

**Middlesex Budget Committee
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, January 11, 2022
4:30 PM**

Present: Randy Drury, Mark Harris, Bill McManis, Elias Gardner

Minutes

Call to Order 4:30

Welcome Guests - none

Draft Budget Committee Report - action possible

- approve under 9%
- Elias moved to approve the report as drafted with the inclusion of a summary of the Budget Committee's recommendations and the final budget amount approved by the Select Board as long as the total increase remains under 9%. Mark seconded. Motion Passed (4-0-1).

Discuss Budget Workshop Documents

- Randy stated the pay raises are hard and supported the treasurer's compromise of an additional 3.5% COLA.
- Elias added COLA above 3.5% is likely warranted but given the large pay increases already this year there are potential benefits to doing additional COLA increases above CPI, next year and over time.
- Randy suggested that future increases could help maintain morale over the long term.
- Elias agreed that the Town should not give a big raise and then stagnate .
- Mark agreed also.
- Randy stated it does not look good that significant raises are being voted on by a Board member whose family member directly benefits.
- Elias & Mark agreed that the perception of a conflict is there.
- Mark pointed out that twice in three years the town will have seen a significant budget increase.
- Mark recommended that the % increase be added to the article that the town will vote on.
- Elias added that it is a transparency thing
- Randy agreed saying it's all about transparency. Adding transparency is what's driven him to be more active.
- Mark moves to recommend to the Select Board to add wording to the budget article to reflect the new budget amount as a percentage change from the current year budget. Randy seconds. Motion Passes (4-0-1) Additional discussion before vote:
 - Mark pointed out the Town could do better highlighting how small our budget is relative to the total tax burden in the town. The school is massive. The town is only 22.7% of the total spending. This town budget increase only amounts to a 2% overall spending increase. There is a lot of information in the town report but some of it is somewhat overwhelming and nothing that says the rate per 100

dollars. We need to simplify for people to understand. Also most of the costs in the budget are out of the town's control.

- Randy added that the town's portion of the budget is the only part of overall spending where people can change the details because the school budget is voted on by Australian ballot. More transparency and conversation would help people be less worried about the increases. He asked what can be done about that?
- Elias pointed out that a challenge is we don't have the information now to know how the tax rate will be affected.
- Randy suggested maybe the Budget Committee can help.

Other Business

- Approve 2021-12-21 and 2022-01-04 Meeting Minutes.
 - Randy moves to approve. Bill seconds. 4-0-1
- Correspondence - none
- Any other matters that may come before the committee - none

5:00 Budget Workshop

- Join Select Board Meeting for Budget Workshop

6:00 Adjourn