

New Budget
Committee
Ordinance

UNITY BUDGET COMMITTEE ORDINANCE
(as amended March 25, 1995)

1. Establishment

Pursuant to 30-A MRSA Section 3001 (*Home Rule*), a Budget Committee is hereby established for the Town of Unity, Maine. This Ordinance seeks to formalize the Budget Committee that has traditionally reviewed the annual Town budget and clarify its duties.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Budget Committee is to provide a constructive forum for thought and debate on municipal policy development and problem-solving in any matter which is likely to have a financial impact on the townspeople. The Budget Committee shall have no power to enact Town policy or make financial decisions on its own, but will make written recommendations to the Selectmen, the voters, and/or to other organizations as appropriate.

The Budget Committee's activities shall include, but not be limited to the following: coordination of various municipal and quasi-municipal activities; long-range planning and problem solving for Unity's municipal management needs; development of policy options, funding strategies, annual budget recommendations and other matters related to municipal government. The Committee shall develop its own priorities, while also being responsive to requests for advice and assistance from the Board of Selectmen and other municipal concerns as issues arise.

3. Committee Membership

The Committee shall consist of from 7 to 15 members who shall be appointed by the selectmen and who shall be registered voters of the Town. In addition to the appointed members, all three selectmen shall serve as non-voting, ex-officio members of the Budget Committee, whose attendance is expected at all meetings.

Members shall serve for terms of three years, except that they shall continue in office until their successors are appointed. (For transition purposes, the initial terms shall be staggered so that as nearly an equal number of terms shall expire annually.) Appointments shall be made by May 1 of each year, although additional members may be added during the year.

4. **Committee Organization and Rules**

The Committee shall have an annual organizational meeting during the first week of May. At that meeting, the Committee shall elect officers for the year, set a schedule of regular meetings which shall be not less than quarterly, and identify priority issues for discussion during the year. This schedule shall be posted on the bulletin board outside the Town Office, with meeting topics indicated whenever known in advance. Other meetings shall be given the same public notice, posted as soon as is practicable by the Committee secretary.

Officers shall consist of a chairperson, vice chairperson and secretary from among the appointed membership. In addition to the regularly scheduled meetings during the year, the Committee shall meet as necessary to conduct its business. Meetings shall be called by the chairperson, or upon request of a majority of Committee members, or upon request of the Board of Selectmen. A quorum necessary to conduct business shall consist of at least a majority of voting members.

The chairperson shall preside over meetings. Upon his or her absence, the vice chairperson shall preside and assume other appropriate duties. The secretary shall be responsible for recording minutes of meetings, keeping copies of all documents, records and correspondence of the Committee, and posting public notice of meetings. The Committee may vote to hire clerical support for the secretary in fulfilling his or her duties, if funds are appropriated by the legislative body in a given year.

All meetings and records shall be subject to the Maine Freedom of Access Act, 1 MRSA Sections 401-410. The Committee may adopt rules of procedure not inconsistent with this ordinance. In the absence of additional rules of procedure, the Committee shall rely on Robert's Rules of Order for guidance. A majority vote of voting members present and voting when a quorum is present shall be presumed to constitute an official Committee decision unless other rules are adopted.

Members may participate in discussion, but shall be disqualified from voting, on any matter which may be construed to constitute a conflict of interest. Members shall volunteer identification of such a conflict at the earliest possible time during discussion on the pertinent issue. Any question of whether a member shall be disqualified from voting on a particular matter shall be decided by a majority vote of the members present and authorized to vote, except the member whose potential conflict is under consideration.

The term "conflict of interest" shall be construed to mean direct or indirect pecuniary interest, which shall include pecuniary benefit to any member of the person's immediate family (grandfather, father, wife, son, granddaughter, e.g.) or to his or her employer, or to the employer of any member of the person's immediate family.

Members are encouraged to attend relevant educational and policy making sessions held around the state. Reasonable fees and travel expenses may be reimbursed as appropriated by the legislative body in a given year.

Section 5. Powers and Duties

The Committee shall have the following powers and duties:

- A. To study long-range capital and operating needs of the Town, researching alternate approaches and funding options. This shall apply to municipal facilities and services, as well as those of quasi-municipal organizations including but not limited to the Unity Fire Department, Unity Utilities District and Unity Athletic Association. The Committee shall also monitor and review all interlocal and regional cooperative efforts, including but not limited to the Unity Area Recycling Center, the Unity Volunteer Ambulance Corporation and interlocal use of the Unity Landfill. The Committee will review and make recommendations on other interlocal efforts for service provision, including but not limited to code enforcement, solid waste disposal and joint purchasing of goods and services.
- B. To study the Town's internal funding structure, developing proposals on the most effective and equitable distribution among funding sources for the provision of various services. This shall include but is not limited to permit fees, user fees, special funds, grants, loans and the general property tax. The Committee shall, in its deliberations, consider the relationship between the use of a service, payment for that service and subsidy from other taxpayers, as well as ability to pay, State requirements, and administrative efficiency of the funding system.
- C. To study means of attracting desirable industrial and commercial facilities to Unity, or assisting with expansion of existing businesses. Areas to be explored include but are not limited to tax incentives, loans, grants, training programs, and development of an industrial park.
- D. To stay abreast of municipal and school funding discussions at the State level and participate in policy deliberations that would have an impact on the Town. Opportunities to increase municipal control over internal financial policies and procedures shall be pursued by the Committee.
- E. To review and make recommendations on the annual budget as proposed by the selectmen.
- F. To consider and make recommendations on any other matter that may impact the financial health and quality of services of the residents and taxpayers of the Town of Unity.

The Committee's authority shall be advisory only with regard to fiscal commitments or obligations on behalf of the Town. The Committee may take positions on fiscal policy matters and represent the Town's position on legislation or other public policy deliberations at the State level, provided that the position does not conflict with any vote or known feeling of the Town on the matter.

Any recommendation on a matter requiring town meeting action shall be printed with the article in the warrant and on the ballot, if any, along with such other recommendations as may be included by the selectmen or required by law. The selectmen shall cooperate with and provide the Committee with such information as may be reasonably necessary and available to enable it to carry out its functions under this ordinance.

