllister to add to the Pledge of Allegiance to the agenda after Welcome and Introductions.

Discussion: Fernandes has no desire to change the agenda as he feels this is perfunctory at a business meeting. Schilling stated her reasoning for its addition that included she is a veteran; this is still a Town meeting and is an example of a show of allegiance to the United States of America.

The motion passed **6-1** with Fernandes opposed.

Pledge of Allegiance – Schilling led all in attendance in the reciting of the Pledge.

Approval of October 10, 2023 Minutes:

Motion by Rogerson, seconded by Schilling to approve the minutes of the October 10, 2023 as written. The motion passed **7-0**.

MES Budget – Fernandes was pleased with the member turnout at the School Board meeting last night. He stated that the \$600,000 decrease in the SpEd budget was offset by special education transportation increases along with other items in the budget. Proposed school warrant articles included \$83,000 for a preschool initiative within the SAU budget, \$20,000 for SpEd; \$100,000 for renovation of the Madison Corner School House and \$150,000 for renovation and equipment for the playground.

The school's CIP has a six-year comparison that Rogerson hopes addresses the needs for the given years. Schilling reminded all that last year it was asked for the list to be prioritized. Curran stated the CIP is usually presented at the December meeting.

Testing scores results were discussed. Fernandes, comparing performance to the cost of education, would rather see the cost per student with the SpEd numbers included as a total budget. Curran feels it should be looked at as a cost per student vs cost of education.

Woodward explained how the opt out of testing works. After 5% opt out the others are counted as zero with 13 exemptions granted this year, so 9 zeros were calculated. Woodward explained that she has to offer the opt out to parents and they must request a form from her so she is able to engage with the parents about their decision. Rogerson hopes that it is expressed to parents that the opting out of the testing hurts the overall scores.

Preliminary 2024 Budget Discussion and Anticipated Large Expenses for 2024 Town Budget – The Committee reviewed the preliminary 2024 budget with notable comments as follows:

Insurance – Fernandes noted that the insurance lines for health, dental, liability and workers compensation, have been filled into the budget.

Arruda made note that the 7% increase in the overall 2024 proposed budget is in part caused by the slash of \$72,000 on the floor of Town Meeting. Bringing the original 2023 proposed numbers forwards leaves us with a 4.5% increase. Calculations of average weekly spending leaves Arruda with an estimated number of \$51,000 left over at the end of the year, barring any unexpected expenditures.

Dame, knowing employees already contribute 5% to their health insurance premiums, asked if the Selectmen considered increasing the amount. Schilling asked when the last time it was addressed by the Selectmen. Rogerson considered the insurance as a benefit that helps to retain employees and that is considered part of their pay.

Fernandes asked Arruda if he sees some areas for cuts. Arruda can see some but in the bottom line it will be peanuts. He will be reviewing this budget, line by line, with the two other Selectmen next week.

Executive – Schilling questioned the Town Administrator’s Salary line and the large increase. Shackford explained that it is not that large of an increase because the Selectmen used that line as a place holder to assist in the required overall cut of \$72,000. Schilling feels this should have come from a different line, suggesting a line that would not be known to spend it all, for as it appears there is shell game going on. Arruda explained that the lines are each a tool. Ultimately the bottom line is what the Selectmen are responsible to hold and they do not move money from line-to-line mid-year.

DPW Administration – The full-time salary line decreased. The part-time salary line increased. Numbers of full-time and part-time employees for the DPW were determined.

Rec Department – The Rec Director pay was moved from a warrant article in 2023 to the operating budget in 2024 which accounts for \$30,000 of the increase. Gray explained the revenues from summer camp (\$21,400) and donations/fund raisers (\$8,500) deposited in the Rec Revolving Fund. Schilling asked about the transportation line. Gray explained that they did not budget well for it in 2023 but next year the summer camp intends to have lake days at Silver Lake instead of White Lake State Park where a parking pass is required. Schilling asked about counselors to which Gray stated that they will increase the number of counselors to four and plan to increase the wages from \$16/hour to \$18/hour.

Warrant Article Drawdown:

Arruda led the discussion first noting that the entirety of the road improvement line was not spent; it is a non-lapsing article making \$27,000 still available.

The \$8,000 for the dam bridge repair will not be spent as it has been determined that it is not worth repairing. It will be worked into the total dam repair project.

The petition charity warrant articles are traditionally paid out in December once tax revenue is received. Talk of partial payment throughout the year were suggested.

Arruda listed Transfer Station revenues thus far for 2023 that included demo, aluminum and metals.

Dame asked for consideration of raising the boat launch fee from \$100 to \$150 to help offset the SLAM line each year; adding there is a request pending to increase the budget line from \$7,000 to \$9,000 next year. The increase could help to offset the increase that is used for the Lake Host Program to keep invasive species out of the lake.

Gray questioned why the Rec Director warrant article was only at half spent. Without actual numbers present it was presumed that the hours worked at the agreed upon hourly wage were not as much as expected when the amount was derived at Town Meeting.

Capital Improvement Plan Review – Rogerson suggested separating the warrant article items from the lease items for ease of reading. Rogerson will re-organize the plan and send it to Shackford to present for review by the Selectmen.

Town Budgeting Ordinance Change – A proposed change to the Town Budgeting Ordinance was presented. The change will make the ordinance more in line with how NH RSA governs the filling of vacant positions. Under the heading organization it was presented as follows:

As duly elected or appointed officers of the municipality, members of the Advisory Budget Committee shall take an oath of office as required by RSA 42:1. The municipal records and Town Report should clearly show the dates of election or appointment and the expirations of the terms. Appointments made to fill ~~unelected or vacancies will be made by the chairman of the Budget Committee. and will be for the remainder of the term.~~ *The appointee shall serve until the position may be placed on the next official ballot at the upcoming annual town meeting at which time the voters shall elect an officer for the full term or the balance of an unexpired term, as the case may be.*

Discussion suggested the removal of the words “the full term or” and “as the case may be”. Which now would read:

As duly elected or appointed officers of the municipality, members of the Advisory Budget Committee shall take an oath of office as required by RSA 42:1. The municipal records and Town Report should clearly show the dates of election or appointment and the expirations of the terms. Appointments made to fill ~~unelected or vacancies will be made by the chairman of the Budget Committee. and will be for the remainder of the term.~~ *The appointee shall serve until the position may be placed on the next official ballot at the upcoming annual town meeting at which time the voters shall elect an officer for the full term or the balance of an unexpired term, as the case may be.*

This change will be reviewed again by Town Counsel and ultimately have a public hearing and be presented to Town Meeting for a vote.

Such Items as Properly Presented – There were none.

Public Comment – There was none.

7:33 PM – Motion by McAllister, seconded by Rogerson to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Shackford,
Town Administrator
Recording Secretary