

LONDONDERRY BUDGET COMMITTEE

Minutes for January 13, 2026

Sunnycrest Conference Room, 268B Mammoth Road, Londonderry, NH 03053

Present: Joseph Gagnon - Chair, Kate Burbidge – Vice Chair, Patrick El Azem- Member at large, Nicole Dery – Secretary, Rebecca Roe - Member at large

(Absent: Ryan Cronin - Member at large, Sara Meier - Member at large)

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by J. Gagnon.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** J. Gagnon led the Pledge of Allegiance
3. **PUBLIC COMMENT (BEGINNING & END OF MEETING)**
 - Motion to open public comment K. Burbidge, second P. El Azem, all in favor (5-0).
 - Motion to close public comment K. Burbidge, second N. Dery, all in favor (5-0).
4. **SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET & WARRANT ARTICLES**

The committee reviewed the School District's budget and warrant articles, expressing strong approval for the work done to reduce costs while maintaining services.

- **Operating Budget & Default:** The committee was pleased that the school operating budget came in approximately \$295,000 below the default budget. The operating budget is expected to decrease by roughly \$208,000, while state revenue is projected to increase by about \$548,000 if full day kindergarten passes.
- **Full-Day Kindergarten (Article 7):**
 - If passed, this would result in a projected \$0.12 tax *decrease* due to revenue changes.
 - The article includes construction for the district office and kindergarten space. It was structured as a warrant article rather than included in the operating budget to ensure transparency and give voters a direct say after two previous failures.
 - Passage of this article is contingent on the Town's corresponding Article 7 passing, as the school will borrow funds from the town.
 - **Moose Hill School Reuse:** Once the kindergarten program moves, the portable classrooms will be removed and sent to Matthew Thornton. The remaining space at Moose Hill will primarily be used for the LEEP program, which continues to grow, as well as for meeting space and storage.
- **Vehicle Replacement:** The budget includes replacing aging vans (2016/2018 models) to avoid rising repair costs, though there are no immediate safety concerns.

5. MUNICIPAL TOWN BUDGET

The committee transitioned to the town budget, aiming to identify approximately \$400,000 in cuts to present to the Town Council. Two primary approaches were discussed: a quantitative analysis of cost curves (from P. El-Azem) and a line-item review based on community impact (from K. Burbidge & J. Gagnon).

Proposed Adjustments & Cuts:

- **Library:** Some members proposed restoring the part-time Children's Librarian position, noting that cutting it would reduce services during a leadership transition.
- **Old Home Day Fireworks:** There was significant debate regarding \$20,000 for fireworks. While some viewed it as a "want" rather than a "need," the consensus leaned toward keeping it in the

budget to avoid disappointing the community, rather than relying solely on donations for this fiscal year.

- **Fire Department Overtime:** A proposal from member Ryan suggested cutting \$150,000 from fire overtime, citing current surplus trends. However, there was caution that this surplus might be due to unfilled positions, and overtime costs could rise once staffing stabilizes.
- **IT Services:** A specific reduction was noted regarding IT management services, though there was debate about moving the OpenGov contract costs (\$44k increase) to a warrant article versus keeping it in the operating budget.
- **Town Clerk Benefits:** The committee discussed a proposal to move the Town Clerk's benefit load to a warrant article for transparency. They ultimately decided against it to avoid the risk of the position becoming unfunded or requiring annual "flip-flopping" votes.

Town Warrant Articles: The committee reviewed a list of warrant articles, focusing on several high-impact items.

- **Morrison House (Article 4):** A \$3.3 million bond is proposed to renovate the Morrison House. Several members expressed strong opposition, with little utility to the town compared to other needs like the DPW facility, needed positions, or SAU offices (etc.).
- **School/Town Office Lease (Article 7):** This article facilitates the move of the SAU office. It involves the town lending money to the school district (interest-free), which the school pays back, saving money compared to the current commercial lease with no interest loan, ultimately saving the town money.
- **Fire Department Needs:**
 - **Equipment:** Article 11 funds new protective gear to replace PFAS-containing equipment.
 - **Staffing:** Articles 19 and 20 propose adding a full-time executive assistant and a fire training officer to ensure compliance and proper tracking of training hours.
- **IT Infrastructure (Article 12):** A \$350,000 capital reserve request to fund a new ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system to replace the outdated "New World" software.
- **Transportation (CART):** There was confusion regarding the overlap between Article 16 (Transportation Capital Reserve) and Article 22 (Municipal Transportation Improvement).

6. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- **Annual Report:** The committee needs to submit their section for the Town Annual Report. They agreed to draft a narrative focusing on their strategic planning, collaborative process, and specific budget recommendations.
- **Strategic Planning:** The Town Manager emphasized the need for a shift toward "strategic-based budgeting" and requested committee buy-in to move away from simple incremental budgeting.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT. N/A

8. ADJOURNMENT

- Motion to adjourn K. Burbidge; second P. El-Azem, all in favor (5-0)

9. MEETING SCHEDULE:

Jan 20: Final votes on Town/School budgets and Warrant Articles.

Jan 29 Strategic Planning and the Annual Report

Feb 19: Strategic Planning