

**TOWN OF ATKINSON
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 27, 2018**

Members Present:

Bill Smith, Chair
Wendy Barker, Vice Chair (via phone)
Sue Carroll
Bob Malo
Peter Torosian
Bob Worden

Others Present:

Agenda: Set meeting schedule for FY 19 budget hearings, select liaisons and vote on officers. Chair Smith announced that Vice Chair Barker and Member Torosian were both reelected to the Budget Committee.

Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.

Chair Smith asked the Committee to select officers. Member Torosian nominated Bill Smith as Chair and Wendy Barker as Vice Chair. Both agreed to serve another term.

Member Torosian made a motion to ask Bill Smith to continue as Chair of the Budget Committee and Wendy Barker to continue as Vice Chair for Fiscal Year 2019. Member Carroll seconded the motion. Member Malo, Member Worden, Member Carroll and Member Torosian voted in favor. Vice Chair Barker and Chair Smith abstained. Vote: 4/0/2.

Member Worden thanked Chair Smith for his work on the spreadsheets.

Vice Chair Barker read an email from Diane Heer regarding sharing documents. A read only budget sheet would allow department heads to view the budget. The Committee discussed starting a shared drive for draft budgets, minutes and the agenda. Chair Smith stated he could also make a larger mailing list. The Committee agreed that a shared drive would be a better solution. Vice Chair Barker stated that she could get it set up with the Technology Committee.

Member Torosian made a comment that it may not be necessary for Department Heads to see the entire budget. Member Torosian also commented that the Budget Committee does have the authority to make the budget.

Member Carroll stated that she would like to follow up with the Elder Services Director regarding suggested donations for rides. Vice Chair Barker stated that Elder Services should be considered a welfare program.

Vice Chair Barker passed out two suggestions, one that the Committee start having a formal agenda and time limitations. She handed out a suggested template. She suggested a call to order, and call out names. The Committee should review any correspondence received. Third, an old business section, a new business section. Anyone who requested an appearance can come up and present their budget.

Action Items need to be tracked and followed up on. Last, review and approve the meeting minutes for the previous week with the hope that everyone has read them before the meeting.

Member Worden agreed, he would like to see the Committee be more on task, if someone would like to address the Committee, send in a request to get on the agenda and also the topic. Vice Chair Barker agreed that residents request to get on the agenda, and stated that they would need to send an email to the Budget Committee email.

Member Torosian stated that he agrees with Vice Chair Barker, but the Committee does not need to be completely rigid. Residents should feel welcome and be allowed to speak. Vice Chair Barker agreed and stated that she made room on the proposed agenda format for audience/resident comments.

Chair Smith stated that it is a great idea and has an agenda for other emails he chairs. When he first started on the budget committee, it was very informal and was not televised. Vice Chair Barker stated that she would start an agenda using the format she started out. Member Malo stated that action items should be part of the agenda. The Recorder stated that she puts the requests in the minutes. Chair Smith requested that the recorder put all requests and action items from the meeting into a separate list.

Vice Chair Barker read a statement to the Committee that she would like to send to Department heads. She also stated that the Budget Committee needs to be part of the entire budget process and needs to be included in communications between the department heads, the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator. Member Torosian agreed and stated that a paragraph to the Board of Selectmen and the Town of Administrator be included requesting that the Budget Committee be included in communications.

Vice Chair Barker suggested that once liaisons are picked, they should meet with Department Heads as soon as possible, go over the expenditures for FY 18 and help to determine the budget for FY19.

Chair Smith stated that he could paraphrase that all requests with figures and the liaison will assist with the process.

Chair Smith suggested an action item to have Member Malo make a flow chart of the budget process.

Member Worden suggested having a joint Selectman – Budget Committee meeting including what they are considering their plans for salaries, health insurance, building programs, or any other planned major expense. Also, what are the goals of the Selectmen for the next fiscal year budget. Member Torosian stated that the Budget Committee needs to know early what possible changes in salary, health insurance and other expenses will be. Vice Chair Barker agreed and stated that the process should start next month.

Action Item - Member Worden will talk to Selectmen and Town Administrator to arrange a joint meeting to start planning the FY19 budget.

Member Torosian agreed. The Committee should discuss issues with different departments. One issue is building maintenance and projected costs. The liaison for that department can assist with a spreadsheet for projected maintenance costs.

The Committee discussed a goal for budget increases and zero-based budgeting. Chair Smith suggested 2%, Member Carroll suggested 0%, Vice Chair Barker stated a 1% increase would be

reasonable due to the cost of living increase. Member Torosian stated 0%, Member Malo stated 0%, Member Worden suggested limiting a budget increase to 1%. The average is 0.67%.

Chair Smith stated that he made a modified base line budget for the FY19 budget which could help find efficiencies.

Member Torosian stated that there should be justification for every increase.

The Committee discussed setting limits on Warrant Articles. It was pointed out that the Committee can only recommend or not recommend Warrant Articles.

Member Torosian pointed out that only 92 people attended the Deliberative Session and one way the Budget Committee could have more success if they encouraged attendance. Member Worden suggested that the Budget Committee be more prepared and do a better presentation.

Action Item – Chair Smith to prepare slides for deliberative with other Budget Committee members. Vice Chair Barker suggested a strategic planning meeting before the deliberative session. Vice Chair Barker/Member Worden to organize.

Member Torosian suggested that the Committee make a public notice to have a meeting and vote on whether or not to recommend the operative budget immediately after the deliberative session. Member Torosian to organize.

Liaisons:

Member Torosian stated that it is easier for liaisons to stay with the same department for this year. Member Carroll stated that the Committee used to rotate. There is an email from the Library Director requesting Vice Chair Barker as liaison. Member Worden stated that he would like to stay with the department he had for FY 18 but would consider changing for FY20. Chair Smith stated that he likes the idea of two years. Member Torosian stated that Departments need justification for expenses.

The Committee agreed to stay with the same liaisons for FY19.

Meeting Calendar:

The Committee agreed to meet the last Tuesday of every month; April 24th, May 29th, June 26th, July 31st, and August 28th. Then, every Tuesday starting September 11th, 18th, 25th, October 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th; November 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th; December 4th, 11th, and 18th.

Member Worden stated that the Committee brings Department Heads in, then reviews the budget several weeks later. It would be better to do the first pass through during the first presentation. Chair Smith agreed and stated that several departments attempt to present in one meeting, then the Committee discusses the budget weeks later. It would be better to have one department present and then discuss at that meeting. Member Carroll stated that she liked the idea and also suggested that the order be rotated. Member Malo suggested that instead of starting with the biggest budget, start with the smallest. Vice Chair Barker agreed, stating that departments like Patriotic Purposes, Conservation, Building Inspectors, Planning and Zoning and Cemetery go in the first week because they can be decided at the first pass. Departments with bigger budgets can present at a later meeting.

Member Malo suggested a cost reduction line item. Departments and personnel that reduce costs can be recognized and rewarded. Chair Smith suggested bonus rewards for cost reductions.

Member Torosian stated that the Committee already knows that departments will request increases. For example, the Fire Department will ask for two more people. The Committee should go to their Departments to find out what other major expenses there will be and where deductions can be taken.

Member Malo suggested the Departments have interns. Vice Chair Barker stated that the Library already has interns. They are part-time high school students. Member Malo suggested full-time, unpaid interns. The possibility of having interns could be addressed in the letter to the departments.

Vice Chair Barker suggested that department liaisons discuss generating revenue. Vice Chair Smith asked to make it an action item.

Chair Smith requested Vice Chair Barker keep track of action items.

Member Torosian made a suggestion that there should be increased property tax revenue and he would like to know what it will be. Also, including a request to the departments asking to limit increases to .67% in the proposed letter.

Vice Chair Barker suggested that it would be helpful if department heads use the same format as the library budget; having a line item with a narrative. Member Malo stated that there should be a format that each department follows.

VICE CHAIR BARKER ACTION ITEMS

- Shared drive document for spread sheet
- Bob Malo - flow chart
- Bob Worden - meet with selectmen
- Building process – Wendy
- Strategic Planning Meeting before deliberative – Wendy and Bob Worden
- Public Meeting after deliberative – Member Torosian
- Bob Malo – intern
- Vic Chair Barker – add to letter to ask that revenue be included in budget
- Vice Chair Barker – summary after line items
- Member Torosian – speak to Tax Collector about property tax revenue
- Member Malo – ideas on cost reduction
- Chair Smith suggested rearranging the budget presentations so that smaller departments go first – Member Carroll to suggest a new order

Member Worden made a motion to adjourn the Tuesday, March 27, 2018 meeting of the Atkinson Budget Committee at 9:23 PM. Chair Smith seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Budget Committee present voted in favor. Chair Smith, Vice Chair Barker, Member Torosian, Member Malo and Member Carroll voted in favor. Vote: 6/0/0.

ACTION ITEMS

- Vice Chair Barker - set up a shared drive with the Technology Committee.
- Member Carroll - follow up with the Elder Services Director regarding suggested donations for rides.
- Vice Chair Barker - a formal agenda and time limitations. She handed out a suggested template. She suggested a call to order and call out names. The Committee should review any correspondence received. Third, an old business section, a new business section. Anyone who requested an appearance can come up and present their budget.
- Vice Chair Barker - Action Items need to be tracked and followed up on. Last, review and approve the meeting minutes for the previous week with the hope that everyone has read them before the meeting.
- Vice Chair Barker send statement to the Department heads. The Budget Committee needs to be part of the entire budget process and needs to be included in communications between the department heads, the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator.
- Liaisons meet with Department Heads as soon as possible, go over the expenditures for FY 18 and help to determine the budget for FY19.
- Member Malo make a flow chart of the budget process.
- Member Worden - talk to Selectmen and Town Administrator to arrange a joint meeting to start planning the FY19 budget.
- Chair Smith to prepare slides for deliberative with other Budget Committee members.
- Vice Chair Barker/Member Worden to organize a strategic planning meeting before the Deliberative Session
- Member Torosian to organize a public notice to have a meeting and vote on whether or not to recommend the operative budget immediately after the deliberative session.
- Vice Chair Barker to keep track of action items.
- Member Malo – interns