

**Bethel Town Meeting Committee
Minutes June 22, 2015**

Present: Jean Burnham, Neil Brooks, Victoria Weber, Davis Dimock, Rick Benson and Lisa McCrory.

The meeting was called to order at 3:30. The minutes of the May 27th meeting were accepted.

The Committee accepted with regret Lucien Hinkle's June 15th resignation from the committee. His diligence and expertise with financial issues was appreciated and will be sorely missed.

Gathering to get citizens involved in budget processes

We made plans for a public potluck meeting on Thursday, September 3rd from 6-8pm at the Town Hall. At this time the main town topic is budgets. This includes citizens' concerns about taxes and how money is spent, and the desire of both the Selectboard and the School Board that citizens become involved in the budget creation processes before they are finished, which for the school is October, hence the early September meeting. The goal is to have brief presentations by someone from the school board and from the Town on how their budgets are created, both timelines and processes, and then to identify any other town topics of interest to the people attending. We would like Carl Russell to speak about citizen participation.

Stemming from this information session, a 'recipe' of how and when citizens can be involved with the town and school budget processes can be written up, and included in the *Bethel Operator's Manual/Handbook* we propose to create. The goal is clarity and transparency in the processes of budget creation.

We discussed PR for this meeting, including the sign in front of the hall which will read:

**Potluck: Exploring School and Town Budget Processes:
Community Input Wanted.
Sept. 3rd 6-8pm.**

Other PR will include a half page sheet in the packets that go home with school children at the time of school starting on August 26th, a letter to the editor of *The Herald*, Front Porch Forum and Facebook postings, Community Calendar posting on Town website and possibly a small poster. Rick will announce it at BBA and Rotary.

Mission Statement

In order to explain who we are and what we are trying to achieve, we drafted a mission statement. We are thinking of Town Meeting itself as at the apex of a pyramid with the school and town budgets immediately underneath, and then all town government officers, groups and activities under that. Therefore while our name is Town Meeting Committee, in order to get citizens involved with and participating in town meeting, they have to be informed about and involved in other town processes first.

Following is the Mission Statement we drafted:

“Helping foster informed and engaged citizens: Creating an environment in which individuals are welcomed, respected, supported and valued.”

We considered adding: “contributing to their town government”, “comfortable enough to contribute” and/or “active in their town government”, but we felt that ‘engaged citizens’ covered these issues.

We also considered adding an action statement explaining the main ways we hope to achieve our mission, which would be: “Bethel Town Meeting Committee: Helping to foster informed and engaged citizens *through the production and distribution of materials to inform the citizens, the facilitation of discussions of issues concerning local residents, and the continued improvement of the annual Town and School meeting process.*”

Recommendations for Town Report and Operator’s Manual

We looked at the list of ideas for the two publications that we had identified in the minutes of the May meeting, and we will take this topic up again in our July 27th meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30.

Next meeting is Monday, July 27th at 3:30.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Victoria Weber, Secretary, June 23, 2015.