

PROCESS

1. TUCKER FREE LIBRARY received the Town Administrator's Budget Guidance Document and Calendar. A "Flat Budget" was requested in the Budget Guidance Document. The trustee budget submission acknowledged and absorbed the potential for a significant increase in PANDEMIC LEVEL Janitorial Services.
2. During COVID, when the library was open to the public, daily detailed cleaning cost between \$1500 to \$1800 per month. In non-pandemic times, the library was cleaned two to three times per week, depending on the season. Normally the cleaning cost is between \$600 to \$800 per month. Due to the uncertainty of COVID and the impact on hours and library service, the trustees choose to absorb the increased cost of janitorial cleaning service. This resulted in an increase of \$10,000 to our budget for this COVID-related expense. To achieve the flat budget trustees:
 - Decreased acquisition budget by \$4,800.00
 - Decreased Technology Management expenses by \$500.00
 - Decreased Program expenses by \$1,684.00
 - Decreased Utility expenses by \$3,000.00
3. TUCKER FREE LIBRARY presented our flat budget at the 11/14 joint meeting of the BOARD OF SELECTMEN/BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE.
 - No questions were raised at that meeting.
 - Peter Flynn actually commended the Tucker Free Library Board of Trustees and Library Administration for running a tight ship because the library in the comparable town he works in has a budget in excess of \$100,000.00 over ours.
 - At this meeting there were only two members of the BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE present at the time of the TUCKER FREE LIBRARY presentation.

ACTIONS

1. BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE took all budget information for review. It appears that a member was added following the initial presentations.
2. Selectmen Tia Hooper and Budget Advisory Committee member Heidi Aucoin attended the 12/29/2020 Board of Trustees Meeting that was held at 5:30PM via Zoom. They asked no questions or made no comments when given the opportunity during the Public Forum at the beginning of the meeting. The same held true when Trustees gave them the opportunity to ask questions at the end of the meeting.
3. At no time did a member of the BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE seek any clarification of the information submitted by TUCKER FREE LIBRARY even though the Minutes of 12/29/2020 meeting at 6:30 PM reflected their concern of "operational expenses and transparency of the Library."
4. Upon conclusion of the discussion the BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE plan "going forward was to arrange and conduct interviews with Tia Hooper, Joe Devine, and Marc McMurphy to ask follow up questions in regards to the aforementioned topics and with that information, determine if any of the budget expenses or cuts make sense to us." The plan was to reconvene on 2021-01-12 at 6:30pm, after the interview were completed.
5. On 1/6/2021 Dan Butler met with Joe Devine who was "able to offer insight and guidance" on several of the Committee's recommendations. Specifically, Joe was asked to explain "reporting complications" with the Library as part of the meeting agenda.
 - WHY WAS THE LIBRARY NOT INVITED TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS DIRECTLY?
 - At the very least, Joe Devine should have insisted that TUCKER FREE LIBRARY Trustees or Library Administration attend to speak to the questions.
6. On 1/7/2021 Dan Butler met with Marc McMurphy of White Birch. The goal of this meeting was to "ask Marc for a more thorough breakdown of what expenses the town's approved donation would cover" and if the donation from the town makes sense since non-residents can use the services.

- Marc had the opportunity to explain the benefits of having White Birch Community Center programs available for our elderly residents, what kinds of programs they offer, how many of the participants are Henniker residents.
 - He then sent an email to the committee explaining how the requested amount was calculated and why the amount is what is requested.
7. The Town of Henniker voted to support the formation of the Tucker Free Library in 1903 thus accepting the responsibility of maintaining the institution. With that comes a STATUTORY OBLIGATION to provide adequate funding for the library as identified by the Board of Trustees; the sole authority in regard to the financial management of the library. Contrast this with White Birch, which the Town is under no statutory obligation to support.
 - Marc McMurphy had the opportunity to meet with members of the BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE to explain the unique relationship of White Birch Center with the town.
 - At no time did the BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE reach out to the TUCKER FREE LIBRARY for the same “courtesy meeting” in which the financial and budgetary process could best be explained by those responsible for the management of the library pursuant to RSA 202-A.
 8. While their minutes reflect that their second full committee meeting was 12/29/20 it appears to be a typographical error, as the meeting occurred on 1/12/21. Those in attendance included Dan Butler, Lori Marko, Heidi Aucoin, Jarrod Gleason, Joe Devine, and Tia Hooper. The goal of this meeting was to re-examine the discussion points from Meeting 1 with the new information provided by Tia Hooper, Joe Devine, and Marc McMurphy. The Committee discussed the “Library Department” and recommends a cut to the Library’s overall budget of \$14,000. The Committee requests that the Library provide their financial and operational records along with their annual budget requests so that the committee can have a better understanding of how much money the Library is spending and how much it needs each year.
 9. At the BOARD OF SELECTMEN meeting of 1/19/21 the BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE presented their recommendations for budget including the \$14,000.00 cut to the library budget.
 10. During the 1/26/21 BOARD OF SELECTMEN meeting Tia Hooper moved to cut the library budget per the recommendation of the BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE.
 11. TUCKER FREE LIBRARY Trustees lodged their concerns about the process during Public Forum 1 at the BOARD OF SELECTMEN meeting of 2/2/21. During the Public Hearing for the Town Budget the TUCKER FREE LIBRARY Trustees/Lib Admin strenuously defended the budget request and answered questions regarding the library financial operations, trust funds and unreserved fund balance. All these questions could have been asked and answered prior to the BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE final recommendations being made. The BOARD OF SELECTMEN did not reconsider the cut.

REBUTTAL

1. A cut this significant will have an impact on library services during 2021. This includes a reduction in the acquisition budget, a reduction in programs, and the inability to normalize and expand library hours beyond pandemic level.
2. The Board of Trustees of the Tucker Free Library, strenuously objects to the characterization of our budget process as “reporting complications” or lacking transparency. The Board of Trustees are solely responsible for the financial decisions of the Tucker Free Library. They are responsible stewards of all funds; tax dollars, trust money, or donations. Never has there been any questions or concerns raised regarding library financial practices during the audit that occurs annually under the direction of the Board of Selectmen and the Town of Henniker Finance Director.
 - The Board of Trustees reviews monthly expenditures at each meeting
 - At each meeting, the Board of Trustees also approves a manifest of bills that are paid monthly
 - The Board of Trustees reports financial data in every annual report. This data includes a breakdown by category of revenue and expenses. It also includes a comprehensive summary of trust fund utilization.
 - Every trust fund has an intention clause which the Board of Trustees dutifully honor.

- Any money that is currently being held in the fund balance is being reserved for future development of the library. This money may be used as matching funds for grants that may be sought to advance the library building project. Imagine receiving a grant for \$200,000 but we can't accept it because we have no matching funds available.

SUGGESTIONS

1. The Board of Trustees is comprised of Henniker residents who are elected at Town Meeting. It is the responsibility of the five trustees to guarantee that the library is properly funded. Unfortunately, the ill-informed recommendation of the BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE will significantly impact library services in our community in 2021.
 - The trustees urge the general public and members of the BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE to attend a meeting and ask their questions in a public forum.
 - The trustees welcome the opportunity to clarify any confusion so future recommendations are based on facts not suppositions.
 - Trustees meetings are posted with a complete meeting package on the library website: www.tuckerfreelibrary.org. Draft minutes of each meeting, including the monthly manifest and Year-To-Date Revenue/Expenditures Report are promptly posted.
2. Eliminate the cursory meeting of the BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE/BOARD OF SELECTMEN in November. Instead provide the BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE with all the budgets and give them an opportunity to meet to discuss them. Hold a BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE/BOARD OF SELECTMEN meeting in mid-December to allow time to review the budgets, which gives them an opportunity to ask informed questions answered by department representatives in an open public forum.
3. Require that BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE post their agendas and minutes for each individual meeting. The agenda should include which departments will be discussed. Those departments should be invited to attend the meeting to have an opportunity to address the BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE questions at the open public meeting before the final recommendations are made.