

## **Warrant Committee Meeting**

**Monday, January 24, 2022**

**I. Call to Order/Roll Call:** 6:01pm by Chair Libby; 14 voting members present

**Present:** J. Berberian, B. Chaplin, C. Chappell, C. Cough, K. DesVeaux, M. Kelly, S. Libby, B. Reece, C. Ryan, A. Sasner, E. Sassaman, C. Smith, K. St. Germain, J. Young

**II. Vote on new member**

Chair Libby stated that former Warrant Committee member Steve Boucher has resigned, which leaves an open seat. It would be helpful to fill that seat before the start of the budget season. The Warrant Committee received an application for this position from Ms. Louise Lopez. The Nominating Committee, consisting of Chair Libby, Vice Chair Berberian, and Secretary Smith met on January 20, 2022 to review Ms. Lopez's application for candidacy and unanimously voted to recommend her to the full Warrant Committee for a vote. Chair Libby noted that the motion to approve new candidates does not need a second.

Chair Libby made a motion to approve Louise Lopez to be appointed to the Warrant Committee to complete the remainder of the vacant one-year term seat. This motion was approved unanimously (*14 Yes, 0 No*).

**III. Introduction and remarks from our new Town Manager, Kevin Sutherland**

Chair Libby welcomed new Bar Harbor Town Manager, Kevin Sutherland, and invited him to speak to the Warrant Committee.

Mr. Sutherland shared a presentation that included his prior work in New York, Illinois, and Maine. He is happy to be here and apply his municipal and non-profit knowledge. Mr. Sutherland noted that Maine is a home rule state and as such bodies have the ability to create their own laws. He proceeded to give an overview of the responsibilities of the Town Council and Town Manager. Also, he shared that he believes that government has three main functions: education, public infrastructure, and public safety. These together total over 90% of the town's budget. Bar Harbor's assessed value is over \$1.9 billion, and has a budget of around \$25 million, with just under \$20 million of that paid through property taxes. Mr. Sutherland explained the mil rate, and how an increase in values can offset increases the town needs to operate. He closed by enumerating the ways members of the Warrant Committee and the public can support the town of Bar Harbor.

#### **IV. Overview of the municipal budget, including CIP, cruise ship and parking revenues, by Town Finance Director, Sarah Gilbert**

Chair Libby welcomed everyone and stated that for those new to the Warrant Committee, it is a body that deals with town warrants, the primary ones related to the budget. In general, there is no disagreement with the Town Council over the budget, but we may bring our recommendations and perspectives forward. He mentioned the Town's Capital Improvement Program, which may be new for some people. It is used for projects generally that cost over \$5,000 and/or with construction lasting longer than two years. It is a way to annually allocate funds toward specific projects to minimize surprises and to spread costs out over a period of years. Parking fund money may be allocated for capital expenditures, like a road grader, that relates to roadways and then transferred to the general fund. That burden is then not on the taxpayer. The same is true for cruise ship funds as well.

Mr. Sutherland noted the budget book will have the same tabs as in years past. Chair Libby also noted that it is a common misperception that we may use cruise ship and parking funds for general budgetary use. There are laws that dictate how those funds are spent. Ms. Gilbert shared the State statute that pertains to the restrictions on parking meter funds. Chair Libby added that with the cruise ship funds, there must be some benefit to those passengers. Mr. DesVeaux asked if there were no cruise ships, how the mil rate would be affected. Mr. Sutherland said that direct expenses related to cruise ships will fall away. CIP items that need to be supported would then need to be covered with tax funds, but he would go into greater detail during his presentation the following evening. Mr. DesVeaux asked about the town's reserves. Ms. Gilbert stated that there was not a lack of town revenue and reviewed the prior two years' reserve balances. Mr. Sutherland added that there had been sufficient funds in the fund balance to cover the debt service. Ms. Ryan asked whether it was possible to request to use the parking money in a broader application in the general fund, perhaps by asking the State in Augusta. Mr. Sutherland mentioned the Maine Service Center Coalition, which is a lobbying group. That might be an option to work with others on legislation to change the language in the state statute, but that would not happen in this legislative session.

#### **V. Discussion about the weeks ahead, meeting schedule and duties**

Chair Libby that with the new year, there are new procedures, bylaws, and schedules. He reviewed the historical schedule of the Warrant Committee's budget review season. He noted that he had shared the budget timeline, and that the following night we would sit with the Town Council as the Manager introduced his budget. The Warrant Committee should feel free to ask questions, though we would not be taking any votes. Chair Libby said that once these budget workshops begin, the Warrant Committee subcommittees will start their meetings shortly thereafter.

They should be aware of most changes made by Town Council and can vote on their recommendations for the subsequent full Warrant Committee. Everything will be completed by February 21, though an extra budget workshop may be needed for final motions by the Town Council. Similarly, the Warrant Committee may need to schedule another full Warrant Committee meeting to complete its work. Chair Libby would work with Vice Chair Berberian, Secretary Smith, and the subcommittee chairs to make the process as efficient as possible. There will still be a need to convene and vote on any proposed LUO changes in March, ahead of the June meetings. Chair Libby reiterated that he was open to questions, and that meetings would be held by Zoom for the foreseeable future. Mr. Sutherland noted that the Warrant Committee meetings will not be televised live but will be streamed live. They will be recorded and then posted to Town Hall Streams. There will still be public comment periods. The Joint Meetings with the Town Council will be on television.

Chair Libby noted to all members that the Warrant Committee is what each member brings to it, with their own set of unique perspectives. All questions are welcome, and people should feel free to ask questions throughout the process. Mr. DesVeaux asked about the format for the following evening's meeting. Mr. Libby stated that it is a Joint Meeting with Town Council. He will call roll call and will need a quorum, but Council Chair Dobbs will run the meeting. The Warrant Committee will not be voting on anything at the January 25 meeting, but the Town Council may have a more active role. Mr. Sutherland stated that it would be an overview of the budget, with assistance from Ms. Gilbert.

#### **VI. Election of subcommittee chairs (2) by members of the respective subcommittees**

Chair Libby noted that Carol Chappell was already voted chair of the General Government subcommittee. Chairs need to be voted upon for the Public Works, Recreation, and Protections subcommittee and also for the Education subcommittee. The first of these subcommittees proceeded, and Cara Ryan nominated Vice Chair Berberian to serve as that subcommittee chair. Chair Libby moved to nominate Vice Chair Berberian to serve as the Chair of the Public Works, Recreation, and Protections subcommittee. This was unanimously approved by members of that subcommittee (5 Yes, 0 No). The Education subcommittee followed suit. Chair Libby nominated Mr. Chaplin to serve as Chair of the Education subcommittee. Chair Libby then moved to nominate Mr. Chaplin to serve as the Chair of the Education subcommittee. This was unanimously approved by members of that subcommittee (5 Yes, 0 No).

Chair Libby noted that he would contact new member Ms. Lopez.

## **VII. Member Q&A**

Ms. Chappell noted that the General Government subcommittee will need to meet and vote on its recommendations before the February 7 full Warrant Committee meeting. The goal is to have the Town Council done with their review and motions on that section of the budget prior to the subcommittee vote. Chair Libby noted that this is a work in progress. Mr. Chaplin noted that he has the school budget and has reviewed that with school personnel. There will be a need to hear the Town Council input on that section of the budget prior to convening that subcommittee.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Libby moved to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 6:56pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Smith  
Secretary, Warrant Committee