

# Salisbury Budget Committee

## Approved Meeting Minutes

### January 8, 2024

A meeting of the Salisbury Budget Committee was held on Monday, January 8, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. at the Academy Hall.

Jason Hood, Chairman (2024)	Present	Marcia Murphy, Vice Chair (2026)	Present
David Kelly (2024)	Present	Bill MacDuffie, Sr. (2026)	Absent
Jennifer Hoyt (2026)	Present	Lorna Carlisle (2024)	Present
Eric Swendsen (2025)	Absent	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 the Academy Hall. There were no attendees via Zoom Meeting.

Chair Hood called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

#### OLD BUSINESS

##### Approve Minutes

Chair Hood **motioned** to approve the draft meeting minutes from the Budget Committee meeting of December 11, 2023.

Brett Walker **seconded** the motion.

Jeff Blanchard noted an error on the previous minutes under the minute approval section.

Brett Walker noted that they should be corrected to read: "Brett Walker motioned that they approve the draft meeting minutes of November 13, 2023 as written. Bill MacDuffie Sr. seconded the motion which passed successfully."

Chair Hood **amended** his motion that they accept the minutes *as amended*.

Kevin O'Neill **seconded** the amendment which passed successfully with none opposed.

## AGENDA ITEMS

### Department Head Budget Reviews

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

#### **4325 Solid Waste, Contract Engineering**

Chair Hood said that line 4325-10 is being amended to \$13,500 from \$6,550. TA Rollins told the committee that this was increased due to updated state reporting requirements that incurs additional costs.

Chair Hood **motioned** that they recommend the budget for Solid Waste Clean Up at \$17,100

David Kelly **seconded** the motion which passed successfully with 1 (*Blanchard*) opposed.

#### **4910 - Highways and Streets- Projects**

Chair Hood **motioned** to recommend the Highways and Streets budget at \$180,000.

David Kelly **seconded** the motion which passed successfully with 1 (*Blanchard*) opposed.

#### **5500 CRF Cemetery M & O**

TA Rollins explained that the funds from the sale of the cemetery markers goes to this trust account.

Chair Hood **motioned** that they recommend 5511-06 at \$1,200.

David Kelly **seconded** the motion which passed successfully with 1 (*Blanchard*) opposed.

### Selectmen's Report

Brett Walker told the committee that the Board of Selectmen found a piece of property at the end of Mutton Road (owned by the Habers) that would be suitable for their new Highway Garage and have come to an agreement to purchase that 10-acre parcel for \$150,000. The process still needs to move through Planning and Conservation, so they are still in the early stages of the process. He spoke to the suitability of the piece of property, stating that it is a great value to the town. They had also been reviewing a piece of property available that abuts the baseball field and cemetery (owned by the Calls), which would allow for future expansion of both areas.

They currently have a total of \$219,000 for land acquisition which covers the purchase of both pieces of property, but they can't use the fund to pay the surveyor or do the environmental study.

He would like to have a Warrant Article for the associated land acquisition costs of \$15,000 so that there can be discussion on it at Town Meeting, as he wants to be as transparent as possible about this process, as he told the taxpayers at Town Meeting last

year that they voted on funding to only purchase the property for the future Highway Garage, not realizing that the associated purchase costs could not be covered by those funds. . He added that their overall budget for the year is down \$99,000, so this would be a good year to try and accomplish this.

Jeff Blanchard asked if these funds were specifically allocated for the Highway Department property. Brett Walker said no, but that is what was discussed at the last Town Meeting, so he wants to revisit it this year to update and keep things transparent and involve public input.

Jeff Blanchard asked if any of those additional costs can be borne by the seller, increasing the cost of the property and therefore allowing them to use those funds. Brett Walker acknowledged that this would be a possibility.

Jeff Blanchard asked if there were any other lines in the budget they could increase to cover the added costs (legal, etc.). TA Rollins said they can add it to the Planning Board legal line.

Discussion occurred regarding whether it was better to fund these needs through the budget instead of through a Warrant Article. Brett Walker would like to have the opportunity for town discussion, which a warrant article provides, but he does not want to create a reserve fund, just authorization of a one-time expenditure.

Kevin O'Neill asked how much is in the fund. Jennifer Hoyt answered that there is currently \$218,485.52 in the fund for land acquisition.

TA Rollins said that the Board was given the authority to use these funds for land purchases. She understands that Brett Walker wants to have a discussion at Town Meeting, but she feels that it would be easier to fund this in the budget. Brett Walker is concerned about pushback from the public. TA Rollins said that there will be ample opportunity for input through Public Hearings at the Planning Board and Conservation Commission meetings.

Kevin O'Neill voiced concern that if the warrant article were voted down, then they would be stuck trying to figure out another way to fund it.

Chair Hood feels that if their priority is the Highway Department, then they should focus on that purchase first. Brett Walker said that both pieces of property are extremely advantageous to the town and they have some time constraints which is why he is trying to do this now.

David Kelly agreed, adding that the public hearings between now and Town Meeting are going to be publicized, and people will have the opportunity to speak on this. They're

always going to get complaints at Town Meeting, regardless of how many public hearings there are beforehand.

After further discussion, the committee decided to increase some budget line items to cover the additional purchase costs.

Brett Walker **motioned** that they increase budget line item 4153-10 LE Legal/Selectmen from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Jennifer Hoyt **seconded** the motion for discussion.

**Discussion:** Jeff Blanchard asked about the warrant article for the unanticipated legal expenses. TA Rollins said that fund was created to cover the utility pole abatements.

The motion passed successfully with none opposed.

Brett Walker **motioned** that they increase the budget line item 4191-28 PZB Planning Consulting from \$0 to \$10,000

Jennifer Hoyt **seconded** the motion which passed successfully with none opposed.

Chair Hood asked to review the Transfer Station Budget, wondering if there is a better way they can track what is on the loads that are hauled out. He doesn't feel that it is fair for taxpayers to pay for a service they do not use, but only subsidize those that do. Brett Walker said that he can talk to Manager Bert LaFlamme about improving tracking of what is on their loads that are hauled out. Discussion took place regarding the current disposal process.

David Kelly asked if they can get suggestions from NRRA about fees that should be charged. Brett Walker said that most towns weigh, Salisbury does not. David Kelly felt that there are other towns in the state that don't weigh, and they could find out what those towns are charging. Brett Walker said that they will put Transfer Station fees on the next Selectmen's agenda.

Brett Walker noted that in order to get their fees to cover their hauling costs, they would have to more than double their fees, and they would likely see a lot more roadside dumping. Chair Hood said they have a police presence that can go after dumpers.

Chair Hood asked about the increase in Salary lines for the Transfer Station. Brett Walker said that this was a negotiated number to more properly compensate the Transfer Station Manager to be there on Saturday by himself, as they eliminated a part-time position. They are still seeking someone for Wednesday, which is what the second salary

line is for. Chair Hood expressed concern about alienating other employees by offering this sort of increase to one person. The committee discussed the challenges towns are facing in retaining staff.

Chair Hood said that regarding the Consumer Price Index (CPI) numbers, the most up to date is a 4% increase. He would like to increase the salary lines to reflect that. Brett Walker said that they set their rates based upon CPI at the same time each year. Any increase in the CPI beyond that point will be captured the next year. He just doesn't want to have to look at changing the salary lines in their budget each time the CPI changes.

#### Town Warrant

TA Rollins said that they are waiting to hear back from the Town Attorney on details and minutiae within the Draft warrant.

TA Rollins said that the Board of Selectmen voted to recommend all warrant articles from 5-19.

Brett Walker **motioned** that they recommend all warrant articles with Article 5 amended to \$1,535,857.

Kevin O'Neill **seconded** the motion which passed successfully with none opposed.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

None.

#### ADJOURNMENT

David Kelly **motioned** that they adjourn the meeting.

Jennifer Hoyt **seconded** the motion and the Budget Committee adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted by Jennifer King, Recording Secretary**