

**Budget Committee
Minutes
September 9, 2010**

Present: T. Beard, M. Beck, B. Boyd, B. Cummings, S. Heinrich, G. Markwell, M. Publicover,
A. Schneider and School Board liaison C. Ortega

Excused: R. Buckley, J. Burk, E. Coburn

Also Present: DRA representative Shelley Gerlarneau, DRA and Business Administrator M.
Shevenell

A. Schneider called the meeting to order at 6:37 PM and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

DRA Budget Workshop

A. Schneider introduced S. Gerlarneau, who is the DRA Municipal Advisor for Merrimack. S. Gerlarneau provided the members with a set of handouts including copies of RSA 32, Suggested Warrant Article language, Budget Forms and Budget Timelines. She then went over a presentation and answered questions on the following:

- 10% rule
- Special Warrant articles
- Bottom line authority/jurisdiction over tax dollars
- Creating the budget, setting policy, spending the budget
- Expendable trusts and endowment funds
- Revenue and how it affects the tax rate
- Estimating for State and Catastrophic aid

A. Schneider thanked Ms. Gerlarneau for her presentation and the Committee took a 5-minute recess at 7:45 PM

The meeting resumed at 7:50 PM.

Approval of Prior Minutes

S. Heinrich made a MOTION to approve the minutes of July 15, 2010 as amended. Second: B. Cummings. MOTION PASSED: 8-0-1 with C. Ortega abstaining.

Member Resignation

A. Schneider read a letter, dated 13 August 2010, of resignation from C. Underhill. S. Heinrich made a MOTION to accept, with regret, the resignation of C. Underhill. Second: B. Cummings. MOTION PASSED unanimously.

Replacement Process

A. Schneider told the Committee that the Committee appoints a replacement for C. Underhill, who will serve until the next election, at which time someone would be elected to fill out the remaining one year of the term. He said the replacement process is up to the Committee. He noted that in the past the Committee had advertised the opening, received letters of interest,

interviewed the candidates in an open meeting and then voted for the replacement. He asked what the members wanted to do.

Discussion included the following

- Offer seat to those who were on the ballot, then have an application process.
- This is a temporary position; the replacement will serve until next election when a one year seat will be elected.
- Those who were on the ballot may not be interested and, if interested can send a letter of intent.
- Mr. Bergin, who was the “first runner up,” has stated he is not interested.
- Requesting letters of intent be sent during a 10 day window of time, which is the same amount of time as the normal election filing period.
- Is it necessary to make the appointment before the budget message is written or does the Committee have sufficient manpower to accomplish the task with current membership?
- Everyone currently on the Committee has been elected, in one way or another.
- Should there be a “whittling” process if a large number of letters are received?
- The advertising process could include word of mouth, cable, newspaper and School District website.
- The Committee needs to decide the specifics of the interview process.

B. Boyd made a MOTION to extend invitation to Mrs. Dawn Zebuhr and should she decline, advertise the opening for no longer than 10 days or whatever period is considered legal. Second: M. Publicover. B. Boyd said he did not feel that the 12 members of the Committee should select a replacement from amongst those who did not put their names on the ballot. M. Publicover said he thought that the committee should determine the correct process that should become precedent rather than base the decision on the politics of the current situation.

A roll call vote was held by request. MOTION FAILED: 3 – 6 – 0.

Voting Yes: T. Beard, B. Boyd, G. Markwell

Voting No: M. Beck, B. Cummings, S. Heinrich, M. Publicover, A. Schneider, C. Ortega

S. Heinrich made a MOTION to open the process, advertise for a minimum of 10 days, conduct interviews in October and let the Committee appoint the best candidate. Second: M. Beck. M. Beck said that had been past practice and there was no good reason to change it.

C. Ortega offered an amendment to include a specific range of time to advertise. A. Schneider stated the motion was already complicated and he would have preferred a simpler motion.

S. Heinrich and M. Beck WITHDREW the MOTION and the second.

S. Heinrich made a MOTION to advertise the vacancy. Second: M. Beck.

A roll call vote was held. MOTION PASSED unanimously.

A. Schneider made a MOTION that the chair contacts Mrs. Zebuhr directly about the opening. MOTION DIED for lack of a second.

B. Boyd questioned the Chair's procedural right to make motions. It was pointed out that the Committee does not operate under Robert's Rule and that the Chair is a full voting member of the Committee and entitled to make motions.

A. Schneider passed the gavel to Vice Chair B. Cummings.

A. Schneider made a MOTION that the Committee advertise the opening starting September 13th for 10 calendar days, utilizing website, cable and newspaper, directing those interested to send a letter of interest, post-marked not later than September 22nd to the Superintendent's office and that those interested were invited to attend a Committee meeting on October 5th for the interview process. Second: B. Boyd. A. Schneider said he wanted the Committee to finalize the interview process and finish the Budget message on September 28th.

C. Ortega asked when the Committee would vote on a selection. A. Schneider said it was his intention that the Committee would make that decision on September 28th and MODIFIED his MOTION to state: the Committee advertise the opening starting September 13th for 10 calendar days, utilizing website, cable and newspaper, directing those interested to send a letter of interest, post-marked not later than September 22nd to the Superintendent's office, *that the Committee determine the specifics of the selection process on September 28th* and that those interested were invited to attend a Committee meeting on October 5th for the interview process. Second concurred.

Discussion included the following:

- Will all candidates be interviewed?
- Some members felt there should be contingency process to reduce the number of candidates who would be interviewed. Others felt that everyone who sends a letter of interest should be interviewed.
- Letters can be sent to the members before the October 5th meeting, but email replies from each Committee member to whittle down the number of candidates would be in violation of RSA 91-A.
- In the past, not all those who send letters of interest actually come to be interviewed.
- The only requirement to apply should be that the person is a resident and a registered voter.
- Letters of interest should include reasons why one wants to be on the committee.

MOTION PASSED: 8 –1-0

B. Cummings returned the gavel to Chair A. Schneider.

Process for Creation of the Budget Message

A. Schneider reminded members they had agreed that the message was supposed to be delivered by the end of September. He said it might take a couple of meetings to create the message and asked for discussion.

Discussion included the following:

- The School Board has a meeting where each member shares individual thoughts and then the School Board chair formulates a message that coalesces the Board thoughts.
- This is the first time the Committee has attempted a budget message.
- Discussion of individual members thoughts should be done in public.
- Does the Committee want to meet three weeks in September plus October 5th?
- All members send whatever points they want included in the message to the Chair who can combine them into a message for discussion at one meeting. Chair could take the meeting input and craft a final message.
- If the Chair crafts the final message, does the Committee need to approve it before its get delivered to the Superintendent?

B. Boyd made a MOTION to instruct Committee members to submit their thoughts, on what they want in the budget message that is going to be sent to the Administration, to the Chair who would then compile them into a document, which would be sent to the members for and discussed at a meeting on September 28th. Second: T. Beard.

Discussion included the following points:

- Should there be a limit to the number and/or length of points sent to the Chair?
- Should each member's points be attached to the message for submission along with the final message?
- Each member's points should be heard by the entire Committee
- Only points that are agreed upon by a majority of the Committee should be included in the final message.
- What if a member does not submit points to the Chair? Could that member's points be verbalized on September 28th?
- The compilation and the final message could be completely different. Does the Committee need to approve the final language?

B. Boyd and T. Beard WITHDREW the MOTION and the second.

B. Boyd made a MOTION instruct Committee members to submit their thoughts, on what they want in the budget message that is going to be sent to the Administration, to the Chair by September 19th so that he can compile them into a document which would be sent to the members for discussion at a meeting on September 21st, and that chair will craft the final message to be sent to the members by September 27th for discussion and approval on September 28th. Second: T. Beard

Discussion included the following points:

- Two meetings seems excessive.
- This is the first time a message is being written. Members want to get it right. Next year it will be easier.
- The need for several meetings in a short time is due in part to the member resignation and need to discuss replacement process.
- The chair can draft a final message to be sent to all members, but RSA 91-A does not allow for changes to be suggested and approved via email.

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- Members felt the chair could compose a final message after receiving direction from the Committee.

MOTION FAILED: 2 – 6 – 1.

B. Boyd remade his original MOTION to instruct Committee members to submit their thoughts, on what they want in the budget message that is going to be sent to the Administration, to the Chair who would then compile them into a document, which would be sent to the members for and discussed at a meeting on September 28th. Second: B. Cummings.

MOTION PASSED unanimously.

A. Schneider said he would like member suggestions to be send to him by September 21st and that he would send a gentle reminder if needed.

Meeting schedule

A. Schneider went over the upcoming meeting schedule:

September 28th: work on budget message and finalize replacement selection process.

October 5th: interview candidates to fill the vacancy.

A. Schneider stated that meetings would start at 7 PM.

Other

B. Boyd noted that the Committee has no by-laws and thought the Committee should have some protocols. He stated writing them would not be an overnight process and should probably be done by a sub-committee, on which he offered to participate. He said he thought such a committee could have a code of conduct ready to submit to the voters in April.

G. Markwell asked if there was a law about how many excused absences a member might have. A. Schneider told him there wasn't but this might be looked into if a sub-committee on by-laws came to fruition.

Public Participation

There was none.

Adjournment

T. Beard made a MOTION to adjourn. Second: S. Heinrich.

MOTION PASSED unanimously.

A. Schneider adjourned the meeting at 9:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Heinrich