

**Hill Budget Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
November 3, 2021**

Final/Approved 11/12/2021

**Present:** Carol Asher, Wendy Rosa, Joann Irving, Betty Hanks, Don Moyer, Thomas Seymour, Chris Vlitas, Paula McDonough, Marshall Bennett.

**Absent:**, Thomas Pavelka (Prior Notice), Paul Meyerhoefer.

**Public:** Lynn Christopher and Frank Marsh (Representatives Library)  
Shaun Bresnahan Jr (Representative Cemetery Trustees)

**Meeting Minutes:**

Called to order 7:00 PM

After brief review of Agenda, Carol Asher posed a question to clarify the role of the Budget Committee with respect to the nature of asking questions and the scope to which the Budget Committee is to operate. Is it limited accepting the budgets as presented by each department or do they have the mandate to propose changes. The question embodies a core exploration of what process is to be engaged in to reach a decision.

The Chair, Mr. Moyer, stated that above all, the Budget Committee is charged with asking every question that could be asked and endeavouring to get those queries answered to their fullest.

Carol Asher relayed that it was her observation that last year's proceedings did not apply consistent review and process to all Departments equally.

Mr. Moyer outlined that this year the process would strive to hear all Departments fully. In addition, the Committee would provisionally vote on each presentation afterwards, with the understanding that it was a non-binding vote. That vote would be based upon information received and debated to date. The proviso being that it was done in good faith that there would be no surprises in presentations yet to come. The reality being, should an unforeseen expenditure come to light, previously agreed upon departmental budgets may need to be revisited. This reconsideration would be in light of a need to adjust spending priorities and the ask for one Department to forgo spending in lieu of need elsewhere.

Carol Asher reiterates that no final approval is given in the votes immediately following any particular Department. Rather, that final vote on Budget Committee recommendations would come toward the end of the process closer to the Public Hearings.

There was an in depth discussion about the nature of a process which would allow deliberation in the absence of Department Officials. Carol Asher opined that it might be best if a representative was always present in Committee deliberations. Mr. Moyer countered that if the Budget Committee was truly doing their job, they would ask all the questions necessary to deliberate during presentations. Therefore, the possibility of a member bringing up an issue that would blindside or otherwise contravene ruminations, should be almost improbable. It was relayed that the Board should be afforded an ability to explore

appropriations among themselves. Again, providing that no new aspects were introduced to sway the decision making process. In the mix of this discussion, Chair alluded to the fact that this was to be a point on the Agenda further into the meeting. He welcomed the discussion in advance, and it served to fully discuss that item in advance.

It was at this point that the Budget Committee recognised Frank Marsh to present the Library's Budget for next year.

Mr. Marsh found himself between a rock and a hard place; neither were of his doing. The initial reporting was that the Library found itself some 500.00 dollars in the red; if you were doing the simplest of accounting. The reality of the situation is complicated by the fact that Mr. Marsh has inherited a quagmire. This was finally made clear a ways into questioning. The takeaway is that the Library is in the midst of rectifying a dereliction of duty with respect to their Treasurer. To fully understand the situation, the Budget Committee was schooled in the unique relationship that exists between the Town and its institution.

Unlike any other Department, the Library is its own comptroller. Each year, the Town issues a lump sum for its operation and then must leave all decisions to the Library Trustees. They alone are to decide how to divvy up the bottom line budgeted. They alone juggle cost of books against wage increases for our Librarian. They also have their own banking accounts from which they pay out all the invoices to operate and wages to staff the Library. Unique indeed.

Mr. Marsh was completely transparent in that the Library was indeed spending more this year than they were allotted from the voting that approved the Town's expenditures back in May. A fair amount of time was spent trying to figure out how the library could spend more than they were slated. The answer was quite illuminating. Because the Library is their own entity, and because they have a savings account, they were able to offset spending of their own accord. In the lurch was a grand total of about 500.00 dollars.

Most of this overrun was due to invoices from the previous year, which had not been attentively paid, having to be rectified now. A side discussion arrived at the understanding that the audit done in September would reveal that under spending would be documented, which, would in turn justify the overages expressed as presented. It was assured by Mr. Marsh that next year would not have these issues, as the Treasures woes were being addressed. To that end, the public of Hill is being implored to step up and volunteer to completely fill all the positions available with the Library Trustees. Have no illusions, there are positions vacant, and the public needs to step up and fill them.

Discussion then moved to illuminate the positive things happening with the Library. Lynn Christopher wrote and was successful in award of a grant to help in adding to the Children's collection. Regardless of audience, Lynn engages in collection development of our Library. The collection is reviewed for pertinence, and books are slated for the book sale. Then, funds are devoted to purchase books to fill the shelves with materials that are in need currently. In fact, most of the overrun was in pursuit of new books.

The Committee then moved on to scrutinise wages. Indeed, the proffered budget included a pay raise. Cleaving to its commitment to understand wage increases over time, it was discussed that this wage increase does not come on the heels of one had last year or even the year before. Averaged over the last five years, it was agreed that this year's increase was warranted.

Carol Asher asked how the Friends of the Library fit in with operations, and the existence of the Library Trustees. Lynn enumerated that they do a great number of things to advance the mission of the Library, including paying for Museum passes, Materials acquisitions as well as other costs. It was her hope that they also were recognized for their contributions and offsets of taxation. Carol Asher wondered how this was conveyed to the Town at large. In the discussion that followed it was outlined that the Friends of the Library operated as a Non-Profit, therefore, their inclusion into consideration of Town appropriations was not possible. It was agreed that any write up of the Library, including the Town Report, could include and highlight the definite contributions made by the Friends of the Library.

Once again the Committee turned to the bottom line increase of \$1200.00 in the yearly proposed budget. Mrs. McDonough asked a question about the bills not paid in 2020. Mr. Marsh was again limited in his ability to answer, given his taking over of the financial aspects, which were in disarray from his appointment. Talk doubled back to that fact that given the nature of the Library's divorced finances, which in total are robust due to the nature of their bank balances, this hiccup should be momentary.

Dialogue finally focused on the bottom line increase from last year of 1200.00 dollars total in budget. As most of this was due to an acceptable increase of wages, the non-binding vote was unanimous in approving the Total Budget of \$33,791.00 for the 2022 FY.

It was at this point that the Budget Committee turned to Shaun Bresnahan Jr, who presented the Budget for the Cemetery Trustees.

Our Cemeteries are the least contentious of expenditures each year. How could they be otherwise at about 6K per year?

The biggest chunk of that money is spent in mowing. The Town currently has a contract with a Landscaper in Town to Mow four of the Ten currently recognized Cemeteries in existence in Town. This accounts for 4,450.00 dollars of the total. Mr. Bresnahan assured the Committee that the mowing contractor would do the same work for the same total again next year. This would include a Spring and Fall Clean Up in addition to multiple mowings per month in the height of the grass growing season. It was an agreement between the Selectboard and the Contractor, that many of the mowings scheduled would coincide with major holidays. This should translate to Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day etc. be found with freshly attended to Cemeteries.

If there would be a downturn to this conversation it would lie in the reality of having a hard time finding people to do the other work involved in keeping our memorial lots tended. Of greatest concern was the need to scrape and repaint fences. The Trustees have allotted for expending money so, yet have had a difficult time in locating a contractor willing to labor on a Cemetery. Members of the Budget Committee lofted the ideas of involving the community to accomplish the need. Suggestions ranged from Pizza drive to get volunteers, to seeking the involvement of the Hill Village Church, to possibly getting students and Teachers from the Jennie D. Blake School to volunteer.

Carol Asher expressed her thanks to those that served on the Trustess. That would be Steve Rosen, Lisa Seymour and Shaun Bresnahan Jr.

Selectboard member Seymour then asked if the number was sufficient for the Trustees to discharge their duties. Mr. Bresnehan reiterated that the biggest problem was trying to find persons willing to do the work involved.

The Committee then gave a non-binding approval, unanimously of the \$6,450.00 requested to fund the Trustees of the Cemeteries for FY 2022.

The following Thirty Five Minutes were taken up editing and approving the minutes from September 22, 2021.

At approximately 8:40 PM, the Budget Committee returned to the afore discussed, now on the Agenda proper, nature and scope of Committee deliberation. It again covered the need for and pursuance of a non-binding vote at each meeting, which would re-visited before the Town Hearing Proper.

Ms. Irving raised and clarified that especially considering the deliberations to be had on the School District, that time between presentations could be taken for each member to consider and form opinions on that budget. It was agreed this was to be an operative norm.

Discussions then became highly philosophical as to the possibility of a conflict of interest being present in which a Department Head also served as a member of the Budget Committee. The merits of recusal were broached. It was entered into discussion that this wades into the subjective, and while Mr. Vlitaz felt that Rubicon had been crossed in the past, it was not a condition that presently afflicted the Budget Committee.

At this point, Carol Asher moved for an adjournment. It was seconded by Marshall Bennett. Accordingly the Budget Committee adjourned at 8:50 PM.