

# Sunapee Advisory Budget Committee

“To see if the Town will vote to approve an Advisory Budget Committee consisting of the selectmen, one member of the school board, town department heads, town committee heads and five members of the community at large, appointed by the selectmen. Motion Passed. (From the 1988 Town Meeting Minutes)”

The people that spoke in favor of the article at town meeting said the selectmen needed help and if we had a committee, maybe we could be a community again, work together. We need to plan together; we are a Five-Million-dollar business!

Background: According to our records, a Budget Advisory Committee was established in 1989. The article was a 1988 petitioned article for the establishment of a Budget Committee under the Municipal Budget Act but was amended on the floor to the advisory capacity. The committee is currently a 5-member committee appointed by the Selectmen.

In 1996, another petitioned article for the Municipal Budget Act acceptance was defeated. Since 1988, the Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) has existed, but with varied approaches as how to be most beneficial to the Town voters, which has led to some confusion for the Selectmen, voters, and Committee members. In other words, there has been a lack of consistent guidelines from which all can work.

In 2016, the Board of Selectmen reviewed the guidelines and worked to firm up some of the process that had been misunderstood to make a more positive working relationship. The BAC should work with the town/school to complement the role of the Board of Selectmen in setting the budget for presentation to the voters at the annual meeting. During this review process it was discovered that the actual committee that was defined and voted on by the town meeting was never instituted. At the time of the 1988 Article, there were 3 selectmen, 3 school board members, no town manager form of government and SB2 form of government had not been even an option. So, the committee should consist of many more members, and is, in fact, a town advisory budget committee (Town ABC). In 2016 the town would like to work with the school to make 2 very distinct committees. The basic premise from the warrant article can be interpreted to work for the school in the same way as the town meeting set up the Town's. See sample of Town ABC and School ABC below:

PRESENT: Adding to the challenge, is the fact that our tax bills reflect expenses from four separate political subdivisions: Town Government, State and Local School and County Government. Without adoption of the Municipal Budget Act, the BAC has very little authority relative to the town budget and no authority relative to the School and County budgets. Since the NH Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) sets the county tax rate based upon its budget, expected revenue and the proportion of each community's property valuation to the total valuation, there is very little that can be done by us whether we are under the Budget Act or not. However, it is worthwhile for Sunapee representatives to attend the County budget hearings to express our concerns. Remember. Sunapee is the fifth largest Town, but we pay the highest portion of the County taxes!

Since the implementation of the town budget process is the responsibility of the Town Manager and Selectmen and there appears to be a lack of a clear-cut mandate or authority on the part of BAC members, it seems imperative that guidelines be established for the sake of consistency and continuity. By law, the committee is advisory only and needs to complement the Selectmen as a "watch dog" group. It would be advantageous for the committee to set up a system to review both the town and school budgets (with approval and sanction of the School Board) fairly and equitably.

Town ABC		School ABC	
Selectmen:		School Board	
School Board Member		Selectmen Member	
Department Members	Police Chief	School Department Members	
	Highway Director	Administration	
	Library Director	Director of Special Ed	
	Town Clerk/Tax Collector	Director of Transportation	
	Fire Chief	Director of Buildings & Grounds	
		Director of Technology	
Committee	Recreation Committee	Business Administrator	
Community at Large (5)		Community at Large (5)	
(Advisory)	Town Manager	(Advisory)	Superintendent

SUGGESTED FORMAT:

1. The Member at Large ABC terms are to be for three years, ending April 15, with no more than two consecutive terms. The Board of Selectmen are the appointing and removal authority.
2. Set up meeting of the Town ABC Committee between October 1 and 10 each year to discuss the charge given by the Board of Selectmen to the Town Manager relating to the Budget expectations. Since the Committee includes a quorum of the Selectboard, all meetings will be posted, and minutes are taken as RSA 91-A dictates.
3. Set up a meeting of the School ABC Committee between October 1 and 15 each year to discuss the charge given by the Sunapee School Board Superintendent relating to the Budget expectations. Since the Committee includes a quorum of the School Board, all meetings will be posted, and minutes are taken as RSA 91-A dictates
4. The input from the respective ABC committees should help the governing body to finalize their Budget for the Public Hearing Presentation to residents and voters at their annual meeting. Duties of the ABC are complete immediately following the Budget Hearing
5. The intent of all parties is to present the best possible budget for the community. Hopefully, it can be done in the spirit of cooperation rather than with adversarial overtures.
6. The Body of the ABC should elect a Chair and Vice Chair.
7. Where the Recreation Committee is the only committee that would be pertinent to the warrant article as written, the committee members will appoint either a member of the committee or the Recreation Director to be the representative.
8. Annually after the ABC participates in the budget process, the Selectmen/School Board should discuss the process and make recommendations for Best Practice to the Selectmen who govern this process.
9. A quorum of the members shall include: 3 members of Selectmen/School Board members, 3 Town/School Department Members and 3 Community at Large members.

Approved and adopted this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of August 2016, by a vote of \_\_\_\_\_ in favor and \_\_\_\_\_ opposed.

Amended this 17<sup>th</sup> day of May 2021, by a unanimous vote.

Certified as To a True and Accurate Vote

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Joshua Trow, Chairman  
Sunapee Selectboard