

**BUDGET COMMITTEE
TOWN OF PEMBROKE, NH
February 8, 2024 Immediately Following 7 PM Budget Public Hearing**

FINAL

Mark LePage, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:10 pm.

I. Attendance

Budget Committee Present: Mark LePage, Gerry Fleury, Clint Hanson, Gene Gauss, Brian Seaworth, Peter Gagyi, Matt Miller, Jason Mayeu, Louis Caron, Jennifer Miskovic (formerly Johnson), Sue Whitbeck

Budget Committee Excused: None

Budget Committee Not Present: None

II. Approval of Minutes: February 1, 2024

Clint Hanson made a motion to approve the minutes of February 1, 2024. Jenn Miskovic seconded the motion. Motion passed as 9-0. Jenn recused herself due to being absent/excused from the previous meeting.

III. Town Budget – finalize recommendations for March Town Meeting

Mark started by explaining the process. The Committee would be revoting to decide what budget number they would like to recommend for the March meetings. This would be the final set of numbers recommended.

Traditionally, there would be the option to reaffirm the prior votes. This was not possible as the warrant article for the EV Refuse Truck changed. The numbers presented to residents at the Public Hearing were the new accurate numbers. The vote would have to be reaffirmed as amended. Brian Seaworth pointed out that there was also a member who was not present to vote at the previous meeting. Mark decided that a revote would be a better approach.

Gerry Fleury spoke about the revision to the EV Refuse Truck warrant changing it from \$721,355 to \$730,402. There was another increase of \$35,366. The quoted price from July was different than quote reaffirmed on February 7, 2024. VJ Ranfos, Public Works Director, wants to compare the quote line by line to make sure that the increase is warranted. The grant is for \$684,970. The language would have taken \$100,000 from the Town Equipment Capital Reserves. Based on the current estimates, as much as \$80,798 could be drawn on. The Selectboard discussed it the previous night and voted 4-0 to approve the warrant article. Someone will need to amend the article at Town Meeting for the actual amount. After this, the order will be placed to lock the price in. The language of warrant article was not changed because the exact number is unknown. Matt Miller wanted to confirm that it would still be less than \$100,000. Gerry confirmed. Gene Gauss wanted to know if the grant number would remain the same. Gerry confirmed.

Article 3 – To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate \$152,000 to perform a stormwater infrastructure project at Memorial Park.

Clint made a motion to recommend. Jenn seconded the motion.

The article was recommended 10-0.

Article 4 – To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$730,402 to purchase a new EV refuse truck with accessories.

Jenn made a motion to recommend. Gerry seconded the motion.

The article was recommended 10-0.

Article 6 – Shall the town vote to Modify Chapter 138, Article IV of the Pembroke Town Code entitle Elderly Exemptions under the provisions of RSA 72:39-a for elderly exemption from property tax in Pembroke.

Clint made a motion to recommend. Jason Mayeu seconded the motion.

The article was recommended 10-0.

Article 7 – To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee’s recommended amount of \$11,624,396 for the 2024 municipal budget.

Sue Whitbeck made a motion to recommend. Jenn seconded the motion.

The article was recommended 10-0.

Article 8 – To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$845,500 for Capital Reserve Funds.

Town Equipment Capital Reserve Fund	\$275,000
Police Cruiser Capital Reserve Fund	\$65,000
Municipal Facilities Capital Reserve Fund	\$75,000
Fire Major Equipment Capital Reserve Fund	\$162,000
Fire Small Equipment Capital Reserve Fund	\$40,000
Roadway and Infrastructure Capital Reserve Fund	\$50,000
Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund	\$30,000
Cemetery Capital Reserve Fund	\$10,000
Ambulance Repl./Equipment Capital Reserve Fund	\$121,000
Recreation Capital Reserve Fund	\$10,000
Town Clock Fund	\$7,500

Gerry made a motion to recommend. Gene seconded the motion.

The article was recommended 8-2.

Article 9 – To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$60,250 to purchase a Hot Patcher for the Public Works Department.

Sue made a motion to recommend. Jenn seconded the motion.

The article was recommended 10-0.

Article 10 – To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$54,850 to purchase a new Police Cruiser and accessories.

Sue made a motion to recommend. Clint seconded the motion.

The article was recommended 9-1.

Article 11 – To see if the Town will vote and appropriate the sum of \$5,000 to purchase a video surveillance System for Memorial Park.

Clint made a motion to recommend. Jenn seconded the motion.

The article was recommended 10-0.

IV. School Budget – finalize recommendations for March School District Meeting

Mark noted that the School Board held a vote after the Public Hearing to revise and align their budget with the Budget Committees recommendation. They also voted to withdraw articles 9, 10 and 11.

Brian asked if the School Board knew the details of where they were applying the reduction and Gene responded that they only know that they will be applied to the 1100 lines at this time. Amber Wheeler, Business Administrator for the School District, spoke about the MS form being revised based on the vote by the Board.

Article 2 – To see if Pembroke School District will vote to raise and appropriate the Budget Committee’s recommended amount of \$33,793,987 for the support of schools.

Clint made a motion to recommend. Sue seconded the motion.

Jenn asked a question regarding the recommendation process if another number were to be recommended. Mark explained that it would be possible to make a recommendation to cut from the 1100 lines, instead of other buckets, and the School Board would be able to move that money around as they saw fit. Matt stated that a lot of people were concerned at the Public Hearing. He heard it and it weighs on him. Mark added that he also heard people’s concerns and that the Committee is also very concerned. Gerry spoke about the large number for the increase, but it not the highest increase he has seen. Gerry thinks about people that would need to cut back on their expenses. He does recognize that people would have trouble paying. This is why he proposed a \$300,000 cut. Sue stated that she doesn’t think that this budget was put together lightly. Jenn pointed out that this does not include the approximately \$200,000 for paraprofessionals. Effectively, it is only a \$100,000 reduction. She spoke about friends and neighbors not being able afford necessities as it is. Mark stated that if he were to vote, he would be recommending a further cut. Gene inquired why there is no discussion on the town side of the budget. It all goes hand in hand, only one side is making a cut. He feels that the Committee rubber stamps the Town Budget, but budgets are put together the same way. Mark responded that the School Budget has twice the impact on the tax rate based on the dollars per thousand increase. Gerry added that it is a question of confidence. He has a higher level of confidence in the town’s than the school’s. He added that the Committee can’t ask anything about 1200 lines. He believes there was more there that could have been cut. He was surprised at how quickly the School Board agreed on a \$300,000 cut with such ease. He also talked about concerns with the school getting first meeting with the townspeople. Because voter sentiment for budget cuts could subsequently materialize, the town would feel the hurt at the meeting which follows the next Saturday. He feels that give the school an advantage.

Sue contributed that even with the \$300,000 cut, someone will lose their job. If the Committee asks for larger cut, it will affect the younger kids. She does not recommend a cut larger than the \$300,000 that is already being discussed. Brian was concerned over broader idea that the high school should not be touched. He was uncomfortable with that idea. Jason added that he did not hear it that way. He heard that because of the difference dollar for dollar, the greater emphasis would be on smaller schools. He did not hear that Pembroke Academy was off the table.

Louis Caron referred to Proposed Budget Cuts sheets that were given to the Committee by the School Board in December. He stated that this adds up to the \$300,000 that needs to be cut. He mentioned that the School Board created this themselves. Gene reminded the Committee that cuts may or may not come from that list. The list was a starting point.

The article was not recommended. The vote was 5-6 with Mark as the tie breaker.

Peter Gagyi stated that he would like to move the vote on this article to next week. Matt agreed. Sue stated that she agreed as she was not comfortable just pulling a number out of the air. Clint agreed. Jason mentioned that he may not be able to attend the next meeting. Mark said that the article would be tabled until next Thursday. Whereas there was no objection to that idea, in the absence of a formal motion to table until the February 15th meeting, the discussion proceeded to Article 3.

Article 3 – Shall the Pembroke School District vote to approve the cost items set forth in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Pembroke School Board and the Pembroke Paraprofessional Education Association.

2024/2025	\$187,750
2025/2026	\$96,963
2026/2027	\$92,580
2027/2028	\$91,126

Clint made a motion to recommend. Jenn seconded the motion.

The article was recommended 7-3.

Article 5 – To see if the Pembroke School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$40,000 for the purpose of floor replacement and painting district wide.

Clint made a motion to recommend. Gerry seconded the motion.

The article was recommended 10-0.

Article 6 – To see if the Pembroke School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of up to \$100,000 to be added to the Special Education Trust Fund.

Clint made a motion to recommend. Jenn seconded the motion.

The article was recommended 10-0.

Article 7 – To see if the Pembroke School District will vote to raise an appropriate the sum of up to \$155,000 be added to the School Building Capital Reserve Fund.

Clint made a motion to recommend. Jenn seconded the motion.

The article was recommended 6-5 with Mark as the tie breaker.

Article 8 – To see if the Pembroke School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of up to \$10,000 be added to the School Technology Expendable Trust Fund.

Clint made a motion to recommend.

The article was not recommended 4-6.

Articles 9 through 11 were withdrawn by the School Board prior to the Budget Committee meeting.

V. Other Business

Next week’s meeting will be the approval of minutes along with School budget discussion and vote.

Gerry added that he wants to know at what point we are getting to the line for the School Budget that the Town will need to hire lawyers to fight law suits. He doesn’t want the Committee to make a mistake. If the School District does not have enough money to run, there will be a deficit or lawyers involved. Sue added comments about more money being on Special Education (SPED) if classroom sizes get bigger. Clint stated that if a SPED costs comes up, the School Board will

take it from somewhere else. There could be the necessity for a vote to comply. He does not agree with the Committees vote on the School Budget tonight.

VI. Adjourn

Clint made a motion to adjourn at 9:50 PM. Jenn seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Mark LePage, Chairman

Normally, detailed information can be seen on www.townhallstreams.com but because of the location of this meeting, it was not recorded on that system.