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**BUDGET TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES**  
**TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2020**  
**10:00 AM**

This meeting was held via webex in accordance with Governor Lamont's Executive Order #7b Section 1, which suspends the open meeting requirements of in-person participation, audio and video of this meeting was available via webex.

In Attendance: Sandy Stein, Joseph Crisco, Joseph Dey

Staff in Attendance: Beth Heller, First Selectman; Anthony Genovese, Administrative Officer / Director of Finance; Karen Crosby, Budget Analyst / Payroll & Benefits Administrator

Tony Genovese reviewed the budget process. There is a Capital Budget and an Operating Budget. We have a package of information that is sent to the departments. The Capital Budget is sent out in September. Budget is a year-long process, it never ends. Department Heads should always be thinking of their budget. What their needs are and how the department is changing. We encourage the departments to think of their long-term needs. In an ideal situation with the capital budget, year two should move to year one going forward. There are always surprises, but we try to limit them. The Capital Budget requests are due back to Finance by early November. In early October, the Operating Budget package is sent to departments and are due the first week of January. The main focus of the operating budget is the personnel roster. The personnel roster drives a large part of the budget. We try to give guidelines each year from the Board of Finance. They have ranged from no new positions, zero percent budget increase. Tony will meet with department heads while they are preparing their budget requests. Those requests are compiled and presented to both the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance for the joint meetings in January. Throughout the year we encourage departments to do things faster, cheaper and more efficiently. Provide more with less or provide less with less. What programs do you offer and do you need to offer those programs.

Joe Dey didn't realize that the Board of Finance gives any type of budget guidelines to the departments. When does that get to the Board of Selectmen as to whether or not they want to continue certain programs. Tony stated that is part of the budget process and another part of that are the commissions. They set those policies and they should be involved in that process. Public Works has had a lot of changes; we eliminated a Parks Director and a mechanic.

Sandy stated that the budget guidelines never really make it to the commissions. How do we take these guidelines to the commissions to make them understand it. There are salary increases that need to be included in a budget.

June 16, 2020

Tony took a budget expenditure history since 2016 and broke it down between Town departments, WBOE and Amity. From FY16 to FY21 the Amity Board of Education has had a 16.66% increase, WBOE is 12.65% increase and the Town portion of the budget is a decrease of .12% over that time period. Although it may not seem that the Town departments, given the fact that they are given salary increases each year, they had a decrease in operating costs. If you strip out capital and debt service, the actual decrease is .43% in operating costs. Tony has worked hard with departments to cut back on the expenditures and rearrange department personnel.

Jos Dey stated that it is interesting to him that the Board of Selectmen doesn't set any of these policies. The point Tony made about the commissions is interesting. Also Sandy said that the BOS and BOF should deal with the commissions more directly and how we educate them regarding the budget.

Sandy stated Budget parameters for the year are not necessarily shared with the commissions. The parameters need to be more clear so they understand.

Tony stated that we have had that reduction and part of that is because we eliminated nine positions since 2016, which is a big part. We also made adjustments in the FY21 budget that are related to the pandemic. This is something that you will need to understand and react to such as the Library hours, senior center, programs, camp. In the upcoming budget process we will have to look at library hours and other programs and how we should move forward.

Joe asked how we would move forward with the upcoming budget and work with the department head and commission program by program. When the departments come to the joint meetings it looks like they are just carrying forward line items. That is not how we can delve into the expenses.

Tony stated that when he meets with the department head they look at the department. For example, when he met with Warren and the public works department eliminated the Parks Director by reassigning work. Sandy stated that there are a lot of smaller departments and it would be hard for them to come in at a certain percentage decrease/increase. Tony stated that for instance, with the Building Department they made the Building Official a part time position rather than full time. When there are staffing changes that is the time to make adjustments in the personnel of the department.

Sandy stated that if the departments are told that they will have to come in at 5% lower in their budget request; the departments should come to the Boards with how that cut would affect the operation of their department. Some departments may have to cut personnel (full time to part time), some may have to cut hours/days that they are open. It will then give the Boards the opportunity to say they want to go forward with the decrease.

Joe Dey asked Tony to send the Capital and Operating Budget packages that were sent to the departments last year to the Task Force for review. Then at the next meeting the Task Force can share ideas on whether to change the process or not.

Sandy asked Tony what he would suggest on how to approach next year's budget keeping in mind what was done this year due to the pandemic. Tony stated that they would have to have an honest discussion with departments/commissions about some of the services and programs that have been historically provided; whether it is time to evaluate whether they should continue to be provided.

June 16, 2020

Sandy asked if they aren't given monetary parameters, how will they have a framework from which to start to look at that. Tony stated that the Boards should certainly give the budgetary parameters but the department/commission and they would have to understand their programs and services and how much they really cost. Is that something they want to continue or not. If a program is going to be eliminated and 20 people attend a virtual meeting and demand the program be reinstated. The boards would have to understand what it is all about and say yes it is a great program but we have gone through this process. Tony would work with department heads to be sure they present something that is realistic.

Joe Dey stated that if Tony talks with the department head how does the commission chair play a part in the decision. Sandy stated that she goes to a lot of the commission meetings. She notices that all the budget preparation is done by the department head and it is brought to the commission. The commission members ask a few questions, and then they approve it. Sandy has never witnessed not approving a budget. Even though they ask questions they most likely approve what is presented to them.

Joe Dey stated that the Boards need to get to the commissions to educate them about the budget parameters.

Sandy stated that Tony has been extremely successful with reorganized public works. Tony stated that in Finance, we lost the payroll clerk. To reorganize there was someone in public works that had the skills to run payroll so we gave that roll to her and had someone else administer it. We also gave some assignments to the Tax Office.

Joe Dey asked what has prevented Tony from doing the same thing with the police department. Tony stated that the opportunity hasn't presented itself. Tony stated that there have been three positions eliminated in the police department that came from the top down. Joe also stated that Tony could work with the department heads and work his magic like he did with public works.

Joe Crisco asked if there would be much savings in putting insurances and banking out to bid. Tony stated that we put insurances out to bid and banking might not be worth the trouble involved to switch.

Joe Dey asked what Tony's involvement is with the preparation of the Beecher budget. Tony stated that he has no involvement at all. That is done by the Superintendent and the Business Manager. Sandy stated that the Town has no control over the line items in the Beecher budget.

Joe asked if the Woodbridge Board of Education is a separate entity. Tony stated that they do have their own Tax ID Number.

Joe stated that we have to try to put a stop to the Beecher increases. Tony stated that if the Boards suggest a 5% cut, it will only affect a third of the budget.

Sandy stated that with regard to Beecher, they were very responsive with the directive that was given to them. They were given a directive of zero percent increase and they came in at .76% with a scenario of zero percent. The Board of Finance decided to take them up on the zero percent increase.

June 16, 2020

Sandy stated that the Superintendents have tried to be collaborative regarding the budgets. Bob Gilbert has re-activated their own budget task force. They have a committee looking into the SRO.

Joe thinks the Boards need to get stronger with their budget message.

Sandy stated that there has been discussion of the Board of Finance directives. We have to be more clear as to how they look at their budgets and to add the Board of Selectmen in the directive. There has been some reluctance to be more specific for X percent. Do they need to be open five days a week. Are there programs that are offered but are not essential.

Tony stated that if the guidance is given earlier in the process it is better than offering it in December when it is too late.

Sandy stated they need to review the budget guidelines sent to the departments and think as to how they might want to change that for next year. Both the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance need to be on the same page so that Tony is carrying out the directive given to him by the two municipal entities.

Joe Dey asked if Tony can put something together for a budget process timeline for the Task Force to review. Sandy stated that it also needs to include that all the liaisons on the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance have to be the communicators of the guidelines to those Boards and Commissions. They have to understand why the Town is going in this direction and where it is coming from.

The next meeting will be scheduled after the Task Force receives requested information from Tony.

Respectfully submitted,

*Karen Crosby*

Karen Crosby  
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Payroll & Benefits Administrator