

Municipal Budget Committee - Town of Conway

Monday, January 6, 2020

Professional Development Room

Kennett Middle School, Conway, NH

Present: James LeFebvre, Terry McCarthy, Ellin Leonard, Michael Fougere, David Jensen, John Edgerton, John Colbath, Ted Sares, Frank Jost, Sarah Frechette, Eric Dziedzic, Mike Laracy, Michael Tetreault, Diann Ryan, Also present, recording secretary Nadine Armstrong

Excused:

Absent: Ellin Leonard, Cherri Sullivan

Meeting called to order at 18:31; Michael Tetreault led pledge of allegiance

James: It's going to be a slight change in the process tonight, we're going to start with the precincts, we are going to go alphabetically with the precincts. So, we are going to start with Center Conway.

Center Conway

Hi there, Center Conway Fire Department, I'll introduce myself, I'm **Glen Merrill**, the Fire Chief.

I'm **Nancy Leavitt**, the Treasurer and **Albert Eaton** Commissioner

Glen Merrill: So just to explain a couple of things for us, we have our total operating budget at \$260,202.50. For our articles we have our special articles, which is Article Three, \$40,000 which we put in every year for capital reserve, it's to go to a purchase of a new truck to replace a 1994 fire truck, Article Four and Five, Article Four is for \$18,000 to replace some outdated air packs, Article Five is \$20,000 to purchase ten sets of gear, both of these are to be paid out of surplus revenue that we already have and it's just surplus and we're just asking the voters of Center Conway precinct to approve that for us to spend that money. Any other questions?

James: Any questions from the Budget Committee? Go ahead Frank.

Frank Jost: I notice that your total income is up quite significantly this year from last, is that inclusive of those special articles? Is that why that's there? Just so I know what I'm looking at.

Nancy Leavitt - These special articles will be covered by the surplus funds

Frank: Okay, so that's what accounts for the 69 to 364. I apologize, thank you.

East Conway

Peter Campbell: East Conway Fire Commissioner, we have a budget proposal for 2020, a total of \$57,650 That would be the same as last year and many other years, at least one other year we had the same budget. Any questions?

James: I always love people who keep their budget exactly level so congratulations on that. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none or seeing no hands go up. Thank you very much for coming sir.

Peter: Thank you.

James: And last but not least of the precincts, it's Redstone.

Redstone

My name **Neil Henry**, Chief, Redstone Fire Department. And I'm **Anne Michelle Ames**, Commissioner

Neil: Our actual budget for 2019 was \$75,229.72, proposed for 2020, \$76,000. And we also like to note that we are doing a special warrant article for \$5,000 for hose replacement on one engine.

James: Next up is the Town Manager, Mr. Tom Holmes, he is going to do the executive overview of the Conway Municipal Budget.

Tom Holmes: Mr. Chairman I'm going to invite **Rob Adair** up here and talk about the Conservation Commission, he's first on your agenda and I'd like to get him in and out.

Rob Adair: Proposed budget for 2020 is \$17,750, pretty much in line with what we've been doing for the past twenty years or so.

James: Any questions or comments? Seeing none, thank you sir. Next up is Tom Holmes, the Town Manager for the Town of Conway, who is going to provide the executive overview and many sections of the budget tonight I am sure.

Tom Holmes: Before I begin, I'd like to invite our new Finance director up to join me. Ms. Kathleen Golding, Ms. Golding is the former Town Administrator for Albany. I have asked her to come here because she is going to come here many times in the future hopefully. The Town Budget is as follows, skipping right to the bottom line we have a 2% increase and I can highlight that number is \$11,753,889 representing an increase of \$286,386. This includes the budget for the police department and the Conway Public Library which is semi-autonomous and determined by the Police Commission and the Library Trustees. The committee, it will be doing the default budget I would like to be involved and invited if I can so I can keep track and I've never done one myself.

James: We are going to have an organizational meeting on the 15th of January.

Tom Holmes: Some highlights of the budget, this year is a presidential election year as you all may know. In addition, we have state-wide elections in the fall. So, in February we're going to have the New Hampshire, First in The Nation primary and then our usual election in April for SB2 voting as well as like I mentioned, state-wide elections in September. And then November presidential election. That is three more elections than we had last year and so that budget is up. Up 10.9%. The town has also moved to a newly refurbished Recreation Center twice the size of the old one and the bottom line is we're up 12.9% on that and I'll get more details as we visit that department. We have not funded the new line item for the cemeteries choosing to leave it in the Parks and Rec budget for the moment I can explain that if there's any questions. The Assessing Department is up at 12.6% that is due to the cost of a new hire, the assessor that took my place took a salary that was about halfway between what I was earning and when she was earning with the understanding that I would be there to assist her and help her through the revaluation process, then she is announced her last day was December 31st we will have worked together for 22 years, easily the hardest working person I ever knew. And I do have a replacement for her as well, a man named David McMullen, a certified IAAO instructor in New Hampshire, he's been an assessor for 25 years I've known in my entire time here in New Hampshire, he has been the assessor for everything from Milton to Claremont to Lebanon to Hanover and a couple of other towns as well and he started on December 30th. We have high hopes for, but he is not planning to be around for too many years but I'm hoping he'll be around long enough to train Corie Hilton the Assessing Clerk. Hopefully will be able to take over that department should she prove worthy and should the time be right. So I have some reorganization of the Assessing Department - you may have been reading in the paper about the discussion of short-term rentals and that's causing the community debate, as a result, we've hired for the full-time assistant building inspector whose primary function would likely be to oversee the oversight and regulation and licensing of these 500 to 1000 short-term rentals in town. To help offset the cost of some of that position, I plan to merge the current part time Code Enforcement Officer into that position and that person would take up a lot of those duties as well, however the temporary event permit which the Code Enforcement Officer does currently is going to be moved to the Recreation Department where they already handle special event permits. I've known in my position as Town Manager for a couple years that there is a lot of confusion between the two and which one is appropriate for which event, So you might as well go to one-stop-shopping and she'll be able to tell you which permit you need. Although small in dollar amount, the Patriotic Purposes line item is up significantly at 12.8% It is simply inflation the rec director John Eastman related to me that Everything from the stage to the lights to the sound system To the band's all went up significantly In just about a year or year-and-a-half time And there may be something we can do along those lines In the future regarding better fundraising From maybe the businesses who benefit the most in North Conway from The fireworks but for the moment we're dealing with Hyperinflation in celebrations.

James: You're going to come back to all these departments individually correct?

Tom Holmes: Yes, this is just the overview. So, if you look on page 4 there is some statistical data about who went up the most based on a percentage basis, who went up the most on a dollar basis, and we are striving for transparency here. And then decreases as well. First of all, I'm entertaining any questions on the summary. I think the first one we're going to talk about is executive. That's my department, I hope I know it. If you turn to page 11 you'll see the executive budget which is up 3% I have saved some of the line items as best I could To help offset some of the increases that were necessary; primarily my salary, and we have been remiss in keeping up with our book binding. The town has traditionally bound minutes of the planning board, the minutes of the Selectman in leather bound books. One of the reasons that we haven't been able to get to it aside from funding is that there are very few companies who still do it and the company is prohibitively expensive. So, I think it is time to embark on a multi-year effort to catch up on what probably hasn't been done in several years. The chairman asked me at one point, is this a statutory requirement, but I'm unable to find a law that says we must bind the books however I'm told by people like the town clerk that it is highly desirable that we keep them in a form that is going to last decades if not centuries. Are there any questions about the executive budget? You'll see there's many stipends in there for salaries

Tom Holmes: Any questions on the executive department?

James: The Board of Selectmen budget shows that the Town Manager is going from a \$118,000 to \$123,518. What percentage is that?

Tom Holmes: 3%

James: Is that reflected in all the departments? That everyone is getting a 3% increase?

Tom Holmes: That is the most you can get and that is what's budgeted in case you deserve the most, it isn't necessarily what I will get in August if I really mess this budget up this year.

James: Okay, thank you.

Sarah Frechette: Just out of curiosity, is there a cap? 3% annually. But is there a monetary cap overall?

Tom Holmes: No but we have a matrix that's designed to give you less of a percentage increase if you are well above the average salary. We are finding that we have the opposite problem and we'll be discussing that when we discuss contracts and with the warrant articles.

James: Is that equivalent to the 30-town average?

Tom Holmes: It is, we have found that since the matrix had been adjusted, people that we are hiring at the 87.5 to 90% entry-level are never getting to the average because their 3% and cost of living is so close together that it would take you 10 years of excellent performance to get to an average salary and we feel that needs to be rectified.

Sarah Frechette: Jim did you say 3 town or 30 town?

Jim: 30 town average.

Tom Holmes: The next apartment is elections and registrations, And I would let the town clerk take that department, I will stand aside.

Louise Inkell: Good evening, thank you for having me here. As Mr. Holmes did mention, the elections and registration budget are up 10.9% again primarily due to having the four elections this year. With that, for the moderators how do you see there is a fifth one which is the deliberative as well. So, there are five meetings for all of them, four actual elections and the deliberative. So everything is up accordingly, we do have one entry, the printers that the town clerk's office uses for the state registration work are no longer supported by the state so the state has turned them over to us knowing that those printers will need to be replaced over time. So, we have added \$1,000 in the supplies budget posted line to accommodate for at least one, depending on the price or perhaps two going forward to replace four eventually that are in our office as needed.

John Colbath: There will be a new site for holding the elections?

Louise: There will be. At this time, there are no additional expenses related to that, that I am aware of.

John Colbath: Are you prepared to discuss those sites?

Louise: I am not, because they are appointed by the Selectmen, and I believe there's a discussion at their meeting tomorrow. But anticipating that the February 11th Presidential Primary will be held at Conway Elementary School and

those polls will be open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. If anybody would like to volunteer and assist us through any of that, it would be greatly appreciated. You are welcome to reach out to myself and I will set something up for you.

Ted: Yeah, this goes back to Tom, he mentioned something about people coming in at 70% and never catching up, that went by me a little fast, never catching up to what?

Tom Holmes: I'll revisit that when I get the chair again Ted.

James: The supervisor of the checklist is here I believe?

Louise: There is one, yes.

James: Would you care to address your increase from \$5,000 budgeted and spent in 2019 to \$6,500 budgeted for this year?

Terri McCarthy: I believe that last year that increased us to \$1500

Louise: There is an increase which affected last year for the supervisors. A warrant article that increased their stipend, as well as the fact that they have been new printing setups so checklist especially for the precincts in all their meetings those checklists have to be prepared, there were expenses that were not budgeted previously for that coming up towards the end of this year after the presidential election there will be the mandatory what the state says it's a 10-year purge of the checklist where you have to send out letters, there is additional postage for that as well.

James: Those letters are sent out to people who have not done what?

Louise: The supervisor can probably answer that.

Terri McCarthy: People who have not voted in the last 10 years.

James: Wow, that's amazing.

Terri McCarthy: So, what happens is all the letters go out, and whatever comes back we have to put in the system, it's a big process.

James: Any other questions on elections and so forth? Seeing none, please continue.

Louise: Going on to finance and tax collecting, This is Kathy's Department as well so there are expenses in here, and follow through I know I have worked with this a little bit, and I don't know, Kathy are you prepared to reach out on any of these?

Kathy: I just started last week.

Louise: I'm sure Tom can help answer if there's any question on that but there is information here that's really in information technology. There is an increase in finance dues, Tom would you like to speak to that for a moment?

Tom: Very quickly, it's very simple, former finance director did not prefer to be a member of the Government Finance Officers Association, a new finance director asked if she could, I agree with this to support that wholeheartedly, especially when you're in the North Country, networking counts for a lot.

Terri: A question about clerks and the increase, normally we have about 15 to 20 and we're expected to have at least 30 with the Primary and General.

James: Understood.

Louise: Correct, that is a big increase, so it is one election at the normal rate, and then the others were budgeted at 24 individuals on a full day plus additional counters that evening. And that is what the budget is set at. Continuing on finance dues, seminars; seminars here are actually for...there are actually some increases are going on for the tax collector seminars for that as well as additional, there is other professional training. Tax redemption fees...

James: Would you mind circling back to tax collection salaries please? Talk about that increase, page 12.

Louise: So those increases were set up by the prior finance director but every year it was a warrant article that the tax collector/ town clerk, does get an automatic, based on that 30 town survey does get an increase on an annual basis as well as this does include half of my position plus the full position of the deputy.

James: And that's budgeted at 3% average increase?

Louise: Yes. So cost of liens has increased, we did have a big increase last year on our contract, these liens are actually collected, so even though you see the expense here, it is a pass through for those and those fees are collected on the revenue side, it just doesn't offset my expenses. Tax billing, again cost of postage, different costs go up, we've just budgeted slightly up for that and bank fees, unfortunately nothing that we can really, that goes through the finance

department and it's the monthly fees, they're always, the banks always seem to increase its fees, return check fees and things like that.

James: You're expecting a \$3,000 increase in that arena? Based on the 2019 budget?

Kathy: New this year, cost of online registration and payment system for the rec programs

Tom Holmes: At the selectmen's request they have budgeted for a software package to allow for online registration of recreation programs and online payment to those recreation programs and that's the cost of this package.

James: That will be addressed again when you talk about the recreation center?

Tom Holmes: No, this is in this department but I'm sure this can come up in conversation, it's basically a convenience for the parents, they can register their kids at home rather than having to come to the school and register them and so forth.

James: Questions? Seeing none, please continue.

Louise: That is the last line.

James: Very good, thank you.

Tom Holmes: Before we get onto assessing I'd like to readdress Ted Sayers question. Ted we have a policy of trying to hire between 87.5 to 90% of the average salary of 30 towns that have been selected and demographically similar to Conway so when you get hired at 87.5% to 90%, and the cost of living goes up about 2.5% a year and you're raised only 2.5% a year, you will always be at that 90% you won't catch up ever, if you excel, you get that 3% then you're above the CPI of 2.5%.

Ted Sayers: There's no merit, cost of living.

Tom Holmes: There is. Our CPI for the last several years has been at two and a half percent, you can get up to 3% but a half a percent a year takes a long time to get from 90% to 100%. Twenty years.

Ted: I understand that, but you can't add merit to that.

Tom Holmes: No, you can't, 3% is it. So 2.5% and you get a .5% based on merit.

Ted Sayers: The half percent is the problem.

Tom Holmes: Okay. There's another cap I probably didn't mention, when we do base on CPI, CPI is capped at the high end at 3.5%, CPI is capped at the low end at I believe 2%

Ted Sayers: Something sounds defective, but I'll leave it alone.

Tom Holmes: Well come by the office sometime.

Ted Sayers: Oh, I will, one of my fortes.

Tom Holmes: Assessing, as I said this department has been reorganized, sorry, new chair.

James: Go ahead Mike.

Mike Laracy: Is that based on current year CPI or prior year?

Tom Holmes: I get it from the Finance Department in the fall. It would be 2019 CPI what we are working on right now through next fall.

Mike Laracy: 1.2, right?

James: 1.6

Tom Holmes: I think the last number I saw said 2.5 but I'm sure we've got different sources.

James: The Feds use 1.6

Tom Holmes: I will check into that.

Ted: The collective bargain agreements are a separate part?

Tom Holmes: Yes, they are, they're going to be under warrant articles this year. The police and the BPW

Ted: And it's possible there that you would have both merit and a cost of increase.

Tom Holmes: Their matrix is remarkably the same as ours, in fact it's identical to ours.

Ted: Really?

Tom Holmes: Yes.

James: Any other questions? John, I thought I saw your hand move, okay thank you. Anybody else? If not, please move on to the assessor.

Tom Holmes: I should clarify Ted, the BPW is the same as ours, I'm not sure what the police's is, I wasn't involved in that negotiation.

Ted: Yeah, I have a hard time believing that it's the same.

Tom Holmes: Very good. Assessing, this department is going through a bit of a reorganization I'm accelerating the clerk to the top of her scale given the fact that she's been asked to handle the office, the only person in the office with the new assessor starting at the end of December also she's proved quite capable she's been taking several courses she is moving very quickly through the educational component of her position or proposed position, it is my hope that we will go back to for the second time an assessor and an assistant assessor. This town in my opinion cannot get by with an assessor and just a clerk there is enough work there that requires two people of expertise in the assessing profession. I started this back in 1994 where I trained my then assistant Roseanne Maurice and she stayed with me for a few years and became quite successful and very proud of her. Then got Dale Schofield, worked hard with her for five years to get her certified as an assistant assessor and then onward and upward How do you saw she took my place Capably When I got promoted to town manager. So with Ms. Corie Hilton we're in the same position she was hired at the clerk level at the bottom of the clerks lane and as she has gone through the progression I am quite pleased with her performance, especially good with the public, the fact that she was now left in the lurch without someone who knows Conway very well, I'm trying to accelerate her because her new boss probably won't be around for more than 3-5 years and I want her ready to take over that department when it happens, that's the plan.

James: If I may Tom, would you address the assessors change in salary for the people who are watching this on Valley Vision and may not understand what we are talking about.

Tom Holmes: The assessor, the previous assessor was not even at the 87.5%. salary was set based on me being able to assist her in her first year on the job and then work forward from there so it would not have even been at the level we would have hired at. Once we knew we needed an assessor, I started advertising, we advertised across three states and internationally and nationally; for three or four months, and I got three applications. And that started at \$83,000 and change and I ended up at \$90,000 which is the average of the 30-town survey. I only got one assessor from New Hampshire who was even qualified to even change a value; I got another person from New Hampshire who was just a couple of years ahead of Miss Hilton and would not have been able to train Miss Hilton and I got a gentleman from Nebraska making \$200,000 a year I chose the assessed for New Hampshire whom I know for 25 years and I can say started on December 31st and we're hoping to get as much out of this gentleman as we can in 3 to 5 years.

James: So, in general terms, the assessor and assistant assessor in total are going to cost us an extra \$32,000, is that correct?

Tom Holmes: It may be correct but if you go back a year it wouldn't. When I was the assessor, I was making more than the assessor who replaced me; significantly, like \$15,000 and then that budget dropped. Now that I have to hire off the street for a market priced assessor, and this is no reflection of Miss Schofield, simply because I'm the former assessor across the hall who can help out in the re-evaluation year now that I have to hire off the street it's a very narrow skill set. It is an aging profession and as a result I got three applications over 3 or 4 months I'm going to war with the Army I've got.

James: Understood. The purpose of my question was to educate the public who was watching this on Valley Vision. By the way, I do want to recognize that once again the Conway Daily Sun has no representative at this meeting thank you very much.

Tom Holmes: Legal, legal expenses are basically an analysis of potential court cases going forward. We all read the papers, we all see what's going on with Market Basket and the hotel. In addition to that there are several other smaller cases that have the potential to cost us some money in the legal department. However, in looking at it I did see that there was room to cut, fingers crossed, as a lot of things settle out so that budget is Down \$10,000 or - 11%. any questions on legal?

Ted: With Market Basket, you are kind of indirectly pointing to the planning board.

Tom Holmes: No sir, not at all.

Ted: Who were you pointing to then?

Tom Holmes: The Entity that owns the Market Basket, the developer, the guy that does Settlers Green, Mr. Barsamian, and other partners, has been in a situation where the hotel that is on that property, owned independently from him has been in litigation over just about everything you can think of for 13 straight years. This is another situation where Mr. Barsamian wants to build something in there and they are preventing him from building it and I have now appealed, I believe three times, based on the giving up of McMillan Lane, the planning board approval and the proposed roundabout; so they are locked in a battle. We are not carrying the major part of the load of legal costs. The Barsamian lawyers, the Settler's Green lawyers are carrying the major load of that legal cost, but we are having some ancillary costs. They fight it out because we have been named in the suit, the town of Conway Have been named in all three suits. Any more questions on legal?

Michael Fougere: Conway or the Planning Board?

Tom Holmes: Well the Planning Board may be one of them but it's the Town of Conway that is the entity that got served.

John Colbath: Predominantly it was the vote to move the road

Tom Holmes: That was the first suit.

John: Then they claimed so we have to defend that vote because it was legally done.

Tom Holmes: That's at the Supreme Court right.

James: Any other questions regarding legal or anything else up to this point?

Tom Holmes: I like to tell the Selectmen that you don't have to do anything wrong to get sued. Moving Forward to planning and zoning. Nothing much in the bottom line, a reduction based on the aforementioned condition that we may be hiring an assistant building inspector and I am moving the coding officer or assistant building inspector to be under the building inspector.

James: Tom may I ask a question (Yes) Is there a reason why you skipped over employee benefits at this time?

Tom Holmes: It wasn't on the agenda, sir; I believe it's for the next meeting.

James: Okay very good.

Tom Holmes: So you'll see a reduction there based on the fact that I'm removing a part-time position, moving it up in the building inspection which is turning into a full-time position to address short-term rentals and other issues, code enforcement issues and so forth in that position.

James: Is there something going on down at the state house that might kick this all into a top hat?

Tom Holmes: It might, there is a bill from Senator Bradley that is preventing towns from using zoning to regulate short-term rentals period. And he does address for fire departments, life safety issues, and the police department to take care of all the problems which we do not agree with. I haven't spoken to Senator Bradley about this yet nor have I told the selectman about this yet it's going to be in tomorrow night's meeting.

James: If that were to take place, how would that affect your plan here?

Tom Holmes: Well, this position may not be hired. However, it would not be cut from this budget by town meeting because this bill is not going to go through that quickly, so we won't know about the life or death of this bill probably till next fall if that. There are also two competing bills the house, one of which is being released from committee as ought to pass and was sponsored by the town of Conway about the disorderly household, which we have had discussions about and another one sponsored by the NHMA to allow towns to have the same regulatory power as cities when it comes to short-term rentals. So, I think there may be a conference committee in the end between Senator Bradley's bill and the house bills If it even goes that far.

James: Would it seem logical to you and to the select board to consider postponing any consideration here until such time as the state makes its decision?

Tom Holmes: I certainly have plan to discuss that tomorrow night at the selectmen's meeting

Jim: I'll be there

Michael Fougere: May I play now? That is why I lost my seat on the planning board because the paper took me as a non-business type of person because I wanted more information about the short-term rentals.

James: Hmm... Really? No kidding. I did not know that. Ted?

Ted: May I just simply affirm where you're coming from on this Jim, if there is a chance to postpone an additional expense, you know, do it, absolutely do it. Once they're in there, they're in there forever.

James: I appreciate your comments.

Tom Holmes: Moving on to ambulance unless there are further questions about planning and zoning.

James: Starting on page 16 at the bottom.

Tom Holmes: This is pretty straightforward, it is a contractual obligation signed over a multi-year contract and this is this is the amount of money that was determined by the voters two or three years ago we're up for a renewal of this contract in 2022. Again, very similar, fire and emergency management, the fire part is a contractual obligation, the same deal, it is up in 2022. These amounts were determined at the time of the original contract and voted on by the voters by a warrant article. In addition to that this is a miniature department, emergency management is something that came about mostly through Homeland Security issues and 9/11 way back when and we have a stipend an emergency management director and a stipended assistant but also this year we have a requirement by the federal government through Homeland Security to the state that we update our Emergency Management plan and emergency management plan cost \$5,000 to upgrade; you hire a consultant, you have public meetings, so on and so forth. So that's been budgeted going forward for this year, any questions?

James: On precinct fire could you address pay \$21,000 increase from 2019 budget to the select board 2020 budget?

Tom Holmes: That is what I was referring to at the beginning of the statements, sir. This is a contractual increase in the third year of a five-year contract. Building inspections, you will see a large percentage increase here, that is the obverse of the planning board, this is the addition of the assistant building inspector and disappearance of the code enforcement officer. Other than that, pretty much the same. Any questions? Page 19. Health Department, again this is a stipended position and it basically respond to things like failed septic systems, complaints about vermin what have you, restaurant issues. Also, we have a dog officer and no town-owned kennel so on occasion when strays are put into the Humane Society kennels and not claimed we are all obligated to pay some sort of fee. And questions on that? And finally, welfare; the welfare department has a full-time welfare administrator and some due, seminars and equipment, all reasonable I believe. The welfare budget is being cut, as far as assistance to local people I have said it before and I'll say it again: aside from the booming economy which means that everyone who wants a job can find a job, it has alleviated the town of some of the welfare obligations. The real issue is we can't find any place to put homeless people. Carroll County does not have a homeless shelter. There are no apartments available and hotel rooms are scarce and the people that are taking this, availing themselves of the services, due to bad situations like homelessness, a lot of them have problems such as mental illness or substance abuse and if we send them to get a hotel room they're often burning that bridge. To the point where we only have one or maybe two hotels that will even accept our clients at this point. It is a real crisis; it is a real problem. We had a lady in today, she's living in a tent right now. But there is nothing out there so for that reason we haven't been able to spend the money that's been budgeted and I have cut it for the second year in a row because it doesn't seem like things are going to change too quickly. Any questions on welfare?

Sarah Frechette: This is probably uneducated of me, but is there anyway of partnering with a town who does have those services? Obviously, it would be a cost but is it anything that has ever been investigated?

Tom Holmes: We do that. We are aware of the other homeless shelters in other counties. We call around for beds. We are also aware of housing currently; we do puts people up in some chalets in Bartlett will take our clients. We do everything we can to find relatives that might take some of these people in so we do what we can as best as we can. But there really isn't a lot out there to house people.

James: Any other questions on that topic? Seeing none.

Tom Holmes: I think we're done.

James: I think you are too.

Tom Holmes: Okay, I do have one other thing. We are scheduled to talk about revenues at the Wednesday night meeting and I have printed them out so we can pass them out and everybody can look at them ahead of time.

James: Okay, the next item on the agenda is the approval of the December 11th, 2019 minutes. There are only nine of us who were present, so the people who were not present cannot vote. Do not vote if you were not here.

Dave: I move to accept

James: I have a motion to accept the minutes as written, seconded by Frank; all those who are eligible to vote say I. Anybody want to say nay? No nay? Anybody abstaining? Everyone else is abstaining, so the I's have it. Is there any old business to be brought forward? Old business going once, or business going twice, old business is gone. Any new business to come forward?

Ted: I would've come last time, but I got my dates screwed up. One of the things that bothers me, is that we go through a lot of work in this committee and it's thankless, we have a lot of meetings, we drive in the snow, two meetings this week, two meetings next week, we keep going, and this is hard work. We have the subcommittee working on the fall, then we go into the town meeting and it all comes to a crescendo and we sit there and hope we have a lively discussion about the items we worked hard on during the year then what we have is a, and this is not a criticism at her, it is a criticism at the function of the Town Manager. Not the town manager, the town moderator, who has awesome powers, if you read here you see what in my opinion are disproportionate powers to what she does, but she has them. And what she does as she combines all these items like one through whatever, and then the town votes and it's like it went right by us like a jet plane, we couldn't stop her, the town votes yeah that's a great idea are you for it or against it and boom, 25 minutes later we've broken the record for the fastest town meeting in history. Something is wrong with that. There is something wrong with that. Anybody who works all year long on this committee and it puts up with that you're missing something and we need to stop that somehow some way, somebody needs to get up, I'll gladly do it, because this will be my last year on the budget committee, get up and say Pam, or whatever her name is, Miss Moderator, you can't do this, and this is the reason why, this is why it's hurting us. And I'll say it, she's allowed to say you're out of order or tell me to sit down, she's been rude to me in the past. And that's fine, but at least I'll do it. But boy, I'll tell you, somebody's got to do something; I don't want to be alone on this one unless you disagree with me.

Sarah Frechette: Just to clarify, so the idea is that it would be better if they were all done individually? Can we require that? Is that a power of the committee?

James: Moderator, under her RSA, has pretty much discretion on how she runs the meeting. I will ask the town manager to approach the town attorney and see what we may be able to do.

Ted: Otherwise, what we're doing is we're giving the moderator by indirect, well, in some way we are giving the moderator the power to set the agenda and in fact the taxes, there's something crazy about the process, the process is defective, it should be changed or the moderator should be told about it. This has never happened before it is this moderator, this has never happened before, again, I'm not picking on her, but what she's doing is that she is an attorney and she's approaching her job pedantically and saying this is what the rules provide, this is how I'm going to do it, but the rules are killing us.

James: I will bring that up through the town manager to the town attorney. Guarantee I will raise that issue.

Mike Tetreault: I agree with Ted that there was a problem with attendance at these meetings. And I know what goes in the newspaper in a little tiny square box down in the corner; but everyone I talk to has no idea that these meetings even go on, the only reason that the school has high attendance is because they are told as teachers to show up to this meeting and support the school. It should be more of an advertisement for something that let the voters know what's going on.

Mike Fougere: I agree with, even if it was a sub-headline saying budget committee tonight, planning board committee tonight, school board and maybe even a small notation, Kennett Middle School, Kennett High School, Town Hall. It's a town newspaper that gives no town information unless it's controversial. The only time they show up here is when we do what Ted says and become controversial and argue.

James: I think you probably heard my comment regarding the fact that there is no one from Conway Daily Sun here and I am going to continue to make that comment as long as they are not in attendance.

Mike: At one point I had heard that channel 3 was coming back

James: Well channel 3 as an independent channel... What I know about channel 3 right now is that it is channel 1301 and there is some possibility based on other things being negotiated with Spectrum that this may come back. I'm going to turn that back over to John Colbath, who is the select board rep for more information potentially.

John: It's all in discussion, it's in contract with Spectrum contract. We have a negotiator working on it. The state of Maine has legislation to keep Public Access at a low digit Channel, New Hampshire is looking at the same type of legislation, so it is all in an unknown

James: Do you know if any of our local Representatives have -

John: So far Spectrum has turned their backs and not come to the table with that, so they seem to be very independent in what they do.

James: Do you know of any of our local Representatives have approached this issue?

John: yes, there was a joint bill with Representative Knirk and Jeb Bradley to try to rectify some of this.

James: Okay, thank you.

Sarah Frechette: About the marketing and stuff, I just think that yes there is an obligation of the paper to properly advertise for the meeting that are happening, obviously we could vamp it up with purchasing some targeted advertising but I also think we live in the modern day and I bet you a number of you have Facebook and other social outlets and so instead of pointing the finger, which I love pointing the finger, so I'm with everybody, but I do think that we could take it on ourselves a little bit this year and if everybody challenge themselves to make a post or just communicate with at least 10 people the date of those meetings for them to come see or to come speak, then we will see a larger number because of those ten people that you talk to a percentage is bound to tell another few so trickledown effect will be there. And our Facebook posts stay live and exist; you can choose to make it public or not. You can also choose not to do this; I'm not telling anybody what to do but it is an outlet that we have, and it is free and a way to keep us connected. And we have a wonderful community a lot of people connected various ways so I would promote that among all of the board members or committee members here and then any other boards that you sit on to for promoting it because we care about the town and we want as many people to have a voice as possible.

Mike Fougere: The paper does put out a calendar, but I don't know if anybody sits and reads the calendar because they're just putting a calendar out. They verbally tell you about individual events taking place (IE: AA tonight, this the next night)

James: You mean just having a page with a calendar on it and what's happening on those specific days during the month

Mike Fougere: We need something informative versus something that nobody is going to look at.

Dave: A question for John, has the town thought about a.) amplifying these kinds of things on the town website and b.) since they're free I just wonder if there might be sense in the various committees having their own Facebook pages, owned and run by the town but where announcements get made but then and shared from there. That way there is a central spot for information that way I'm not saying oh yeah there's a meeting next Thursday when in reality I got my days messed up and everybody shows up when there's no meeting. Say Krista or someone was in a position to manage that.

John: The town website always advertises the meetings officially and that is a common resource that people should look for. Facebook, any social media becomes controversy and if you allow public access to it you get as much erroneous as you do get factual stuff on there so you need to have somebody who can control that so I don't know what that level of control is.

Sarah: Maybe turn off comments

John: Legally adjusting the town moderator, they follow a town warrant, that's how the meeting is run, with a published warrant which gets followed. I think a lot of the issues are public apathy as we have all discussed; SB2 form of government does not promote people attending a deliberative meaning. They will come and vote in April instead, by choice. I know a lot of people are far away on deliberative meeting night. In my biased opinion, it is a poor way to set up and run a government.

James: Ted did you have something

Ted: Yeah, there is also another way to get at this, a specific issue which is the moderator, the apathy issue is over there, that's separate, the attendance issue, all that is separate. The one I'm working is the moderator and I think I'm going to approach it with a letter to the editor as they a citizen and not as a member of this committee but as a citizen and I'm going to criticize last year's meeting and I will work at that way. Somehow, someway, the paper has got to grab hold. Damon Steere comes out with an article about tonight's meeting, which I used as a reference to help me with tonight's meeting. I

assume he is going to watch the video of this I come out with a meeting, Damon if you do, please listen to us , you know, there is a message we want you to put in the Sun. Let's see if he does it.

James: Appreciate that Ted. Any other comments on anything we have covered here this evening? Hearing none. Any new business, other new business? Any public comments? Well the only member of the public, Mr. Jones, left, so then I will entertain a motion to adjourn, motion to adjourn by Mike Fougere, and seconded by Dave, all those in favor raise your hands. Appears to be unanimous. Meeting is adjourned at 19:33.