

**ADVISORY BUDGET COMMITTEE
TOWN OF MADISON
December 5, 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.

Schilling asked that Alternate Gray be offered a seat at the table, Fernandes stated traditionally only voting members sit at the table but that can be changed. Gray joined the Committee at the table.

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

Approval of November 7, 2023 Minutes:

Motion by Rogerson, seconded by McAllister to approve the minutes of the November 7, 2023 as with the following italicized additions:

MES Budget – Fernandes stated there were four ABC members that attended the School Board meeting. The proposed budget is at \$7,120,575; the default budget is at \$7,081,733. The articles for the warrant include #3 which is the budget, #4 to add \$30,000 to the Special Education budget, #5 add \$50,000 to the School Building Capital Reserve and #6 is \$50,000 for the Madison Corner School House renovations. The total amount for the school was \$7,120,575 which is a decrease of approximately \$300,000 from last year

2024 Draft Town Budget – The Committee reviewed the 2024 budget with pertinent comments cited by Fernandes:

Personnel Administration – There has been an increase in health insurance premiums;

Executive – That department increased by \$25,000;

DPW Administration – Increase of \$20,000, offset by highway and solid waste to ultimately only be a \$12,000 increase;

Rec Department – The increase of \$30,000 was from moving funds from last year's warrant article into the budget for the director's salary.

Fernandes asked Shackford if the director has drawn their full salary to which Shackford responded that the director has been paid for the hours worked.

Gray explained the job description and the number of hours anticipated to be worked. Schilling asked Gray if you took the \$30,000 and divided it by the number of hours anticipated is that what she has been paid.

Gray responded no, but if you reverse engineer it, it would be \$28.65/hour, not \$20.00/hour. Gray stated that the \$20.00/hour was non-negotiable with the Selectmen. Schilling and Gray find disparity here.

Fernandes noted that the Selectmen negotiate hourly rates but the Town did not say a specific rate.

Schilling began a general discussion of wages and salaries of Town employees, which are decided by the Selectmen before the budget comes to this committee. Discussion lead to how employees are given pay raises and when does someone make more than the job's 'worth' in the salary range of the job they are doing. Arruda sees that the whole valley needs to be taken into consideration.

McAllister asked how a part-time employee is salaried; with Schilling offering calculations about how many hours are worked and the math to get an hourly rate of \$29.41. Arruda noted that this is the second person the Town has had in a retirement basis that works to get the job done while saving the Town a benefit package.

Gray offered details about a salaried employee's wages who was hired in 2019, surmising a rate of \$38.46/hour based on the number of hours allowed to work per the NH Retirement System. Gray asked if this is the same salaried person to which Arruda responded yes.

Fernandes attempted to bring the discussion back from personnel. Schilling finds this discussion difficult for budgeting because wages are not something that you can order less of, or defer a payment as in the case of a vehicle.

Gray raised a concern stating as fact that three of the four highest paid employees in the Town were Selectmen when appointed to their positions without offering the jobs to outside applicants. Fernandes feels this Committee should decide if the salaries are in the right range or are we overpaying people asking Gray if she feels it is because of nepotism to which Gray stated it has the appearance. Fernandes is interested in if the salaries are in proportion and are the townspeople receiving the services they want and need; nepotism can come with a small town and it is good to have this discussion in a public forum. Fernandes suggested the statement that there shouldn't be part-time salaried employees to which Gray said it doesn't make sense. Schilling stated this goes to the point of transparency and a budget growing at an unsustainable rate and it all bares looking at it how to maintain talent and have it keep growing. Fernandes sees several reasons for the budget increases and would like to see the Selectmen discuss these issues.

Gray would like to see pay rates presented by name, title position, rate, exempt or non-exempt, and end wages to have a full picture. Prior to 2019, the Town Report had this information and more in it.

Fernandes suggested a motion to be forwarded on to the Selectmen for their consideration.

Gray asked for a list of town employee including salary, hourly and stipends, exempt or non-exempt, how many hours per week or year they are expected to work, the end wages, a threshold for over-time and cost of benefits. Confusion that Gray, being an alternate, cannot make a motion, the motion was made by Schilling.

Motion by Schilling, seconded by McAllister to request a list of Town employees by name that includes salary, hourly and stipends wages, exempt or non-exempt, how many hours expected to work, the end wages, a threshold for over-time and cost of benefits.

Discussion included Principal Woodward noting that the school cannot report insurance information as it is personal information.

Motion by Schilling, seconded by Rogerson to amend the motion to include only information that is available according to law. The motion passed unanimously.

The Committee unanimously agreed to the passage of the motion.

Arruda was asked if there are any substantial changes to the budget. Arruda responded not to the operating budget. There are two vehicles being looked into, one being a replacement of our 40 year old grader and the other a vehicle to haul trash. The trash vehicle estimates in the range of \$220,000 with talk of using funds from the Transfer Station ETF to offset the cost. Fernandes asked Arruda if he feels trucking our own trash is cost effective with Arruda stating yes and offering comparison numbers. Dame would like to see the actual cost to run our own truck versus paying to have our trash hauled by an outside vendor. Fernandes suggested having those numbers at Town Meeting to substantiate a truck warrant article.

Gray asked if an analysis has been done of doing vehicle repairs in house versus with outside contractors. Arruda stated that we had two very good mechanics in the past and they left to go elsewhere.

Gray asked what sorts of supplies fall under DPW Administration. Shackford explained that it is one line for Park & Rec, Highway and Solid Waste containing everything from printer ink to spark plugs as an example.

Fernandes asked about the SLAM line. SLAM came to ask the Selectmen to increase it from \$7,000 to \$9,000 which they did. Dame suggested an increase to the sticker price for non-taxpayer/residents from \$100 to \$150.

2024 Draft Town Warrant Articles - The Committee reviewed the 2024 budget with pertinent comments listed:

E. Solid Waste Truck – Arruda noted that some funds from the Transfer Station ETF could be used to offset with the Board still looking into the best path for a truck.

F. Modoc Hill Road Repair – The Selectmen are still trying to decide the best option for a solution that vary ranging up to \$500,000 with a replacement in kind being considerably less at closer to \$150,000.

L. Silver Lake Dam Improvement ETF – Shackford did not have numbers on the total improvement cost with McAllister noting that the funds already put aside were for the study on the dam.

M. Create Veterans Monument ETF – Schilling explained that a \$3,600 fix could cover the mistakes but the Selectmen would like to see it fixed by grinding a re-engraving which would be closer to \$10,000. Schilling also proposed to the Selectmen to put about \$500 in the ETF for engraving.

Q. Acceptance of Deed to Banfield Hollow Roads – By Petition, the roads were built to Town specs and would be plowed and maintained by the Town.

Budget Ordinance Change – After a last review by Town Counsel one more change was suggested to be approved by the Committee regarding the amendment to the Budget Ordinance.

“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 balance of ~~an~~ the unexpired term.”

Motion by McAllister, seconded by Rogerson to accept the proposed change suggested by counsel. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment – Principal Woodward stated that the school spends \$10,000 - \$13,000 in trash and recycling removal and would entertain a conversation of having the Town haul it instead of Waste

Management. There are two containers, one 10yd and one 8yd. Arruda thought if it fits in our truck, it could be a possibility noting that the school does the mowing and plowing there already as a cost saving measure.

Such Items as Properly Presented – CIP – Rogerson is still working to make some adjustments and has called out the operating budget items versus warrant articles, and possibly calling out ETFs. Arruda had a request from the School Board to merge the two CIPs together which Rogerson cannot see as a benefit as they do not have leases and as many reasons to put away today for what is needed tomorrow.

Schilling asked again to have them listed by priority possibly higher than a 2. Arruda feels that if the priority is a 3, then it shouldn't be on the CIP. Fernandes can see that as something for future consideration.

Thanks was extended to Rogerson for this work on the CIP and budget document.

8:03 PM – Motion by McAllister, seconded by Rogerson to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Shackford,
Town Administrator
Recording Secretary