

**Town of Chesterfield  
Board of Selectmen/Budget Committee  
Joint Meeting**

**MINUTES  
June 24, 2013**

**Present**

Selectboard

Chairman Jon McKeon called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm. Others in attendance were Board members Elaine Levlocke, Jim Larkin and Administrator Rick Carrier.

Budget Committee

Chairman Bayard Tracy, John Koopmann, Charlie Perry, Cliff Emery, Steve Laskowski and Susan Newcomer

McKeon asked Tracy to begin. Tracy stated that McKeon and Laskowski concurred it would be a good idea to have this joint meeting. With warrant articles and increasing compensation the members felt left out of the loop and blindsided by the PD compensation and longevity increases brought to the floor at Town Meeting. The Budget Comm had discussed these but had not made a decision. The Budget Comm is responsible for the budget with the responsibility to give guidance to the taxing authorities. The Town is aging and more with fixed incomes. Anything we do to increase the budget falls directly on the tax payer.

The purpose of the meeting as the Budget Comm has discussed; we want to make sure this doesn't happen again. We'd like to know about substantial changes without a repeat of this going forward.

Laskowski asked why we should be working so late into the process. Is there a mechanism to avoid this; maybe by being involved early on in the process? Laskowski stated we also should be looking at what the State will be passing down to the Town. Both the Budget Comm and town need to look at what money is spent on. He believes we would have a more thoughtful budget working together. This would avoid adversarial attitudes.

Newcomer stated it was her impression that the information came to the Budget Comm from the police dept before it went to the Selectboard. Koopmann stated it boils down to communication. They heard the presentation and then deferred to the Selectboard for recommendations. The Budget Comm would have welcomed the Selectboard's recommendation.

Perry stated that at the Budget Comm meeting when the PD did the presentation he said it was totally inappropriate and they should have gone to the Selectboard and then back to the Budget Comm. Levlocke was there and it was her understanding that the chief was invited to make the presentation.

McKeon stated to speak to Laskowski's point, looking at the budget jointly, the Selectboard needs to see the proposed budgets first. McKeon agreed that communication is important and we will do better. We need to see the Budget Comm as a resource for the Selectboard. We've learned as a Board moving forward we will not go forward without all budget items being brought to the Budget Comm.

Levlocke stated she takes responsibility and apologized for the miscommunication. With the time restraints she didn't realize she needed to bring it back to the Budget Comm.

Laskowski stated it may be helpful to the Selectboard if there is a big change to the budget to wait until the following year. Emery noted that Tracy had stated that the Budget Comm would be open to looking favorably to the PD compensation package but not the longevity increases and asked that Levlocke bring it back to the Selectboard.

Newcomer stated we make a mistake by just throwing information out without the history behind it. The people may be more likely to make a better decision with that history. Emery stated that the news should be out before Town Meeting. Laskowski stated that most people didn't have a clue about what was passed. Koopmann stated we had no information about longevity pay; it was only briefly discussed.

McKeon stated it's hard to stop fiction with fact. With good communication we can get the information out for what we propose to do and its outcome but also the other side of the matter.

Emery stated there is an image in Town that the Budget Comm and the Selectboard don't agree on anything at all. He thinks they should agree on what is presented. Koopmann stated there is harmony between the Budget Comm and the Selectboard. Emery noted that the Budget Comm took \$20,000 off the Solid Waste budget because historically it has been under spent by \$30,000. Laskowski stated that historically the Selectboard gives little input. The goal is to have a thoughtful meeting. McKeon stated we do that to a certain extent; on articles where we think there may be questions we make sure we are prepared.

Laskowski stated that the Selectboard get the first crack at the budget but the Budget Comm should get it earlier. Koopmann thought the general schedule was fine; it was just those items brought at the last minute. Tracy stated if there are contentious items they need to be addressed.

Emery asked to have a voice from each Selectboard member as to their reasoning for the longevity increases. Larkin stated when the idea had first come to the Selectboard he thought something should be done. There was a need to be addressed when an employee working for 10 years makes the same as the 20 year employee. Why do we keep people? They want to be here. We should be rewarding them and in his opinion it's a step in the right direction; a step that needed to be made.

Emery asked why not change the step levels. McKeon stated he would rather hire a 4<sup>th</sup> step police officer to avoid training costs.

Emery asked why you would want to keep older employees in a physically challenging job. Levlocke stated that the employees are held to work reviews. If they can't do the jobs then look at it. Laskowski stated this doesn't stop us to look at it again.

Tracy stated that the Selectboard chose longevity. He would have the steps redesigned. Laskowski stated there is a value put on each job. Tracy stated that proscriptively you can do something about longevity by raising the steps. We should be doing best practices. Industry has gone away from longevity because it reduces productivity.

Laskowski stated there is a disparity between what the school is paid and what the town is paid. It's up to who has the best union. As the State forces more down to the town, more will be passed down to the tax payers.

Tracy stated we know it's a tough job; the Budget Comm is willing to work with the Selectboard to avoid this happening in the future. If there is an issue of contention, bring it up.

Perry suggested that more be done to communicate information to the community. It was noted that there is a monthly email that goes out to all that subscribe. McKeon stated that public hearing notices are posted by law around town. Larkin is working on a newsletter; the town's website is being upgraded and we have had email sign ups.

### **Adjournment**

*With no other business to conduct, Levlocke moved to adjourn, Larkin seconded the motion which carried.*

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Ross  
Secretary

Approved by:

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Jon P McKeon, Chairperson

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Date

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Elaine H Levlocke

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
James M Larkin

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date