

1 **Minutes of**

2
3 **Litchfield Budget Committee Meeting**

4
5 **Held on March 27, 2009**

6
7 The Litchfield Budget Committee held a meeting on Thursday March 27, 2009 at
8 Campbell High School, 1 Highlander Court, Litchfield, NH 03052.

9
10 **PRESENT:** B Lemire (Chairman), J Harte (Vice Chairman), M Falzone, R Peeples, B
11 Spencer, P Parker, J Guerette (School Board Representative), G Lambert (Board of
12 Selectmen Representative)

13
14 The following were also at the meeting: F Byron (Board of Selectmen),
15 P Jewett (Board of Selectmen), Senator B Devries, Attorney M Carroll (General Counsel,
16 Local Government Center)

17
18 Chairman Lemire opened the meeting at 7:01 p.m. He began by welcoming new
19 members of the Budget Committee, Messrs. Jason Guerrette and Bill Spencer and
20 members of the Board of Selectmen. He then introduced everyone to the guest speakers,
21 Senator Betsi Devries and Attorney Maura Carroll, General Counsel for the LGC.

22
23 1. **PUBLIC INPUT**

24 There was no public input.

25
26 2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

27 **MOTION:** by Mr. Falzone

28 *Move to approve the minutes of the Budget Committee meeting on January 6, 2009*

29 **SECOND:** Mr. Harte

30 **VOTE:** 6-0-2 (Messrs Spencer and Guerrette abstained)

31 **The motion carried.**

32
33 **MOTION:** by Mr. Harte

34 *Move to approve the minutes of the Budget Committee meeting on January 13,*
35 *2009*

36 **SECOND:** Mr. Falzone

37 **VOTE:** 6-0-2 (Messrs Spencer and Guerrette abstained)

38 **The motion carried.**

39
40 **MOTION:** by Mr. Falzone

41 *Move to approve the minutes of the Budget Committee meeting and Public Hearing*
42 *on January 15, 2009*

43 **SECOND:** Mr. Harte

44 **VOTE:** 6-0-2 (Messrs Spencer and Guerrette abstained)

45 **The motion carried.**

46

1 **3. STIMULUS PACKAGE PRESENTATION**

2 Chairman Lemire introduced Senator Devries and Attorney Carroll, thanking them
3 for coming to explain how Litchfield might benefit from dollars in the Federal
4 Stimulus Package. He reported that Senator Devries, Selectman Byron, Mr. Guerrette
5 and himself had met recently with Mr. 'Bud' Fitch in Concord for an informational
6 session regarding the stimulus package and the guests this evening were here to
7 provide further information and clarification. Chairman Lemire also reported that
8 Representative Ober was unable to attend this evening, but that she had agreed to put
9 some information together for the Budget Committee and the Board of Selectmen.
10 He handed over to Selectman Byron who spoke briefly about the meeting in Concord,
11 stating it would help to keep the lines of communication open between the town of
12 Litchfield and Concord to enable the town to take advantage of any funding which
13 might be available to them.

14
15 Senator Devries handed out a copy of information which is available on the state web
16 site on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 at
17 www.nh.gov/recovery, explaining the information changes daily and the package
18 shows all the grants flowing into New Hampshire as of yesterday. She reported the
19 Local Government Centers have agreed to work with the state and the municipalities
20 to help in any way they can, and spoke about some deadlines which were missed by
21 the town. In particular she spoke about the fact that Pennichuck Water has applied
22 for some funding on behalf of the town.

23
24 Senator Devries reported the April deadline for the COPS (Community Oriented
25 Policing) program is approaching and she was concerned the town does not miss this
26 deadline. She suggested holding additional meetings to keep town officials abreast of
27 things as state officials become aware of them.

28
29 Attorney Carroll handed out some information which is geared to municipalities and
30 available on the LGC web site, reporting this has descriptions of some of the
31 programs and monies coming to New Hampshire, along with the deadlines for
32 application. She stated the town needs to be familiar with the FedConnect link and
33 obtaining a Duns ID and should register for the central contractor registry. She
34 explained it takes three weeks to obtain a number, and encouraged going online as
35 quickly as possible to obtain the numbers so that the preliminary work is done. She
36 spoke of deadlines for DOT and DES water programs which are already past, but that
37 decisions have not yet been made by DES. She also stated the rankings will be on the
38 web site and there will be a public hearing on April 3, 2009, and a written comment
39 period through April 10, and the DES will not make determinations until after that
40 period.

41
42 Attorney Carroll reported there is not enough money to go around for DOT projects
43 in New Hampshire and provided information on the qualifying process. She also
44 explained that potentially New Hampshire could obtain more funding if other states
45 have not committed in the timescale set by the Federal Government. Attorney Carroll
46 reported there are a lot of other programs but they are just gathering information on

1 these now, and there is also funding which will be competitively obtained, explaining
2 those who are 'entitlement' communities i.e. those communities receiving a specific
3 amount of money under the Federal formula cannot then apply competitively.
4

5 Senator Devries referred to some of the grants mentioned in the handout and the
6 discussion which had taken place with Mr. Fitch regarding the possibility of
7 Litchfield applying for grants for weatherization of buildings, stating she believed
8 Litchfield has a compelling case to make with the elementary school for grants
9 relating to public buildings as well as transportation. She stated she is currently
10 unsure whether there are any strings attached to these particular grants, and she will
11 continue to look at the details accompanying this pot of money. Chairman Lemire
12 stated Dr. Cutler intended pursuing this. In response to a query from Mr. Harte as to
13 whether funding for schools will be through the Department of Education (as there
14 had been some negative feedback from that department pertaining to GMS), Senator
15 Devries stated she would have to check this detail. Selectman Jewett pointed out that
16 replacement of the windows at GMS is in the school budget.
17

18 Senator Devries reported that legislation has already cleared the Senate and the House
19 to put and additional town meeting or deliberative session in place for communities to
20 discuss the impact on their budgets of the stimulus funding. She confirmed for
21 Chairman Lemire that the 'no means no' provision would not be tripped as this
22 additional funding was not there originally and because there can now be an
23 additional town meeting and election. She pointed out the town will have to look at
24 the additional costs which may be involved and that they may not know with certainty
25 whether they have been selected in time for the town meeting. There followed a
26 discussion with Attorney Carroll regarding RSA 3195 and its application and the
27 process involving the voters.
28

29 There was a discussion regarding the intent of the COPS (Community Oriented
30 Policing) program and Ms. Carroll referred the Committee to the website for further
31 clarification on the definition of terms used in the program. Senator Devries
32 suggested Chief O'Brien might wish to contact the police chief in Manchester who
33 has been involved in this. Ms. Carroll pointed out there will be a lot of accountability
34 which goes along with the program, and pointed to information in the handout
35 regarding how COPS works. She stated there will be \$5 million coming to New
36 Hampshire which can be used for personnel and equipment.
37

38 Senator Devries spoke about problems with the money for education, mentioning
39 dollars for Title One and Special Education. She also spoke about the 'cliff effect'
40 with the programs when they come to an end. She cited an example relating to
41 Goffstown and a special education program to keep students 'in district'.
42

43 Senator Devries updated the Committee regarding the re-instatement of Meals and
44 Rooms revenue sharing, and the benefit to Litchfield, and stated she is tracking
45 education adequacy to ensure the town does not lose this.
46

1 Chairman Lemire informed the Committee that Representative Ober will provide
2 insight on the state budget when she gets the opportunity.

3
4 Senator Devries handed out information on the Litchfield budget meeting which took
5 place on March 26, 2009, and discussed its contents. Attorney Carroll confirmed the
6 governor's budget will be out next week, and she clarified for Mr. Spencer what the
7 fiscal year is for the state. Senator Devries reported she has not heard how the
8 Governor is going to deal with the shortfall in the budget. She also spoke about the
9 impact to the town of the reduction in revenue sharing for the NHRS (New
10 Hampshire Retirement System) - another \$7,000 for the town and \$36,000 for the
11 school district. Senator Devries stated she was tracking things to see what might be
12 available to reduce the overall shortfall. Chairman Lemire explained that increases in
13 health insurance benefits and employee salaries are not funded in the default budget.

14
15 Senator Devries stated she thought the figure received for meals and rooms will
16 reduce due to the economy. There was a discussion regarding meals and room with
17 Attorney Carroll explaining the 1994 meals and rooms statute. She stated she thought
18 Litchfield would get their existing amount through the next biennium.

19
20 Senator Devries stated she needed to continue to track the finance committees.

21
22 Mr. Spencer clarified it was his understanding that the school district might be able
23 to offset the loss due to the cut in NHRS through funding for the elementary school.
24 He also spoke about how the school might help the town reduce the tax rate. Mr.
25 Harte spoke about the JAG program possibly helping with the police prosecutor.

26
27 Senator Devries advised that towns still need to advocate for themselves and it is
28 critical that they still have conversations with her and the House delegation to see
29 what funding they can come up with, and it was critical to scrutinize every program
30 of the stimulus package to find dollars.

31
32 Selectman Byron stated Litchfield would qualify for the transportation enhancement
33 program for the bike path, explaining they have applied for a grant to pay for 100%,
34 monies for 2011 are being brought forward and they are ready to go out to bid on
35 now. In response to a query from Chairman Lemire, Attorney Carroll stated
36 Litchfield would not qualify for the community development block grant, but
37 suggested checking out whether there is anything they would qualify for.

38
39 Senator Devries reported the energy grant has a transportation component and
40 suggested to Selectman Byron that the town dual submit. She also confirmed there
41 would be a program on April 7 to help communities understand how they can utilize
42 the dollars and has voiced concern to the Congressional representatives that there is
43 not much in the stimulus package to help New Hampshire. There was a discussion on
44 the penalty for not following the guidelines. It was confirmed that there was no 'cliff
45 effect' for the JAG grant and there was a discussion about COPS and how the town
46 can use it.

1
2 Chairman Lemire raised a question on the NHRS contribution and there followed a
3 discussion which included information on HB2, the discussions going on at the state
4 level regarding employee contributions, areas of the system which may be changed
5 and the implications of the possible changes to the retirement contribution.
6

7 Chairman Lemire clarified that the Governor's budget will cross over into the Senate
8 on April 9, 2009. He suggested maintaining a dialog with Senator Devries in order to
9 update the Boards and the Committee at their April meetings. In response to Mr.
10 Guerrette's query about when money will be available for COPS if the town's
11 application is successful, Senator Devries suggested following the links on the
12 websites for additional information.
13

14 Senator Devries suggested having another session with Mr. Bud Fitch prior to the
15 Budget Committee's next meeting, and suggested the town apply for grants/funding
16 even if they are unsure about them as they can decide not to take the dollars if
17 granted. She recommended everyone ask questions of their congressional officials
18 regarding what can be done to use dollars at the local level.
19

20 Chairman Lemire thanked Senator Devries and Attorney Carroll for coming along
21 and sharing information, and voiced the appreciation of the Committee and the Board
22 of Selectmen. Senator Devries suggested including the school district in the next
23 meeting.

24 ***Action: Mr. Guerrette agreed to take this to the School Board.***

25 There was a discussion about the school district helping the town if there is inequality
26 in obtaining dollars from the stimulus package.
27

28 **4. MEMBER INPUT**

29 Mr. Falzone asked whether figures are available for the Committee showing the
30 current status of the budget.

31 Chairman Lemire confirmed he has a copy of the default budget to distribute to
32 members. ***Action: Chairman Lemire***

33 He then requested a status report from Selectman Lambert who reported the Board of
34 Selectmen has requested that department heads look for cuts. He confirmed they
35 have found approximately \$52,000 to cut and the Board will vote on these, clarifying
36 that half of these are from the fire department, and the rest are from roads.
37

38 Mr. Harte asked what the process will be regarding how the Board will deal with the
39 cuts they make, and Selectman Lambert stated he is unsure whether money will be
40 moved out of Contingency or left there for the time being. There followed a
41 discussion to clarify what Selectman Lambert had just stated, with Chairman Lemire
42 clarifying some of the figures.
43

44 Mr. Spencer asked if the Board of Selectmen will have the default budget resolved
45 within the next month, and Selectman Lambert reported he was unsure about this.

1 Mr. Spencer requested from Selectman Lambert the latest expense report and the final
2 figures for 2007 and 2008 prior to the next meeting. *Action: Selectman Lambert*

3
4 Chairman Lemire stated he wished to raise a procedural question, asking why the
5 police prosecutor was in the default budget in the first place, and Selectman Lambert
6 stated he was unsure. Chairman Lemire requested that Selectman Lambert ascertain
7 how the Board intends to deal with the prosecutor position now. *Action: Selectman*
8 *Lambert*

9
10 There followed a discussion on the police cruiser, with Selectman Lambert reporting
11 the Board of Selectmen has asked the police chief to wait as long as he can before
12 obtaining this. He also stated the Board felt that leasing the cruiser is not an option
13 due to the high mileage done on cruisers.

14
15 In response to a query from Mr. Spencer regarding lawyers' fees, Selectman Lambert
16 explained there had been a court judgment awarding the town pay these. He
17 explained how this had come about and what the fees are for. He clarified these were
18 not a budgeted expense, and town counsel is checking out where the money should
19 come from.

20
21 Mr. Guerrette reported he has requested an agenda item for the next School Board
22 meeting to discuss how the school district can help the town keep the tax rate down.
23 Mr. Spencer requested that Mr. Guerrette send the Committee electronically the
24 figures for the school district actuals and a hard copy of the latest enrolment figures.
25 *Action: Mr. Guerrette*

26
27 Mr. Spencer also requested a copy of the 2009/10 school budget. *Action: Mrs.*
28 *Maxwell agreed to give her copy of the school budget to Mr. Spencer at the next*
29 *meeting.*

30
31 **5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

32 Chairman Lemire asked for motions to elect officers on the Committee for the
33 coming year.

34
35 **MOTION:** by Mr. Falzone

36 *Move to re-elect Mr. Lemire chairman of the Litchfield Budget Committee*

37 **SECOND:** Mr. Spencer

38 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

39 **The motion carried unanimously.**

40
41 **MOTION:** by Mr. Spencer

42 *Move to re-elect Mr. Harte vice chairman of the Litchfield Budget Committee*

43 **SECOND:** Mr. Peeples

44 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

45 **The motion carried unanimously.**

46

1 Chairman Lemire thanked the members for their confidence in him. Mr. Harte also
2 thanked the members for their confidence in him and for their work on the Committee
3 for the town. He spoke about the Committee supporting the local officials when they
4 find ways to reduce spending and about acting as a sounding board.

5
6 Chairman Lemire stated he has ideas for the budget schedules for this year. There
7 followed a discussion on how the Committee will move forward for the year.

8
9 • **Upcoming meetings**

10 ○ April 23, 2009

11 Mr. Peeples announced he would be unable to attend the next meeting.

12
13 **MOTION:** by Mr. Harte

14 ***Move to adjourn***

15 **SECOND:** Mr. Peeples

16 **VOTE:** 8-0-0

17 **The motion carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.**

18
19
20
21
22
23
24 **Minutes by:**

Mrs. Sandra Maxwell (Recording Secretary)