

TOWN OF BEDFORD
BUDGETARY TOWN MEETING
March 13, 2019

The Bedford Budgetary Town Meeting was held on Wednesday, March 13, 2019 at the Bedford High School auditorium. Present on the stage were Bill Duschatko (TC Chairman), Melissa Stevens (TC Vice Chairwoman), Councilors: Chris Bandazian, David Gilbert, Phil Greazzo, Kelleigh Murphy, and Catherine Rombeau, Rick Sawyer – Town Manager, Tammy Penny – Finance Director, and Gloria MacVane – Town Clerk.

Moderator Bill Klein opened the meeting at 7:00pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Moderator Klein introduced on the stage Bill Duschatko – Council Chairman who then introduced Vice Chairwoman Melissa Stevens, Rick Sawyer – Town Manager, and Tammy Penny – Finance Director, and Gloria MacVane – Town Clerk. Moderator Klein introduced Councilor Chris Bandazian who then introduced Dave Gilbert – Town Councilor, Catherine Rombeau – Town Councilor, Kelleigh Murphy – Town Councilor, and Phil Greazzo – Town Councilor. Councilor Murphy's son, Finn, joined her on stage.

Moderator Klein thanked everyone who came out to vote on Tuesday and those who worked at the polls including Brian Shaughnessy, Brian Harjula, Bob Goodale, and Gloria MacVane. He commented on the great job Lori Radke, Rick Sawyer and Gloria MacVane did together to keep the Town Clerk office running smoothly and without any hitches. Gloria has done a great job and even put together a guide book for the new incoming Town Clerk.

Moderator Klein mentioned newly elected positions including Sally Kellar – Town Clerk, Pamela VanArsdale – Library Trustee, and Mac McMahan – Trustee of the Trust Funds.

Moderator Klein stated that they are using the same rules as last year and if anyone had any questions they should ask his Chief Assistant, Brian Shaughnessy. They are discussing the two Articles that were not covered at the Elections. When people come up to speak at the mics, they are to have their voter card with them. They should make sure their name is on the card and that they have signed it. They need to also clearly state their name and address and address their comments through the moderator. They will only be talking about one item at a time. If someone makes an amendment to an article, they will discuss that only. Until they've acted on that amendment, they won't be going back to the article or discussing anything else. Anything else would be out of order. On any amendment or motion they act on, following the taking of a vote on anything, he's going to ask for a motion to restrict reconsideration.

Article 5. – Capital Reserve Fund-Projects and Equipment

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate **\$1,225,350** to be deposited into various Capital Reserve Funds. **\$1,195,950** to come from new taxation and **\$29,400** to come from the Sewer fund.

Moderator Klein recognized Chairman Duschatko to move **Article 5** as printed and presented in the Budgetary Town Meeting Handout.

MOTION by Chairman Duschatko to move Article 5 as written in the Town Meeting Handout with a total appropriation of \$1,225,350. Seconded by Councilor Stevens.

MOTION by Bill Dermody, Birchwood Circle, to approve the budget as presented by the Town Council without further discussion.

Moderator Klein stated that he would like to give people the opportunity to discuss it.

Mr. Dermody stated that there is precedent to for that at previous meetings of the Budgetary Town Meeting. This is not something new.

Moderator Klein recognized the motion and would call for a vote on the motion on the floor and accept the article and vote on it.

Bill Greiner, 12 Aspen Lane, respectfully disagreed with Mr. Dermody's motion. He thought that would cut off debate and discussion and the chance to make any adjustments, up or down. It disenfranchises the people that showed up.

William Carter, 100 New Boston Road, stated that he had an amendment. Moderator Klein stated that it's out of order. They are only discussing the motion to limit discussion on it.

Charlie Fairman, 243 Liberty Hill Road, disagreed with cutting off discussion and hoped that they would not pass that.

Frank Sledjeski, 2 Carolina Lane, thought the people that came should have an opportunity to speak to the items they are talking about.

Vote taken – Motion failed.

William Carter, 100 New Boston Road, noticed that in the handout the Sewer Catch Basin Clnr Reserve was listed twice. He wanted to know if there was a reason it was listed for \$12,600 and again for \$29,400. Mr. Sawyer stated that it was accurate. Paying for that piece of equipment is split between two separate funds. The Sewer Enterprise Fund pays the larger number of \$29,400 and the \$12,600 is through the regular Public Works operating fund.

Charlie Fairman, 243 Liberty Hill Road, wanted to know if there were initiating any new capital funds. Mr. Sawyer stated no. They are the same funds as last year.

Vote taken on Article 5 – Motion passed.

Moderator Klein asked for a motion to restrict reconsideration.

MOTION by Brian Shaughnessy to restrict reconsideration. Seconded by Paul Brock. Vote taken – Motion Passed.

Article 6. - Town Operating Budget

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate such sums of money for municipal operations in the ensuing year. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately.

General Fund	\$27,675,078
Special Revenue Funds	31,400
Recreation Day Camp	78,517
BCTV	469,131
Sewer Fund	1,734,783
Total Appropriation	\$29,988,909

Moderator Klein recognized Chairman Duschatko to move **Article 6** as printed and presented in the Budgetary Town Meeting Handout.

MOTION by Chairman Duschatko to move Article 6 as written in the Town Meeting Handout with a total appropriation of \$29,988,909. Seconded by Councilor Stevens.

Bill Greiner, 12 Aspen offered an amendment to Article 6.

MOTION by Bill Greiner to amend Article 6 by reallocating \$120,000 from debt service, previously intended for the sale of that bond, in first year debt service of the defeated Article 3 Parks & Recreation Improvement Bond, to the Recreation Field Maintenance/Other improvements line and adding \$885,000 to the same line for a total appropriation of \$1,005,000 to complete Sportsman Field improvements as proposed by the Department of Public Works with \$150,000 coming from Recreation Impact Fees and \$855,000 coming from the Unassigned Fund Balance, therefore not increasing the tax rate. Seconded by Frank Sledjeski.

Mr. Greiner stated that there is no tax impact on what he just proposed. This was something that was discussed by the Town Council should the recreation bond that was voted on yesterday failed. Everyone recognizes that Sportsman Field is a mess and needs to be redone. Without doing this, there is a strong likelihood that in the fall, that field would not be used in the evenings and that impacts thousands of kids in the Town. He understands the recreation bond failed yesterday. This was something that was discussed by the Town Council as a backstop for that. Many of the people in here are parks and recreation people. Most of these people did not vote for the bond. In talking to board members and presidents of the different leagues, his perception is that although it was great to offer \$4,000,000 in recreation funding, many of the folks thought that was too much money. They didn't agree necessarily with the plan and certainly didn't agree

with user fees to pay for that. While it would be great to have \$4,000,000 to spend on things that may or may not be needed, these folks felt that it was prudent to take a step back and only address what really needs to be addressed right now, which is Sportsman. The proposal in front of them does that. Does not raise taxes and will give the Town the opportunity to fix Sportsman and perhaps come back about a plan to address recreation needs without spending millions of dollars unnecessarily and having a viable plan before they start spending taxpayer money.

Councilor Murphy stated that to the extent the Council did discuss this, they did discuss modifying the bond and only taking up Sportsman and putting it on the ballot. That motion failed. Her issue with the motion that is on the table right now is one of process. We are elected by the people in this Town to make a budget, to have multiple public hearings on the budget where people can come and speak their mind, to make decisions to put that operating ballot before you so we can vote on it. She felt like coming here tonight with such a small fraction of voters circumvents that process that they worked on at the Council level. Nobody came to the public hearings and said, 'I don't want to see a \$3.9m bond on the budget, I'd rather you just bond Sportsman.' Where were you guys when we were having the public hearings? You weren't at the first one and you weren't at the second one. She's got an issue with that, because it's not following the process. That's why we have a Town government. That's why we do things that way. It looks a little bit shady to her when you try and circumvent that process by coming here tonight.

Joleen Worden, Birchwood Circle, Bedford Taxpayers Association, stated that aside from the fact that 4,000 people in Town just voted against what the gentleman is proposing, she's having a bit of an issue. She thought the improvements proposed were a capital improvement, and if they are, why wasn't the motion put forward on the item when they just now approved. She assumed the improvements were going to last for at least 12 years. Mr. Sawyer stated that the public is allowed to make motions however they want to amend whichever budgets they want as long as there is a line in that budget already. They can't add a line that doesn't already have an appropriation. Improvements can be funded through the operating budget or the capital budget. Either one is acceptable. Ms. Worden stated that it didn't make sense to her. If somebody is proposing a capital improvement, then they should have proposed it before they voted five minutes ago.

Frank Sledjeski, 2 Carolina Lane, stated that as President of Bedford Soccer, they have about 400 Bedford student soccer players and about 800 in their program. He's also on the MOLD committee, which is the group that Parks & Recreation kind of relies on. It's made up of the various outdoor sports in Bedford. Bedford Soccer supports turfing Sportsman. The field is in utter disarray, the light poles may be coming down thanks to a woodpecker infestation. By turfing this field, they will not only improve the community, they also relieve the stress on a lot of the other fields in Town, which will help those to recover better since most of their space is lighted and grass. From a soccer perspective, they support this motion.

John Schneller, 86 Brick Mill Road, thought that to extend some of Mr. Greiner's comments that the tax rate won't go up right now, but that \$855,000 coming out of the

unfunded balance went into the unfunded balance because it was either excess revenue from car registrations, dog licenses, etc., or it was split into tax relief. Those dollars are used to fund the delta between the School system's spending cycle and the Town's tax collection cycle, so those are reserved so if they have a downturn in the economy, they have a full buffer so the School will continue to run and continue to be funded. They would be taking money away from that and would in turn have to be replaced with tax dollars in the future. So unless he's wrong, this is actually going to raise people's taxes, because that will have to be replaced.

Bill Greiner, 12 Aspen Lane, stated that to answer Kelleigh (Murphy), he was actually at one of the Council meetings when this was discussed and the user fee issue came up. Secondly, if this fails tonight, they are going to be looking at doing this next year and it will cost tax dollars. There is no question that Sportsman needs to be redone and thought everybody on the Council agrees with that statement. They can do it now and not have an impact on the taxes, or you could do it next year, taxes go up. It doesn't matter to him; he doesn't have kids that play in the leagues anymore, so this is not for his children. He's there because he thinks it makes sense for the community. He would like to move the question.

Moderator Klein wanted to give people the opportunity to speak. After the three people standing to speak are done, he will move the question.

Paul Brock, Bracken Circle, agreed with what Ms. Murphy said earlier. They have a process in Town for addressing topics like this. The Town Council obviously chose to proceed down an avenue that they chose to be best for the Town. Unfortunately, the bond article didn't pass, but they are committed to the process and they have to live with the results. It felt to him like the work to be done to Sportsman Field does not come under the category of an operating budget improvements. It's pretty clear to him that it's a capital improvement with a long life and as such should probably be done under a bonding process. Given that monies are still pretty cheap, he felt that they were best serving the interest of the Town, both the users of the field as well as the taxpayers, if the work to be done was bonded and spread out across the lifetime of the field.

Kelleigh Murphy, 69 Hawk, stated that Mr. Greiner said something interesting. He said, 'it won't cost any tax dollars this year, but if we have to come back next year, it will.' A dollar is a dollar and it goes to the bottom line of the budget. Whether you take it out of a fund balance reserve or raise it through taxpayer capital, you are ultimately still raising taxes and appropriating funds. It's not imaginary money if they do it this year as opposed to last year, but it does contravene what she believes is the will of the people and the process they've established in this Town.

Charlie Fairman, Liberty Hill Road, supported Mr. Greiner's motion mainly because Sportsman Field is a critical field in this Town. It is not only used for sports, but it is used for several events such as Old Towne Day, it used to be used for the Strawberry Festival, and it is a critical field in this Town. It needs some major maintenance and upgrading and he supports it. He stated that he received no information on the bond beforehand. There was no literature that came out to him that said anything about the bond or about it being funded through user fees. His daughter, that has kids playing on

the fields, got a lot of literature about it. Sixty percent of this Town does not have children involved in the schools or doing sports. He doesn't know why the bond didn't pass, but thought it was irrelevant tonight. Sportsman Field needs to be reworked for the better of this Town and it sounds like a good time to do it. He's not for raising taxes, but they should do the work that needs to be done that should have been done sooner.

Bill Duschatko, 33 Wiggin Road, read the following statement:

Although I acknowledge the right of any citizen to amend the proposed budget, I'm concerned this proposal action is not in keeping with the way the program was designed. We've had a number speakers mention the fact that we are trying to circumvent the bonding process. I take issue with at comments that there is not adequate notice about the bond or the budget. There is a very clear cycle that is very publicized and it's up to the individuals in this community to keep themselves apprised of what's going on. There's information put on our website and other publications. I got no communication from the 40% that Mr. Fairman is referring to that said there is a bunch of communication. Something is wrong with the communication when we have these huge discrepancies. We've had testimony that people didn't know about it. I've been to every one of the meetings that we've had and many of the Parks & Recreation meetings. They've made every effort to reach out to the people that were concerned in this and any representation that is made other than that is an outright deception on the people. As you are aware, every attempt was made to be totally inclusive of public discussion about this project. There are no private meetings held by Councilors as opposed to some other interested stakeholder groups. All the stakeholders in the process were made aware of what direction we were proposing, which was a comprehensive plan to fix all the recreation facilities in this Town whether it was a tennis player, a skateboard park, a football field, or soccer field, whatever. We looked at the entire thing. We spent months doing this and we were trying to be as open as possible and get the best amount of feedback from the population. There is one particularly selfish group that took it upon themselves to say, 'Hey, we've had a free ride from the taxpayers for years and we don't like the idea that you might come up with a bona fide policy for user fees.' Well, to make it clear, we already have a policy for user fees. We were going to revisit that to see how it worked best in raising funds. Not to pay back the bond, but to ensure that we had a program that would last forever to make sure the maintenance of the huge investment that we are asking everybody to make would be maintained. I'm sorry, but the proposal doesn't go far enough on this and I would ask you to vote it down.

Moderator Klein asked for a vote for ending discussion now. Moderator Klein asked for a voter if they would like to continue. The motion failed so discussion is still open.

Corin Wright, Colonel Daniels Drive, stated that he attended a handful of the MOLD meetings. From the perspective of a parent that has kids in about five different sports in Town, there was an effort to put together a comprehensive plan. The effort never asked a single one of the leagues what those leagues needed from the Town from a rec perspective, how the fields weren't being used acceptably, whether or not they needed lights, what each individual sport would like. So somebody was funded to put together a study that then had a really big price tag. The first time I saw the numbers it was about

\$2m and it continued to grow up to \$4m. Everybody on the MOLD Committee made suggestions to pull that number down within the MOLD community. So it's disingenuous to say that people didn't challenge that data and those assumptions and those dollar values. That's just not the case. We did it in a forum that we were asked to participate in, which was the MOLD Committee. Furthermore, there is not a single one of the outdoor leagues that is opposed to user fees. The problem the user fee discussion brought up is that there was no discussion as to how the user fees would be allocated and what they would be used for. So some people thought they would be used for things like striping fields. Other people thought they would be used for capital improvements. There was absolutely no direction or statement as to how that would be used and what the policy and plan would be. It was a fairly poorly contrived plan to put together a \$4m bond that none of the outdoor leagues supported it. None of our leagues rallied any of our players or any of our families to vote for it. Some rallied against it and some stayed silent. This is an opportunity to use a much smaller amount of money in order to do something that everybody pretty much agrees with and it would have had overwhelming support and that the outdoor leagues don't have a problem with paying user fees associated with Sportsman or the High School or other fields. This has to be an actual plan and it has to be allocated correctly.

Moderator Klein reminded everybody to direct their remarks through him. Do not go back and forth with each other.

Frank Sledjeski, 2 Carolina Lane, took exception to the Chairman's categorization that they are like a rogue group of people. They represent probably 2,000 – 3,000 kids, student athletes, young kids, pre-K up through high school. We are not some rogue group looking to just randomly spend \$1m on a new field. These are our kids. If you have a kindergartener, 1st grader, 2nd grader, they will be on those fields for the next decade. Both of his children are basically out of Bedford and like Mr. Greiner, he really has no stake. By the time this is done, his kids aren't going to use. However, representing all of these people, being on the MOLD Committee, he does this to help the community, to help the kids that play sports in Town. To categorize us as a rogue group is a very poor representation of the Town Council. Maybe rogue wasn't the right word, but you get the idea.

Sue Thomas, 36 Glen Road, stated that her kids are way older and out of leagues, but about 10 or 12 years ago or more, she was on the MOLD Committee and Parks & Rec and Sportsman Field needed to be redone then. It would have been a lot less money then. It's time to redo Sportsman Field. There's a ton of kids, a ton of events are used on it. It will not benefit her at all, but it's time to do that field.

Loren Foxx, 79 Wentworth Drive, stated that he has two kids who play sports, he's been on boards, he's coached, and he's spent countless hours on fields without regard for his kids. It's to their detriment that he's helping other kids get better at sports. It's to their detriment that he spends time there, in fact he has to leave to go pick up one of them from gymnastics. His point with any of this is to be characterized as leagues as selfish and freeloading as the Chairman did earlier, to him that's not fair. He was up at one of the Parks & Rec meetings and they discussed user fees there and one of the things that was brought up was you pay user fees and the Town is then responsible for the fields,

but what you don't see is the amount of time that is spent, whether it's a field or a basketball court, to make everything playable and to make it so these kids have the opportunity to play in a league. In this Town it's a domino effect. If they have one field that's out of commission in the fall, Swenson field is getting a ton of time, the Little League field is getting a ton of time and all of these fields are slowly getting decimated. They can't afford to have that as a town given the fact that there are thousands of kids in this Town that their alternative to playing sports is they are on the couch or doing nothing. With fitness and people not being in shape, that's the worst possible thing they could have for their kids. If they want to make this a great community to live in the things they need to invest in are their schools and fields.

Frank Sledjeski, 2 Carolina Lane, moved the question.

Kamee Leshner, 44 Old English Road, wanted to know why turf and is it more or less expensive. Councilor Bandazian stated that it's considerably more expensive to do turf, but it extends the hours and season that the field could be used for, so you'd get a more complete use of a turf field. He wanted to correct a misimpression that was mentioned and stated that if the field is turfed, it cannot be driven on and it will not be used for Old Towne Day. There will be no vehicles or trailers allowed on it. If you look at it by playing hour dollar for dollar it's a good value. If Sportsman were to continue to be used with the restricted schedule that it has now, it probably isn't a great value.

Moderator Klein stated that if you're not familiar with the difference, you've got the weather factors, the more consistent playable surface, and the safety is higher.

Johnny Burgess, Donald Street, stated that his wife and he raised eight kids and the baby is in college now, so they are past that stage, but he thought it was about due process. He's a huge Donald Trump fan and there's probably people there that aren't. The beauty in this country, two years later there's a mid-term election, checks and balances. He thought Bedford should be just as proud. Yesterday 4,000 people voted. He got a notice hours ago that 40 people, 1% of yesterday's voting, want to change things today. If you want to put it on the ballot, let's vote for it again. If you want to do a private fundraiser, he'll write a check. He didn't think that 1% of what voted yesterday should happen.

Moderator Klein read the amendment to Article 6:

To amend Article 6 by reallocating \$120,000 from debt service, previously intended for the sale of the bond and first year debt service of the defeated Article 3 Parks & Recreation Improvement Bond, to the Recreation Field Maintenance/Other improvements line and adding \$885,000 to the same line for a total appropriation of \$1,005,000 to complete Sportsman Field improvements as proposed by the Department of Public Works with \$150,000 coming from Recreation Impact Fees and \$855,000 coming from the Unassigned Fund Balance, therefore not increasing the tax rate.

Vote taken for the amendment –Yes-83, No-93. The amendment fails.

MOTION made to limit reconsideration. Seconded by Bill Dermody. Vote taken – Motion Passed.

Vote taken on Article 6 as presented – Motion passed.

Chairman Duschatko stated that with great appreciation, the Town Council would like to award Kelleigh Murphy with a plaque representing her years of being the first Chairwoman of the Bedford Town Council. It's been a great time working with her and looks forward to continuing doing so in other ways.

Vice Chairwoman Stevens stated that this past year she's had the privilege of serving with Bill Duschatko as his vice chair. He has been a great chair and she appreciates his dedication to the Town and also the detail he pays to every little thing that they seem to do. She thanked Bill Duschatko for his leadership presented Bill Duschatko with a plaque for his 1-year as Chairman.

Moderator Klein called for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION by Bill Carter to adjourn at 8:03 pm. Seconded by Bill Dermody. Vote taken – Motion Passed.

Submitted by:

Dawn Boufford, Executive Assistant

Sally Kellar, Town Clerk