

**Salisbury Budget Committee
Approved Meeting Minutes
September 13, 2021**

A meeting of the Salisbury Budget Committee was held on Monday, September 13, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. at Academy Hall.

Jason Hood, Chairman (2024)	Absent	Marcia Murphy, Vice Chair (2023)	Present
David Kelly (2024)	Present	Bill MacDuffie, Sr. (2022)	Present
David Merwin (2022)	Absent	David Croft (2024)	Present
Jennifer Hoyt (2023)	Present	Velvet Sweeney (2023)	Present
Brett Walker, Selectman (2022)	Present	Jeff Blanchard (2022)	Present
April Rollins, Town Administrator	Present	Jennifer King, Recording Secretary	Present

Public Attendees: Eric Swendsen, Jeff Blanchard

Attending Via Zoom: Gayle Landry

Marcia Murphy called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

AGENDA ITEMS

Two candidates appeared before the Budget Committee to interview for the one vacancy on the committee. Each candidate was given the chance to respond to the following four questions:

1. What is the most important financial issue facing our town?

Eric Swendsen: lack of tax base.

David Croft asked how they could solve that. There is a lot of rural residential land in Salisbury, more business would provide more tax revenue.

Jeff Blanchard: it is important to keep taxes down and provide services in the most economical manner. He has no preconceived agendas or notions to push. He believes in looking at the data and making the best decisions for the town based on that data.

2. Do you have any experience working with municipal budgets?

Jeff Blanchard said he does not have experience with municipal budgets but has done inventory management and has served as treasurer on a few boards. He feels his background would provide some value in looking at the budget.

Eric Swendsen has not had municipal budget experience either, but has worked in the corporate world, and monitors his own budgets.

3. Why are you interested in being on the budget committee?

Eric Swendsen said he has lived in town for 4 years and feels he can offer a new perspective on things. He is fiscally conservative, but willing to appropriate funds as needed to benefit the town. He would like to give back to the town.

Jeff Blanchard said he has lived here for 17 years and has been very involved on a volunteer basis. He is getting closer to retirement and has more time in his life to serve the community.

4. Are there any changes you would like to see regarding our town finances or the committee itself?

Jeff Blanchard answered that he has no preconceived notions or agendas. He is willing to learn and go from there.

Eric Swendsen said that does not know enough about the town finances to answer that question, but he is very inquisitive and not afraid to ask questions. He comes from the other side of the country but noted that the town is very frugal and allocates funds carefully.

Neither candidate had questions for the committee at this time.

Motion: by David Croft, seconded by David Kelley to elect Jeff Blanchard to the vacant Budget Committee position.

Discussion: David Kelley is inclined to vote for Jeff because he has lived in town for a long time.

Vote: (4-3). Motion carried.

Marcia Murphy thanked both candidates for signing up for consideration and encouraged Mr. Swendsen to watch for future positions in town government.

Selectman Walker swore Jeff Blanchard in as the new Budget Committee member and Mr. Blanchard joined the committee at the table.

OLD BUSINESS

Approve Minutes

Motion: by David Croft, seconded by David Kelley, to approve the draft meeting minutes of April 12, 2021 as written.

Discussion: none.

Vote: (8-0).

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Recommendations for the 2022 Budget

Marcia Murphy asked the committee for their recommendations regarding the 2022 budget.

David Croft asked where they were at with the rooms and meals revenue. **April Rollins** answered that they are still waiting on final numbers, but that they should know soon. It should be roughly the same as last year.

Bill MacDuffie asked about the Highway Block Grant. **April Rollins** responded that they aren't expecting anything further on this.

Marcia Murphy asked if anyone had any recommendations for the department heads as far as managing their budgets. **David Croft** suggested that they look into implementing a pay scale system for their employees that gives increases based on merit. Their employees are very important and deserve to earn raises based on the quality of their work and not be dependent upon the tax rate.

Selectman Walker added that he is in favor of not increasing the salaries of the elected officials. April Rollins noted that the Town Clerk will be requesting increases for the Town Moderator and Supervisor of the Checklist, especially in light of their efforts during the pandemic.

Discussion continued regarding pay increases and employee retention, noting the current job market and how important it is for them to pay a fair wage and remain competitive.

Marcia Murphy asked how many town employees they currently have. **April Rollins** answered approximately 9 or 10.

Selectman Walker noted there will likely be pushback on both sides regarding increases.

David Croft suggested that they conduct a salary analysis based upon similarly-sized nearby towns and develop the pay scale from that.

Marcia Murphy asked if anyone had suggestions for other expenditures? **Selectman Walker** advised just being mindful of the increases in supplies, gravel, fuel, etc.

David Croft asked if there was any truth to the rumor that they may end up closing the school.

Selectman Walker said there is a study being done between Salisbury and Webster to see if it is necessary to close either school. Salisbury has very small class sizes and a decreasing population, but Webster has older facilities. There will be public hearings in the future as they go forward.

Marcia Murphy asked about the difference on the line for Refunds and Abatements: They budgeted \$5,000 but are currently at \$15,617. **April Rollins** explained that it was due to the Unifil settlement agreement.

David Croft asked about the phone line under the police department budget. **April Rollins** said that it is for the line that runs into the building for the Fire Chief's office. They can re-title that line to tie it to the Fire Dept. budget. **Mr. Croft** also asked about why there is a line for pistol permits when he provides them and receives the money. He charges the resident, not the town. He also asked about the \$500 for the DARE program. **April Rollins** said it is to pay for their share of supplies, travel, etc., for the office in Webster.

Marcia Murphy asked about the demo/debris container rental. **Selectman Walker** said that they are on target for their budget; those numbers may not be in the right place at the moment. He noted that their demo fee has doubled. **April Rollins** said that those numbers may change, as

they are starting to bill and credit the account. Discussion occurred regarding the fees charged for demo items.

Marcia Murphy asked about Building Inspector fees, noting an increase. **April Rollins** said those are the fees charged when the inspector issues a building permit. Those fees are paid back out to him through the town.

Marcia Murphy asked about the increase in Contract Engineering Services. April Rollins said that there was an inadvertent double payment, so they are getting reimbursed for that.

Marcia Murphy asked about the increase in the recreation budget.

Discussion occurred regarding library salaries.

Marcia Murphy asked about the CRF for transfer station and asked if they have spent the budgeted \$40,000: **April Rollins** said that she is waiting for them to cut them a check for the \$35,000 for the trash compactor. Discussion occurred regarding project-related expenses. **Ms. Murphy** is wondering if they have some sort of leverage on this \$35,000 if things go downhill on this project. **Selectman Walker** acknowledged that there is some liability risk associated there.

Selectmen's Report

Selectman Walker updated the Budget Committee on the following:

- They signed a contract for the generator in the amount of \$22,700, and the compactor for \$35,000.
- The town has received first payment of the ARP Act funds: \$75,690.91.
- TDS is working on the approval process, cutting through red tape to install new lines.
- The budget is on track for the year.

Next committee meeting will be held on Monday, October 18, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: by David Kelley seconded by Selectman Walker to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Jennifer King, Recording Secretary