

Salisbury Budget Committee

Approved Meeting Minutes

October 16, 2023

A meeting of the Salisbury Budget Committee was held on Monday, October 16, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. at Academy Hall.

Jason Hood, Chairman (2024)	Present	Marcia Murphy, Vice Chair (2026)	Present
David Kelly (2024)	Present	Bill MacDuffie, Sr. (2026)	Present
Jennifer Hoyt (2026)	Present	Lorna Carlisle (2024)	Present
Eric Swendsen (2025)	Present	Kevin O'Neill (2025)	Present
Brett Walker, Selectman	Present	Jeff Blanchard (2025)	Present
April Rollins, Town Administrator	Present	Jennifer King, Recording Secretary	Present

Several members of the public attended the meeting at Academy Hall

Jocelyn Henry attended the meeting via Zoom.

Chair Hood called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS

Approve Minutes

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the last meeting of April 10, 2023.

- A spelling correction for David Croft's name was noted.
- Eric Swendsen should be marked 'present' for that meeting.

Chair Hood **motioned** to approve the draft meeting minutes from the Budget Committee meeting of April 10, 2023 as amended.

David Kelly **seconded** the motion which passed successfully.

AGENDA ITEMS

Department Budget Review

The Board discussed their process for the upcoming year, noting concerns about last year's process as well as anticipated hurdles and ideas for improvement from the prior year.

Jeff Blanchard would like to see the Committee take the time after receiving budget information to perform a thorough review before voting on it.

Marcia Murphy said that they need to reach a consensus up front about what the recommended salary increase should be. Discussion occurred regarding salaries and how to handle those going forward.

Kevin O'Neill asked about how the Selectmen make their budget recommendations to the departments. Brett Walker said that they don't make arbitrary recommendations to the department heads on budget items or percentages, but the department heads do a good job of creating budgets that meet their anticipated needs for the coming year. Salaries are a bit of a different category. He feels that the COLA increase listed by the Consumer Price Index is a good benchmark to follow.

Eric Swendsen asked if the Committee opposes following the CPI COLA increase as a basis for determining recommended salary increases. Employees are finding their pay is eroding each year due to current inflation.

Jeff Blanchard doesn't feel that an increase is warranted this year at all due to the large increase given last year.

Chair Hood agrees that it makes sense to follow something standardized such as the CPI COLA increases to give the department heads some guidance ahead of time. The Budget Committee cannot review individual performance reviews, so any performance increase above and beyond that would be up to the department heads and the Selectmen to decide. Further discussion occurred regarding COLA vs. merit increases. Brett Walker stated that a COLA increase is to help ensure that the dollar they earn this year is worth the same as the dollar they earned last year, which is why the performance increase is something separate.

Chair Hood **motioned** to keep the recommended salary increase at the recommended CPI COLA increase of 3.7%.

Jennifer Hoyt **seconded** the motion which passed with 1 (Blanchard) in opposition.

Department Head Budget Reviews

The Committee reviewed the budgets as presented for the following departments:

4140 Elections, Registrations, and Vital Statistics

Town Clerk Jim Zink-Maixllou reviewed his proposed budget for 2024 including the COLA salary increases of 3.7% as just discussed. He noted that the supplies and equipment lines have been combined and that there are increases in software licensing and elections.

Total Proposed 2024 Town Clerk Budget: \$29,222.

Bill MacDuffie Sr. **motioned** that they accept the proposed budget for department 4140 at \$29,222.

David Kelly **seconded** the motion which passed successfully with 1 abstention (Hoyt).

4149 Tax Collector

Tax Collector Gayle Landry presented her proposed 2024 budget. It is up approximately 4.9% at \$26,954. She noted that most of the increases in her budget are not items she has control over.

The salary for the Tax Collector role was set at 5%.

Selectman Walker feels they should leave the salary increase at the 3.7% they discussed as for now.

Gayle Landry stated that she is standing firm on her salary increase request because of her length of time she has been with the town and the amount of time she puts in above and beyond what are considered 'normal hours' for this role. They would have a difficult time finding someone to fulfill her duties in this role at the current salary. She is well worth another 1.3%.

Jeff Blanchard **motioned** that they accept the Tax Collector budget as presented at \$26,954.

Jennifer Hoyt **seconded** the motion which passed successfully.

4150 Financial Administration

Town Administrator Rollins noted increases in the line items of Equipment, Audit, Town Website and Mileage.

Eric Swendsen **motioned** that they accept the Financial Administration budget as presented.

Jennifer Hoyt **seconded** the motion which passed successfully.

4153 Legal Expenses

Brett Walker proposed starting a legal contingency fund to hold a balance from year to year, as legal expenses are difficult to predict in any given year. He cited the Eversource class action lawsuit that is now back on as an example of an expense that is difficult to plan for. They need to be prepared in case the judgment goes against them and they have to fund the tax liability and/or legal expenses. The Selectmen would like to spend the same amount as last year (\$15,000), but they would like to put \$10,000 into their budget and \$5,000 of it into the proposed contingency fund that would need to be approved via warrant article. Discussion occurred regarding the best way to budget for these anticipated but uncertain expenses.

Bill MacDuffie Sr. **motioned** that they accept the Legal Expenses budget as presented at \$10,000.

Jennifer Hoyt **seconded** the motion which passed successfully with 1 (Blanchard) in opposition.

4191-10/28 Planning Board

TA Rollins stated that this budget is level-funded.

Bill MacDuffie Sr. **motioned** that they accept the Planning Board budget as presented at \$1,600.

Brett Walker **seconded** the motion which passed successfully with 1 abstention (Blanchard).

4191-40/45 Zoning Board of Adjustment

TA Rollins stated that this budget is level-funded

Chair Hood **motioned** that they accept the proposed budget for the ZBA a budget as presented at \$2,050.

David Kelly **seconded** the motion which passed successfully.

4195 Cemeteries

The Cemetery Committee presented their proposed budget for 2024.

Mowing has increased for this year, but they have it in writing that it will not increase next year. They requested that they combine the lines for tree removal onto a new one.

Discussion occurred regarding the funding for granite markers. It was explained that the town purchases the cornerstones and are then paid by the person purchasing the cemetery plot.

It was decided that they will keep the Sexton pay the same as last year.

Discussion occurred regarding the maintenance and upkeep of markers

Bill MacDuffie Sr. **motioned** that they accept the proposed budget for the cemeteries as presented at \$24,695.

Eric Swendsen **seconded** the motion which passed successfully.

4210 Police

The committee reviewed the funding for Police details. They had budgeted for 8 hours per week of outside police details in town. That was changed via petition warrant article to 12 hours (passing by 1 vote). The State Police have been able to fill about half of the available hours due to staffing. Discussion occurred on whether they should keep it at what was voted in last year or decrease it again.

Chair Hood **motioned** that they accept the proposed Police budget as presented at \$51,651.

Jennifer Hoyt **seconded** the motion which passed successfully.

4215/4220/4290 Ambulance/Fire/Forestry

Tabled for next meeting.

4240 Building Inspection

Tabled for next meeting.

4312/4910 Highway/Highway Projects

Tabled for next meeting.

4520 Recreation

Gayle Landry stated that this budget is relatively level-funded. Not all fees are in yet for 2023.

Chair Hood **motioned** that they accept the Recreation budget as presented at \$3,530.

Bill MacDuffie Sr. **seconded** the motion which passed successfully.

4550 Library

The Library Trustees presented their proposed budget for 2024. They stated that their telephone and internet budget lines are increasing. Salaries were increased 3.9% in part because they hired a new director last year. They reduced their budget significantly last year. Their telephone and internet lines are increasing. They are in need of supplies this year, as they removed their supply budget line for last year. They are needing an increase in their book/media budget, and they would like permission to use some of their funding for that (\$1,200). They are looking to carry over some of their children's programming funds.

Total library budget requested is \$44,762, an increase of 4.3% over last year.

Discussion occurred regarding the best way to account for the Library's funding sources apart from what they receive from the town.

Jeff Blanchard **motioned** that they table this department budget until they have more information on the proper accounting process.

Brett Walker **seconded** the motion which passed successfully with 1 abstention (Hoyt).

4600 Conservation Commission

David Kelly stated that this budget is level-funded. There is a conference and work session in November.

Jeff Blanchard **motioned** that they accept this budget as presented.

Eric Swendsen **seconded** the motion which passed successfully.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next Budget Committee meeting will be held on Monday, November 13, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Hood **motioned** that they adjourn the meeting.

Brett Walker **seconded** the motion and the Committee adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer King, Recording Secretary