

**BUDGET COMMITTEE
TOWN OF PEMBROKE, NH
July 16, 2020 at 6:30 PM**

Mark LePage, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

I. Attendance:

Budget Committee Present:

Daniel Crean, Peter Gagy, Michael Connor, Brian Seaworth, Gerry Fleury, Karen Yeaton, Paul Hanson, Mark LePage, Gene Gauss, and Armand Soucy

Excused: Marie Chouinard and Andy Camidge

Staff: David Jodoin Town Administrator

II. Approval of Minutes: June 11, 2020:

Gerry Fleury moved to approve the minutes of June 11, 2020, Dan Crean seconded the motion. Motion passed 10-0.

III. Update from Town on Budget

David Jodoin stated that the Department of Revenue Administration asked for the tax collection rate difference between last year at this time and this year. Pembroke has a higher collection rate this year than last for unknown reasons. Last year at this time, 93% of the commitment had been received and this year 95% has been. David stated that there are concerns for the collection rate from the second half tax bill of 2020 and first half tax bill of 2021. Motor vehicle permit revenues and interest on the savings accounts are still down. Revenue from interest on delinquent taxes is also lower than last year. A rough estimate to use right now would be to say that the Town could be seeing a revenue loss of \$100,000 - \$150,000 at year end.

It is unclear if there will be any further federal or state stimulus money. The Town's fund balance will be able to be used offset the anticipated loss in revenue rather than raising new taxes. A portion of the new development by the golf course may be added to this year's tax rolls when it comes to set the rate in the fall which will likely have a positive effect. It will all depend what was there as of April 1st. The Town Departments are still watching the money they spend carefully and postponing any expenditures they can. The Board of Selectmen agreed to fund the capital reserves. They are also moving forward with purchasing the two police cruisers and the loader. The Chief of Police said he would not request a new cruiser next year if the two are purchased this year. Next years requests for CIP will likely be minimal.

Gerry Fleury commented that there is a plan for CIP to start on July 29, 2020 and they will be meeting every Wednesday after that. The meetings will be held remotely.

IV. Update from School on Budget Situation and Preparations for

Gene Gauss stated that currently the approximate surplus for the School District is \$668,705. There is approximately \$285,705 in unanticipated revenue, \$135,000 attributed to the sale of the Village School, other sources such as vocational transportation, tuition, special ed aid, and student fees totals \$150,000. There is still \$82,500 that needs to be used to fund warrant articles. The School District is still finalizing year end and there are expenditures that may still impact last year's budget. Net surplus to be returned for tax relief will likely be \$580,000.

The Governor passed their recommendations and guidelines on Tuesday of this week for school opening. The administration and staff are working on the plan for the fall to be presented to the School Board next week. Amber Wheeler has also been working on a revised schedule for payments from the town for the next few months. Once the Town sets the tax rate, they hope to refine the schedule further so it works best for both the town and the schools.

Dan Crean asked if there is a way, they can get input from taxpayers on the school opening. Gene answered that they will be discussing it at the next meeting and there is public comment time. They can also write to the Superintendent and the School Board to express what they feel should happen. There was a survey sent out they will also take into consideration. The State has decided they will take the hands-off approach and are handing the decision whether or not to open down to the local level. Dan shared concerns that the School Board is only looking at one subset of taxpayers. They do not seem to be looking at input from taxpayers that are outside of the school system. Gene stated that the community was polled by the schools to see how they wanted to proceed and what they felt was safest. Karen Yeaton asked which part of the community he is referencing. Gene answered that it was sent to parents in the District.

Gerry Fleury stated that transportation companies are saying it will take three times the amount of buses to get kids to school and the Governor's office put out a comment that they were unaware that this was an issue. Gerry expressed concerns for the costs the District will be incurring with the extra busing. Gerry also feels the survey should have gone out to the all taxpayers since the parents are not representative of the whole community. Gene stated that survey was done by the school administration and it was geared towards how parents felt about the health and safety of their students going back to school in the fall. It was not necessarily designed for budgetary input. The next school board meeting will be in the cafeteria at Pembroke Academy and concerned citizens should either attend the meeting or share their thoughts with the Board and administration via email or phone call. The guidance coming from the State is limited and changing. Any decision made on Tuesday will be reliant on outbreaks from across the country.

Mark LePage read concerns from Paul Hanson that the survey should have been sent to all taxpayers. Mark stated that he saw the survey and it was geared to parental preferences for their students. Paul asked how citizens will know about the meeting next week. Gene answered that it is a regularly scheduled School Board meeting and it is on the normal schedule.

Gerry Fleury requested a copy of the survey so they can see what questions were asked and what the results were. Gene answered that he will email Patty Sherman to have her send the survey and answers to the committee.

Dan Crean expressed concerns that the School Board felt this information is the school's information and not the public's information. All the information should have been sent to the Town. Gene answered that they are not holding any information back. Anything they receive will be entered into the minutes, posted on the SAU website, and the board is available for any questions. Budget considerations were not involved in the survey. The only criteria for the survey was moving forward and how they can best educate students. Karen Yeaton shared that any operational changes at the school will have an impact to the budget. Gene agrees but until any decisions are made on what education will look like in the schools, they cannot anticipate the budget implications. They are looking at completely remote, hybrid, or full back at school models. They are considering all options. Once they decide on an avenue, they will look to make it work within the budget. There is a lot that is still up in the air and they have only been working with the States guidelines for two days.

Gerry Fleury asked about the costs for special ed. Gene answered that they are required by state and federal law to deliver those services and programs. It was a concern at the end of last year and it is a concern moving forward.

V. Other Business

Next meeting will be held August 20, 2020. The meeting location will be decided closer to the meeting date.

VI. Adjourn

Dan Crean made a motion to adjourn at 7:09 PM. Gerry Fleury seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Mark LePage, Chairman