

**TOWN OF DEERFIELD
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
September 5, 2023
MINUTES**

PUBLIC MEETING – Board of Selectmen and Resident meeting on the 2024 Budget

Call to Order

5:30 – Chairman Pitman called the meeting to order

Present: Chairman Richard Pitman, Vice Chairman Fred McGarry, Selectman Steve Barry, Selectwoman Cynthia McHugh and Selectman Will Huebner.

Chairman Pitman states the selectmen will say their piece, 2 letters will be read into the minutes and then they will have the citizen's comments.

Selectman Barry states his piece first about wanting to hold a public hearing about the budget because a budget hasn't been passed in seven years even though prices for everything have increased each year. He would like to hear from the public as to why they are voting it down.

Selectman Huebner shares that everyone agrees that they want what's best for the town and he's there tonight to listen to what the citizens have to say and he would like everyone to work together.

Selectwoman McHugh states she's excited to everyone there and can't wait to see what the citizens would the BOS to do next.

Vice Chairman McGarry states he has many of the same feelings as Selectman Barry and he's pleased with the crowd size.

Chairman Pitman asks Vice Chairman McGarry to read the 2 letters into the minutes.

Letter 1:

"Members of the Board of Selectman,

I'm writing to express my discontentment and sadness regarding the possibility of decreasing funding for our recreation department and town library. These are two very valuable commodities for our small town. Outside of activities stemming from the library or the recreation department, Deerfield does not have any other means of gathering or activity aside of the annual 4-day fair. Our community continues to show demonstration of support for our school and to reduce funding for the library and rec (which also support our children in town) is completely hypocritical.

We moved our family to this lovely town to raise our children in a community with friends they will make for life. The recreation department is the only option for young children not yet in DCS to get involved in team sports. The rec also provides the only large group setting after school program, allowing working parents to work longer than what hours school is in session. In order to have money to pay increased taxes to pass a budget, our working families need to be able to work and have reasonable childcare.

Taking the funding from the rec department will do much more harm than good.

Our library is a historical figure in our town and needs continued support and funding to serve the community. Anne has done a wonderful job making many community activities and bringing the community together after a terrible pandemic.

Please reconsider your budget plans and continue to support our library and recreation department.

The Stankard Family"

Letter 2:

"Dear Members of the Select Board,

1 Thank you for holding a public hearing regarding the 2024 budget to get input from people in own. I am
2 submitting this letter, as I am unable to attend this evening, but I hope the evening is filled with
3 enlightening and fruitful discussion.

4 As you well know, the Select Board has the challenging task of building a budget that reflects the values,
5 needs, and desires of the people who reside in town. I am certain that if you ask 4,000 different people,
6 you will get 4,000 different responses about what should be a priority in the budget and what services are
7 unnecessary. Inevitably, every person in town has different priorities, different lifestyles, and different
8 values, and it is your job to ensure all those perspectives are taken into account when trying to create a
9 budget that will be approved by the voters.

10 It is disheartening that the majority of people who vote down the Town budget year after year do not
11 attend BOS/MBC meetings or the Town deliberative session. Last year, for instance, 765 people voted
12 against the budget, yet there were only several dozen people who attended Town meeting where they
13 could have voiced concerns about - and make motions to adjust - particular budget items. I do not have a
14 suggestion to figure out why the budget hasn't been approved in many years; however, decreasing well-
15 utilized services (such as the library, parks & rec, the transfer station, etc.) in the name of passing a
16 budget would be an enormous disservice to the people in town.

17 The Select Board should be at the helm of changing the Town's understanding and support of the budget.
18 It is the role of the BOS to steer the ship and propose a budget that will be passed by the town, yet there
19 are Select Board members who continue to be very negative about services/programming and do not
20 seem to consider the community as whole. Making campaign promises to decrease the town budget,
21 when the department budgets are generally carefully crafted and do not, in my opinion, contain excessive
22 bloat, is not a virtue and does not help to get the budget passed. Rather than continuing to promise lower
23 taxes (without an actual plan to do so), I wish people running for this office would focus on their duty to
24 provide - and raise/appropriate funds for - necessary and valued services to the community and not on
25 cutting those services/costs to get elected. It sets the BOS and the town budget up for failure when the
26 only focus is decreasing cost and not on showing the benefits to the community of providing these
27 services. It is my hope that more BOS members will avail themselves of the wonderful programming and
28 services around town to get a better understanding of how vital these resources are to the community.
29 The Town needs budget cheerleaders – it does NOT need more negativity about taxes and providing
30 needed services.

31 We live in a community, and we need to start acting like a community. Services and programing that
32 support our community and make our community stronger – including our wonderful library and parks &
33 rec department – are at the top of my personal priority list.

34 Sincerely, Kendra Cohen"

35
36 **Public Questions/Comments:**

37 -Kathy Shigo. Ms. Shigo explains her appreciation of all the hard work the BOS has been doing for the
38 past 7 to 8 years. She goes on to explain her view of budget and where she sees over spending and
39 where the process could be improved.

40
41 Selectman Barry asks the audience for a show of hands if the town should be paying employees the
42 prevailing wage and most of the people in the room raise their hands.

43
44 -Kevin Verville. McCarron Road. Mr. Verville asks the BOS if they have data on employee wages showing
45 the town employees are not paid the prevailing wage.

46 Selectman Barry explains that it was voted down to do the wage scale study but in to him he does feel in
47 some areas the town are employees are being paid less than the going rate.

48 Mr. Verville explains he feels a third-party vendor is not needed for a wage survey but someone could
49 research all the town reports and see what other towns are paying their employees rather than insinuate
50 that not all of Deerfield's employees are being paid the prevailing wage. He would like to see it proven
51 and then adjust from there if needed. He doesn't feel it's salaries that are causing budget issues.
52

1 -Debbie Kelley. South Road. Ms. Kelley states her appreciation of the BOS and their time and efforts. She
2 asks if the community has a vision of what they need and want. She explains her how she feels the town
3 could work together whether it's right or wrong and she would really like to see the town work together
4 and take politics out of it. She feels that if the budget gets cut or keeps being voted down the town is
5 going downhill and it cannot move forward. She reiterates her appreciation for BOS's work and that this
6 meeting tonight is the beginning of something positive for the town.
7

8 Chairman Pitman asks if any Board members would to say anything.

9 Selectman Barry states he doesn't recall the BOS being against anything for the library and that the Parks
10 and Rec department is mostly funded by their programs and he hasn't heard a word about cutting any of
11 their funding.

12 Selectman Huebner encourages the Board to listen and then discuss.
13

14 -Harriet Cady. Ms. Cady reminds the BOS that there had been a meeting previously about what do with
15 the money left in the stimulus fund and the majority wanted to see it spent on the roads and she agrees
16 the roads need the attention and they need to be in the budget. She then explains the waste she does
17 see in the budget. She goes on to explain that she looks for what and why money is spent in the budget
18 in a certain way. She reiterates the roads needing to be a priority.
19

20 -Jack Hutchinson. Mr. Hutchison states what he feels one of the things is happening is they are trying to
21 resolve a process issue with content and he explains why by providing factual data. He goes onto to
22 explain what he feels could possibly help in having budgets pass based on the data.
23

24 -Skip Kelley. South Road and Pond View Lane. Mr. Kelley agrees with Mr. Hutchinson and goes onto to
25 explain why but would also like to know if the town people voting the budget down understand inflation
26 and now the town is far behind that it can't keep up. He moves onto the library and parks and rec topic
27 and asks what the tax effect their budgets have on the tax payers and Chairman Pitman states they'll get
28 back to him with the accurate numbers.

29 Selectman Barry provides the information that to reduce the tax by \$1.00 they would have to remove
30 \$781,000.00 from the budget and \$78,000.00 to reduce it by \$0.10. He explains what it would take to
31 reduce the budget this much and how he feels it's just not possible.

32 Mr. Kelley responds based on this that it doesn't save the town any money to cut little onesie twosie
33 things.

34 Chairman Pitman states, take the positive look and it's going to add a dollar to cover that \$781,000.00.
35

36 -Madelyn Foulkes. Nottingham Road. Ms. Foulkes provides what she feels warrant articles are good for
37 and what she doesn't want to see move from the budget to warrant articles.
38

39 -Jeff Shute. Pleasant Hill Road. Chairman of the Parks and Rec Committee. Mr. Shute explains the rumor
40 he heard about cutting parks and rec. He explains the park and rec budget and then goes over where
41 money is lost and what should be in the budget because of this. He feels most of the audience present at
42 the meeting voted for the budget so he's not sure how to reach the people that vote it down. He thanks
43 the BOS for all they do.
44

45 -Maureen Quinn. Nottingham Road. MBC Member. She explains the process of each year having the
46 department heads come in and justify their budgets and she has never felt they have ever proposed
47 anything extravagant. She feels the people that keep voting the budget down should come and listen to
48 the presentations so they will understand what they are saying no to. She describes what she would like
49 to see change and invites the people who vote the budget down to come to the MBC meetings.
50

51 -Robert Prieto. South Road. Mr. Prieto acknowledges the hard job the BOS and MBC have to get a
52 budget passed. He explains why he feels the BOS and MBC should put out more information in other
53 ways than just the meetings and he encourages them to do so.
54

55 -Rebecca Hutchinson. Lang Road. Ms. Hutchison starts by agreeing with some of the previous speakers
56 on the topic of parks and rec and explains why. She ends by asking the people on social media who

1 express disdain or frustration to ask the question what do you not want the town to spend money on and
2 if you want the town spending less; you need to explain what the town shouldn't be spending money on.
3

4 -Gigi Klipa. Candia Road. Ms. Klipa brings it back to something Ms. Kelley said about vision and asks if
5 there is anything out there through, possibly, UNH or the state to help the town create a vision for the
6 town because she feels the town is stuck in a negativity bias and explains why and how a coming
7 together of the community to discuss the positives and a vision for the future would help pull the town out
8 of this bias and maybe UNH or the state or an organization could come in to help do this. She lastly offers
9 her assistance in looking into this.
10

11 -Nancy Shute. Pleasant Hill Road. Ms. Shutes thanks the BOS and then goes on to speak to the point
12 Selectman Barry made about what needs to come out of the budget to impact the taxes. She explains her
13 view point and would like to know where BOS sees there could be possible cuts and if there is no room
14 for cuts how do help people to understand that.
15

16 Selectman Barry states he has an answer to Mr. Kelley's questions. Library budget last year was
17 \$154,186.00 which is about \$0.20 on the tax rate.
18

19 -Patrice Kilham. Ridge Road. Ms. Kilham asks if there a 5-, 10-, or 20-year plan for the town and
20 Selectman Barry states he knows there was one several years ago but he's not sure about now. Ms.
21 Kilham would like to see things being down off the plan rather than having the plan created and left to sit
22 until it's time to make a new one. She goes on to explain what she feels could help the town like
23 marketing the budget to the town showing it's adequate and it's what the town needs.
24

25 -Pete Schibbelhute. Planning Board. Mr. Schibbelhute states the planning board is working on the master
26 plan update and then they will be working on a capital improvement plan.
27

28 Chairman Pitman asks how many would like to come back in November and almost everyone raises their
29 hand.
30

31 -Kevin Verville. McCarron Road. Mr. Verville states that he believes his tax bill is comprised and 4 parts
32 and lists them out and asks if anyone can give him the percentage break down.
33 Selectman Barry gives the stats. On a tax rate of \$18.32; \$1.81 goes to the town (\$0.12 for every dollar
34 paid in taxes), \$0.80 goes to the county, \$14.50 goes to local education and \$1.21 goes to state
35 education.
36

37 Vice Chairman McGarry explains that the planning board will be having a charette either this fall or early
38 next year. They will be holding it because of the grant money they received for creating a master plan. He
39 then goes on to explain what he was hoping for from wage survey and why. He also felt that the cost of
40 the survey from a third party was not excessive.
41

42 Chairman Pitman closes the public meeting and invites everyone back later in the year for more budget
43 discussion. Lastly, he expresses his appreciation for everyone coming out.
44
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46
47

*The Minutes were transcribed and respectfully submitted by Randi Long, Recording Secretary
Pending approval by the Board of Selectmen*