

**TOWN OF ATKINSON
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
Saturday, January 30, 2021**

Members Present

Wendy Barker
Ray Fournier
Bob Malo
Bill Smith
Peter Torosian

Members Absent

Mark Sakakeeny

Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 3:15 PM.

Agenda: In light of spending increase amendments to the Operating Budget at Deliberative Session, the Committee met immediately afterwards (as posted in the calendar used all through Budget season and as announced by Chair Smith before Deliberative ended), to reconsider Budget Committee warrant recommendations.

Warrant Articles Review: After brief discussion, the Committee voted the following changes to Budget Committee warrant recommendations:

Article #2021-3 Long-Term Borrowing Planning & Deferred Maintenance of Town Facilities

Member Barker made a motion to "Not recommend" Article #2021-3. Chair Smith seconded the motion. Discussion indicated that, although amendments had removed some unnecessary items, non-essential Town Hall interior remodeling and other items remained, and the wording and dollar amounts were still vague and without supporting documentation (professional quotes). It is not the intent of the committee to eliminate spending on building maintenance; rather it is to employ a more conservative approach to annual spending with a long term (10 year) plan and project prioritization. Vote: Not Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 5 to 0.

Article #2021-4 Operating Budget

Member Torosian made a motion to "Not recommend" Article #2021-4. Member Fournier seconded the motion. Members agreed that deliberative amendments had increased the amount significantly further from our original goal (as stated at the beginning of budget season and repeatedly since) of a flat budget due to concern about the economic impact of the Covid emergency, which has caused some taxpayers to lose jobs and businesses, and which may worsen in the next year. Vote: Not Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 5 to 0.

Article #2021-10 Highway Department Capital Reserve Fund

Chair Smith made a motion to "Not recommend" Article #2021-10. Member Barker seconded the motion. In general Committee members are opposed to additional capital reserve funds, preferring clear line items in the Operating Budget. There was also concern about vehicle replacement timing. The committee believes that a less aggressive replacement plan should be and can be employed so that annual spending on these items has less of an impact on the taxpayer. Vote: Not Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 5 to 0

Article #2021-11 Road Agent Additional Duties

Member Torosian made a motion to "Not recommend" Article #2021-11. Member Malo seconded the motion. Earlier questioning had indicated Mr. Stewart would not be working additional hours, and that the highway department put in extra money for an additional full time employee, adding to the line item under highway department and also using up money formerly allocated to Building maintenance supervisor. Vote: Not Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 3 to 1 to 1

Article #2021-13 PFAS Investigation

Member Torosian made a motion to "Not recommend" Article #2021-13. Member Malo seconded the motion. Allocating tax money seemed premature in light of possible class action lawsuits and potential future payments by manufacturers. Vote: Not Recommended by the Budget Committee by a vote of 5 to 0

Chair Smith made a motion to adjourn. Member Torosian seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Vote: 5/0/0

The Atkinson Budget Committee Meeting adjourned at 3:25 PM.