

TOWN OF WESTFORD
BUDGET TASK FORCE MINUTES
Budget Challenges & New Revenue Working Group
Wednesday, July 12, 2023

Attendees:

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

Administrative actions:

Clay called meeting to order at 12:31 pm

O'Donnell moved to approve minutes of June 26th, 2023 and June 28th, 2023. The motion was seconded by Chew and approved 4-0-1; Kohl abstained.

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

Farnsworth discussed some of the potential new revenue opportunities and talked about the estimated revenue impact, process to initiate, and recommendations for the Select Board to pursue. Talked about town facility rentals and possibly reviewing current rates to ensure our rates we charge are around market rates.

Clay discussed the possibility of composting to be implemented in town and that could reduce the trash tipping fees by 10-20%.

Farnsworth discussed the option of having a recreational marijuana dispensary in town. She discussed some of the feedback other communities that have a dispensary have provided and what kind of impact there has been if any.

Clay discussed the pay as you throw trash fees that could help reduce the amount of trash waste per household and help offset some of the increasing tipping fees cost.

Farnsworth discussed the possibility of implementing a short-term rental fee, but it would be a low impact.

Clay discussed the possibility of having a split tax rate. This would have no impact on new revenue and would only impact the allocation of the taxes between residential and commercial/industrial taxpayers.

Farnsworth discussed meals tax and that the town is already at the max rate.

Clay talked about looking at other communities that have a real estate transfer fee and come up with an estimate of what impact it could have.

Farnsworth discussed room occupancy fees and that the town is already at the max rate.

Clay discussed cell tower rentals and how the cellular companies are the ones that canvas and reach out to communities.

Farnsworth discussed school activity fees and bus fees and comparing them to other comparable communities to see if our fees need to be raised.

Farnsworth discussed solar panel field rentals but there is an ongoing assessment so the group will circle back in a few weeks.

Farnsworth discussed naming by-law fees for potential naming rights on town facilities.

Farnsworth discussed the MBTA multifamily zoning requirement and that if approved could have significant impact in FY26.

Clay discussed economic development and that the town will utilize a consultant to evaluate the town.

The group talked about a proposition 2 ½ override and will discuss later the mechanics and what other communities have done.

Budget Task Force Meeting

The members of the Budget Task Force Benchmarking and Efficiency Working Group joined the zoom call and the whole group started the Budget Task Force Meeting at 1:10pm.

Future Activities

The task force members agreed to meet again on Wednesday July 19, 2023.

Meeting adjourned at 1:10 pm.

A full recording of the meeting is available online.



Tom Clay, Budget Task Force Chair