

Kingston Municipal Budget Committee
August 26, 2020 - Town Hall

KMBC Members in Attendance:

Chuck Hart, Chair
Rick Russman, Vice Chair
Kim Donahue, Secretary
Marissa Federico, Recording Secretary
Ray Donald
Gary Finerty
Heather Hanlon
James LaValley
John Pramberg
Annemarie Roth
Stanley Shalett
Kevin St. James, representative from the Board of Selectmen (BOS)

No members of the public were in attendance.

Chuck called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

All members introduced themselves.

Election of Officers

Rick nominated Chuck for Chair, Gary seconded. All in favor.
Chuck nominated Rick for Vice Chair, Kevin seconded. All in favor.
Chuck nominated Kim for Secretary, Jim seconded. All in favor.

Information Distributed to Members

Chuck now provided an overview of the handouts he distributed for tonight's meeting:

- Contact list for KMBC members
- Reminder for the NHMA Budget and Finance virtual workshop on Thursday 9/24
- Contact list for department heads
- List of department assignment(s) for each member
- Calendar of events - Future KMBC meeting dates to be discussed, but the dates on the calendar for decision days and public hearings should be final

Old Minutes and Business

There were no old minutes to review and no old business to discuss.

New business

Chuck explained that as there are 11 members on the KMBC, 6 members are needed for a quorum at each meeting. The by-laws state the KMBC customarily has 12 members, but the Committee can perform its duties well with the 11 current members as long as a quorum is reached at each meeting.

He explained the KMBC by-laws: First, the BOS meets to set the budget. Next, Cindy Kenerson puts this information together and sends it to the KMBC. The KMBC then reviews this information with each department and provides its recommendations.

Chuck emphasized that it is important for KMBC liaisons to be in contact with his/her department(s) prior to the meeting for information sharing. This will streamline the questioning process during the meeting. Ray concurred with this statement.

Ray stated that last year, the new fire chief had many questions about salaries for the KMBC. This process took a long time during the meeting. He emphasized It is important that the fire chief discuss salary information with the BOS prior to meeting with the KMBC.

Future KMBC Meeting Dates

Chuck said that although the KMBC has historically met on Sundays, some members wanted a weekday option. Town Hall confirmed that Wednesday evenings are available. In the past, the KMBC has met 4 times with an average meeting length of 2 hours per meeting but were sometimes longer. Chuck offered to spread the KMBC meetings out to 5 meetings to reduce the length of meetings. Heather suggested the possibility of a 5th meeting date to be available only if needed. After discussion and a vote, members agreed to 4 meetings to be held on Wednesdays and Sundays with a start time of 6 p.m.

Gary asked if the KMBC can choose how department budgets can be discussed, and Chuck stated there are no discussion guidelines; the discussion does not need to be line by line, and members can focus on those line items for which he/she has questions or those that have relatively large changes. This will also shorten the meeting's duration. Rick said last year, they went through each budget line by line, which was time consuming. He suggested big changes could be highlighted and explained in the meeting to streamline the process. Chuck concurred and is planning to do this; he stressed that each department liaison review each line item before the meeting to facilitate discussion.

Rick stated the discussion of the budget for Welfare/Human Services/Social Services could take longer due to the COVID pandemic.

Chuck stressed that each liaison should be at the meeting to discuss his/her department(s).

Jim asked if there was a deadline by which meeting dates need to be set, and Chuck stated there was none. However, he emphasized he wanted to post the dates soon.

Goals of the Committee

The committee discussed that there are no concrete goals at this time as only preliminary information is currently available. The Committee is waiting to hear from the BOS in reference to what they're thinking about for the budget next year.

Review of Prior Year's Budget

Chuck reviewed one page of the 2020 budget proposal and discussed the process for the KMBC. Ray brought up that election figures change year to year depending on the amount of elections that need to be held in town. He also added that members should be aware that some parts of the budget are flexible and may change during the year.

James asked when the proposed numbers will be available. Chuck stated he is not sure, but as soon as he gets them, they will be emailed to each member.

COVID Precautions for Future KMBC Meetings

Having the meetings on Zoom was discussed, but the Committee's hope is to have in-person meetings. There is plenty of room for social distancing of Committee members, the department head, and members of the public. The plan is to have only one department head in the upstairs room at Town Hall at a time. The department head next on the agenda can wait in the vestibule. Ray suggested the individual next on the agenda can wait in his/her car; the KMBC can text him/her when he/she is needed.

Chuck concluded the meeting at 8:11 p.m.