

Wiscasset Budget Committee

Minutes: March 4, 2024

In Attendance:

Tom Joyce, Chair

Marty Fox

Robert Jones

Dennis Simmons, Town Manager

Kim Andersson, Superintendent of Schools

Meeting called to order at 4:00PM by Tom Joyce.

- Chairman reviewed upcoming schedule and plan to meet with the Select Board on March 6 and vote on budget items March 11.
- Members opening comments on budget items of concern.
 - Reviewed note submitted by Brian Adams indicating no concern about department budgets and recommended funding no new community organizations.
 - Tom Joyce expressed concern about Parks and Recreation budget increase. Commented that we have not received a final Police budget due to ongoing negotiation.
 - Robert Jones expressed concern about the size of the EMS budget and size of the subsidy. Also voiced concern about the Parks and Recreation budget. Asked about the increase in municipal insurance.
 - Dennis Simmons provided a response regarding EMS and Parks and Recreation. EMS budget reflects “cost of readiness”. Parks and Recreation budget has a large subsidy but the people of Wiscasset have continually

supported providing the subsidy in every election. Insurance increases are due to health insurance costs and FMLA.

- Marty Fox asked how and why the unexpended fund balance has grown.
 - Dennis Simmons explained how it has grown as certain budgets have been under-spent in certain years, and why a fund balance is important to have in case there are timing issues with tax collection or revenue. Kim Andersson commented on the status of the school fund balance. There was additional discussion about appropriate uses of unexpended funds.
- Dennis Simmons commented on the capital requests. The initial list totaled \$1.8M. This total has been reduced. Some of the items have been eliminated. Others can be paid for out of department operating budgets and are included there. New vehicles will be financed via municipal leasing. The largest items are paving of roads and the community center parking lot.
- The school budgets were discussed.
 - Kim Andersson commented that expenses are up 2.44% and there was a decline in funding from the state, so the net increase is 6%.
 - Tom Joyce asked about the step increases in teacher pay. Kim Andersson explained that this was to maintain competitive pay and improve retention of experienced teachers.
 - Tom Joyce asked, and referenced questions submitted by Bob Nesbitt, about what can be done to improve the schools' rankings which are in the lower third of Maine

public schools. Kim Andersson commented on planned curriculum and program improvements.

- Dennis Simmons commented on the status of the Capital Fund. It was established in 2010 with \$10,355,000, and now has \$11,705,000. Total town indebtedness will be \$2.8M down from \$3.8M last year.

Meeting adjourned at 5:15PM.