

**TOWN OF WESTFORD  
BUDGET TASK FORCE MINUTES  
Budget & New Revenue Working Group  
Monday, June 26, 2023**

**Attendees:**

Dan O'Donnell, Erika Kohl, Tom Clay, Shana Farnsworth, Chris Chew

**Administrative actions:**

Clay called meeting to order at 2:32 pm.

**Working Session to Review, Develop, and Comment on Information Related to Budget Challenges and New Revenue for the Budget Task Force**

The Budget and New Revenue group discussed several of the budget challenges the Town will face in the coming years:

- Solid waste and Recycling – both contracts expire on 6/30/2024 and the current solid waste vendor will not be providing services after the contract expires. Group discussed that any new vendor would use an automated system requiring new bins for all residents. O'Donnell discussed that the recycling market is highly volatile and difficult to forecast future expenses. The Town would see sizable increases in solid waste and recycling costs with the new contracts in FY25.
- Energy Costs – O'Donnell discussed that the Town locked into three-year agreements with the electricity and natural gas providers in 2021 and with the contracts expiring in 2024 we see significant increases in utility costs with the new contracts.
- Employee nonunion salaries – Review market communities to ensure that positions are paid within market rate.
- Town Collective Bargaining Contracts – The Fire Fighters contract expires 6/30/2024 and all the others expire on 6/30/2025 so the Town will need to review the market for contract negotiations.
- School Collective Bargaining Contracts – Currently in negotiations and reviewing market communities for comparable wages.
- Health Insurance Trust – Town has a partially self-funded plan and current claims are exceeding Town's contribution. Renewal rates will be reviewed in late 2023.
- Uncertainty of New Growth – O'Donnell discusses that new growth can vary year to year and difficult to forecast multiple years ahead. Group discussed that vacant buildings could be redeveloped for a new use and become new growth.
- Bus Contract - Contract is expiring in FY24. Reviewed surrounding towns and seeing around a 11% increase in fees the Town will need to plan for.
- Special Education Fleet Leases – Discussed the cost of maintaining current fleet, getting leases for new vehicles, or using the contracted bus company.
- Feasibility Study Outcomes – Discussed having a range of impact over next 3-5 years of capital requirements that have been endorsed by the School Committee.
- Special Education Tuitions – Discussed that the school is anticipating a 14% increase in tuitions rates for FY24. Chew discussed that there are one-time funds available to cover FY24 and that this will need to be considered for FY25 and future years.

Farnsworth discussed potential new revenue sources. Group discussed creating a list of questions to reach out to other communities.

Kohl discussed using a Monte Carlo simulation to aid in the budgeting process. Group discussed creating a range of potential impact for each new revenue to evaluate the most impactful options.

**Old Business**

No old business to discuss.

**Future Activities**

The task force members agreed to meet again on Wednesday June 28, 2023.

Meeting adjourned at 3:49 pm.

A full recording of the meeting is available online.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Clay", is written above a horizontal line.

Tom Clay, Budget Task Force Chair