

Town of Wiscasset
Budget Committee
Meeting Notes 3/26/2022

Budget Committee Attendees:

- Bill Maloney
- Katharine Martin-Savage
- Robert Jones
- Sharon Jacques
- Tom Joyce

- Dusty Jones
- Dennis Simmons
- Terry Heller

Minutes:

- Meeting called to order at 9:00 am on 3/26/2022 by Bill Maloney.

- 1st Order of Business: review of Waterfront Committee proposal for waterfront expansion and addition of boat slips.
 - Sue Robson, Chair of Waterfront Committee was present to answer questions about the proposal to seek grant money to make improvements to waterfront facilities. These improvements include adding bathroom facilities and upgrades to the harbormaster office, and adding 14 new boat slips that would be available for rent, and an end pier.
 - Tom Joyce asked how long the slips would be and the largest size boat that would be accommodated. Sue Robson said the slips would be 32' long. The committee reviewed a map of the proposed facilities.
 - Bill Maloney asked if the installation can be expanded if it is successful. Sue Robson said that the engineers were asked to keep expandability in mind but did not know how this would be done.
 - Bill Maloney expressed concern that people who currently rent moorings would move to the slips and the loss of revenue from the moorings would offset the new revenue. Sue Robson said the slips would encourage other boaters to come to Wiscasset.
 - Bill Maloney asked if the other boatyards in the area are at capacity and if there is excess demand that could come to Wiscasset. Sue Robson stated that the other boatyards are doing very well. Dennis Simmons stated that there is also a backlog of people waiting for moorings.
 - Tom Joyce expressed concern that the business plan in the proposal had a 9 year long payback. He said this is too long and that the \$174K investment the taxpayers are asked to pay should be paid off faster. He said he was not inclined to vote for this unless it has a payback closer to 3 years.

- Sue Robson said the goal of the proposal is to improve recreational boating opportunities. She said the purpose of the plan report is to show that there would be revenue, and there is a benefit to the town. She said the Waterfront Committee does not know what the operating costs will yet, and does not know where things will be in three or four years. She said their goal was to have enough information to apply for the grant, and the operational details will be figured out in the future.
 - Tom Joyce stated that he does not agree with this approach. He said that if a proposal has a long payback and many unknown details about the operating costs that is cause for concern. He said the costs could be much higher and the payback longer. He requested that the Waterfront Committee do another review of the plan and make improvements.
 - Sue Robson said that in the past the town voted for a bond for the commercial pier and this was successfully paid back over 10 years even though the commercial pier does not generate much revenue.
 - Terry Heller of the Select Board asked Tom Joyce for more detail about his concerns. He discussed these and said he had provided specific feedback on the financial proposal to the Waterfront Committee.
 - Dennis Simmons commented that the \$174,000 investment would not affect taxation this year. It would come out of the town's financial investment account. If the town applies for the grant, the town would have to commit in advance to spend the \$174K if the grant is approved.
 - Dennis Simmons said that if the Select Board decides more work should be done on this plan, the warrant article could be delayed until November to allow time for this work.
 - Terry Heller expressed strong support for the proposal and said we should not wait until November.
 - Katharine Martin-Savage commented that "haste makes waste". She said this is a big project and said it makes sense to hold off until November and have the Waterfront Committee take the time to work on the proposal and provide more specifics to the voters.
 - A map of the plan will be posted in the town office.
- 2nd Order of Business: open Budget discussion.
 - Bill Maloney asked if members had questions on any part of the proposed budget.
 - Tom Joyce asked about the request from community and charitable organizations and how those would be decided.
 - Dusty Jones suggested that the requests should be broken out so they could be voted on individually.
 - Motion by Bill Maloney to ask the Select Board to break out the community organization requests so they can be voted on individually
 - Seconded by Tom Joyce

- Approved 5-0
- Katharine Martin-Savage asked for clarity on some of the requests. Dennis Simmons provided information about Waldo Community Action, Lincoln County Television and other organizations requesting money.
- Katharine Martin-Savage said that she does not support giving the requested \$13,500 to Lincoln County Television when they do not broadcast our town meetings or school sports events, as they do for other towns. Other committee members supported this view.
- Tom Joyce asked if there were any major changes in the most recent draft of the budget that was received. Dennis Simmons commented on some changes that did not materially affect the earlier draft budget.
- Sharon Jacques asked about the Parks and Recreation budget. She expressed concern about the year-over-year increase. Dennis Simmons said electricity and heating oil have gone up roughly 40%. The swimming pool in particular costs a lot to heat. Sharon asked if fees should go up. The group discussed whether our fees are competitive and whether fees should be changed.
- Tom Joyce stated that the other towns that use the rec center do not pay much under our contracts with them. These include Alna, Edgecomb, Westport Island and Dresden. He asked if we have the ability to require them to pay more. Dennis said the Select Board and Parks and Recreation department can ask them to pay more.
 - Motion by Katharine Martin-Savage to have Tom Joyce represent the Budget Committee and recommend to the Select Board on 3/29/2022 that they increase the fees the other towns pay under contract for Parks and Recreation
 - Seconded by Sharon Jacques
 - Approved 4-0-1 abstaining
- Bill Maloney commented on the Capital Expense budget requests. Budget Committee members have spent substantial time reviewing these with the departments. He said many buildings and pieces of equipment have degraded and are in disrepair because we have not made investments in the past. He suggested that the town should use money in the investment account, which has done well, to pay for the full list of capital investments this year. Others expressed support for this.
 - Motion by Tom Joyce for the Budget Committee to recommend to the Select Board that on a one-time basis the town take from the investment account the full amount required to address the capital improvement requests for this year up to the \$1.8M estimate.
 - Seconded by Sharon Jacques
 - Approved 5-0

- Tom Joyce asked about the Airport budget and asked how the airport budget works. Dennis Simmons said that the grants we receive that fund much of the airport's costs are dependent on the town approving the airport budget. He also stated that the budget is now profitable and is not losing money. Dusty Jones stated that the airport is profitable.
 - Next steps were discussed for finalizing the Budget requests. The members stated that they would prefer to see the language of the warrant articles before voting on the budget items. There will be a joint meeting with the Select Board on 3/26/2022 and items may be voted on by both committees at that time.
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- Motion to adjourn by Katharine Martin-Savage
 - Seconded by Sharon Jacques
 - Approved 5-0

Meeting adjourned at 9:52 am