



Town of Barre VERMONT

BARRE TOWN BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025

Tuesday, January 30, 2024

AGENDA

1. Call to order.....6:00 p.m.
2. Consider approving agenda.
3. Acknowledge guests, if any, for non-agenda items
4. Self-introductions
5. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair
6. Discuss Budget Handouts
7. Discuss Organization and Details:
 - a. Review, corrections on contact sheet
 - b. Preferred means of receiving meeting material
 - c. Thoughts on receiving information from or meeting with groups included in the budget
 - d. Review Open Meeting Law, Conflict of Interest Policy
 - e. Meeting Schedule
 - f. Live stream meetings
8. View PowerPoint presentation detailing significant changes in the budgets and an outline of what to expect moving forward
9. Public comment, if any.
10. Adjourn

MINUTES

The duly warned meeting of the Barre Town Budget Review Committee for the proposed 2024-2025 fiscal year budget was held on Tuesday, January 30, 2024 at the Barre Town Municipal Building, Emergency Operation Center, Websterville, VT.

Budget Committee Members Present: Norma Malone, Bob Nelson, Paul White, Justin Bolduc, Chris Neddo, Todd Provencher, Jamie Cushman, Josh Howard, and Lindsey Lozier. Those present virtually: Mike Gilbar.

Budget Committee Members Absent: None.

Staff Members Present: Town Manager Chris Violette, Town Clerk Tina Lunt, and Finance Director Katelyn Kran.

Others Present: None.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Paul White

APPROVE THE AGENDA:

On a motion by Bob Nelson, seconded by Norma Malone, the Budget Committee voted unanimously to approve the agenda as presented.

GUESTS: None.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Committee members introduced themselves and provided brief background information.

ELECT A CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR:

The Committee will elect a Chair and Vice-Chair. There are no requirements for this role, except chairing the meeting.

On a motion by Justin Bolduc, seconded by Todd Provencher, a nomination for Norma Malone was made for Chair of the Barre Town Budget Committee. With no other candidates put forth, nominations ceased, and the Committee voted to appoint Norma Malone as Chair.

The meeting was turned over to Chair Malone.

On a motion by Bob Nelson, seconded by Todd Provencher, a nomination was made for Justin Bolduc as Vice-Chair of the Barre Town Budget Committee.

Justin Bolduc declined the nomination.

On a motion by, Justin Bolduc, seconded by, Josh Howard, a nomination was made for Todd Provencher as Vice Chair of the Barre Town Budget Committee With no other candidates put forth, nominations ceased, and the Committee voted to appoint Todd Provencher as Vice-Chair.

BUDGET HANDOUT:

Town Manager Chris Violette shared that with Selectboard approval, he has changed the process from previous years. Instead of handing out the budgets and beginning the review process on the first or second night, this first meeting will be all about housekeeping as well as laying out the process. There has been many changes with regard to how the budgets were prepared this year. He is hopeful the overall process will be more streamlined for all. Mr. Violette reported that the non-profit groups will attend next week's meeting. Budget binders will be available at that time.

Committee members requested to receive the non-profit group presentations ahead of time for review.

ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION DETAILS:

- a) Contact Sheet: A contact sheet was shared with Committee members. Members were asked to verify their contact information. A revised contact sheet will be shared with Committee members next week.
- b) Receiving Meeting Material: Committee members were asked their preference on receiving material by email only, on paper only, or both. Consensus is to receive by email.
- c) Groups: Four entities receive a direct financial contribution to their operating cost via the Town's budget. They include Barre Area Development, The Aldrich Public Library, Central Vermont Economic Development, and the Barre Partnership. Barre Area Development, The Aldrich Library, the Barre Partnership, and Central Vermont Economic Development will attend the February 6th meeting to provide a presentation about their operation and finances. The groups will have up to 30 minutes each for their presentations. The presentations will be held in the Selectboard meeting room.
- d) Law and Policy: Chair Malone gave a brief overview of The Vermont Open Meeting Law and the Town's Conflict-of-Interest Policy. Chair Malone encouraged all members to be aware that all information is public, this includes emails and text messages. It is important to be cautious of what is exchanged in a committee quorum. Town Manager Chris Violette will share a document that outlines The Vermont Open Meeting Law with Committee members.
- e) Meeting Schedule: The committee will meet on Tuesday evenings at 6:00 p.m., in the Lower Conference Room at the Municipal Building. The Manager recommended keeping meetings at a 2-hour limit, if possible. He noted the budget schedule will be discussed in a later presentation. The Town Meeting warning must be approved by the Selectboard no later than April 2, 2024. A budget decision must be made by the Committee no later than March 29. Currently, the last meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 26.
- f) Live Stream Meetings: The Budget Committee has no desire to live stream the meetings. The public can remote into any of the meetings.

BUDGET PROCESS:

Department Heads include: Town Clerk's Office – Tina Lunt; Zoning & Planning – Brandon Garbacik; Police Department – William Dodge; Fire Department – Andy Lange; Ambulance Service – David Danforth; Emergency Management – Jack Mitchell; Cemetery - Dwight Coffrin; Recreation – Johnny Crossley; Public Works (Equipment, Sewer, Water, and most of the Highway) – Richard Tetreault;

Engineering (Municipal Building, Highway, Sewer, and Water) – Josh Martineau; and Finance Office – Katelyn Kran.

The Manager expressed his appreciation for Mrs. Kran’s help with the budget preparation.

Town Manager Chris Violette and Finance Director Katelyn Kran gave a PowerPoint presentation. A summary of the presentation includes:

- Budget Process: Mr. Violette explained that the budget process has been underway for months. The process begins in November with review of the Town’s 5-Year Plans. Department heads submit their proposed expense budgets in December. In January, the Manager reviews the department head’s budgets with individual department heads, adjusting as necessary. The budget being considered by this Committee is the Manager’s revised budget. The Budget Committee will make the final budget decision(s) and adopt the proposed budget. The final General Fund (including Highway) Budget will be presented to the voters on Town Meeting Day, May 14, 2024.

Mr. Violette stated the January process has changed. He is working more closely with department heads to give them an idea of what to expect in their budget requests. Department heads would still have the opportunity to present non-approved budgeted items that the Manager may have excluded. Additionally, Mr Violette noted that he and the Department heads have tried to walk a tight line between being “frugal” and “functional”.

- Schedule: A Tuesday evening schedule was shared that begins January 30 and ends March 26. It is noted that additional Thursday night meetings may be required. Mr. Violette said the goal this year is to condense the process and not review budget items line by line as in previous years. He asked for Budget Committee members to do their homework and come prepared with questions.
- Equipment Fund: Mr. Violette reported that for several years the Town has had a Qualified Audit Opinion in their General Fund. This is due to how the Equipment Fund was set up. He and Finance Director Katelyn Kran have been working closely together and taking the necessary steps to change this. With that, brings major changes to the budget. Mr. Violette noted he is going to recommend that the Selectboard approve a name change to this fund. He has suggested that the Equipment Fund become the Fleet Maintenance Fund.
- Equipment Fund vs. Fleet Maintenance Fund: Mr. Violette explained the difference between the Equipment Fund and the Fleet Maintenance Fund. The major changes are reduced transfers to the Fleet Maintenance Fund and increased Equipment Purchase Budgets in other funds.

Finance Director Katelyn Kran noted that interfund transfers will need to take place on equipment that is cross funded. One example of this would be the Town dump trucks.

Mr. Bolduc inquired about the ARPA funds and if these funds could be noted within the budget. The Manager noted the ARPA expenditures are all being entered into one fund. Mr. Bolduc shared concerns on how this would be reflected in the budget vs. actuals. Mrs. Kran stated she has been reviewing this information in hopes she can answer the Committee’s questions around this matter. She asked for members to email her ahead of time, if possible, and she is happy to review this information in preparation for their questions.

- Changes in Wage Splits: Mr. Violette stated the Committee is going to see a change in wage splits for the following positions: Town Manager, HR/Town Manager’s Assistant, Finance Director, Finance Clerk, Water Billing Assistant, Town Engineer, and second Mechanic. The goal of splitting these funds is to ensure that all funds are paying their accurate share of wages.
- Ambulance Fund: Mr. Violette reported there has been some major changes in the Ambulance Fund. Those include the following:
 - New station and contract added (Williamstown). This added 6 additional full-time staff
 - New EMS Director
 - New billing company as of September 1, 2023
 - Hired over a dozen per-diem employes. This has led to a decrease in overtime wages
 - Delivery of two ambulances and added a 6th by retaining one of the older vehicles
 - Rates increase effective January 1, 2024

Budget Committee Meeting of January 30, 2024 Continued:

Board members requested to receive a copy of the PowerPoint presentation. Furthermore, Board members commented on the presentation expressing it was a great presentation.

Mrs. Malone inquired about additional positions and asked what the committee can expect to see. Mr. Violette said there will be one additional position in the Water Department, and possibly another one within the Cemetery Department.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

ADJOURN:

On a motion by Josh Howard, seconded by Bob Nelson, the Budget Committee meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

APPROVED MINUTES

Barre Town Budget Committee

Filed in the Barre Town Clerk's Office on this _____ day of _____, 2024.

ATTEST: _____, Barre Town Clerk.