I. OPEN MEETING
A. Opening Ceremonies
Town Manager, Jack Clukey opened the meeting at 6:30 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Roll Call
Budget Advisory Committee Members present: James Annis, Lucas Butler, Kimberly Cavanagh, William Clark, Jamie Gaudion, Sean Letarte, Chris Maas, and Marc Poulin. Absent: Kathleen Thibault. Also present: Town Manager, Jack Clukey.

Town Manager Clukey introduced new member Lucas Butler. The Town Manager, Town Clerk, and committee members gave brief introductions.

C. Adjustments to the Agenda

II. ORGANIZATIONAL ITEMS
A. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman
Town Clerk, Lisa Ronco opened the floor to nominations for Budget Advisory Committee Chairman. Chris Maas was nominated and elected as Chairman.

Town Clerk, Lisa Ronco opened the floor to nominations for Budget Advisory Committee Vice Chairman. Marc Poulin was nominated and elected as Vice Chairman.

B. Meeting Schedule
The committee agreed to meet each Wednesday in March for work sessions on the proposed departmental budgets with a joint meeting of the Budget Advisory Committee Select Board on March 25, 2020 and a public hearing the 2020-2021 proposed municipal and wastewater budget on Wednesday, April 1, 2020.

C. Other- Meeting End Time, Open Session, Etc.
The committee agreed to convene at 6:30 PM and finish their work session by 8:15 PM with an open session until 8:30 PM.
III. FY 2020-2021 MUNICIPAL BUDGET

A. Introduction/Overview

Town Manager, Jack Clukey gave an overview of the budget advisory process. The Town Manager reviewed the FY 2020-2021 Budget Summary and explained how the information is displayed in the columns and line items. The line chart was also reviewed.

The Town Manager said that in the current year’s budget, there was a line item for pre-payment of leases which is not included in the proposed budget, but there are items proposed for capital equipment and buildings for the purchase of a plow truck for public works and improvements to bridges and sidewalks.

The Town Manager talked about changes in the homestead exemption and an increase in State revenue sharing from 2% to 3% in the current year. He explained that this income is from State income tax and sales tax revenue.

Chairman Maas asked about BETE reimbursement.

The Town Manager said that there is a tax exemption for business equipment, but the State reimburses a municipality 50% of what it would have collected for property tax on business equipment.

The Town Manager explained that historically revenue allocated to certain budgets for items such as leases and excise tax is listed in the public works column to show that the amounts do not cover what is spent on roads and highways.

He said it is the same for the solid waste department.

Town Manager Clukey said that in his introductory letter, he discusses that the common thread across each department is a decrease in health insurance costs.

He also said that this is the last budget that will be effected by the minimum wage increase from $7.50/hr to $12.00/hr which creates the need to deal with the rest of the pay scale as other positions are at a below average pay rate, also noting the difficulty in attracting new hires for the police department and snow plow drivers for public works. He said that the adjustments proposed are a 2% COLA with a 3% pay scale adjustment which hopefully will move the town in the right direction, otherwise work force issues will only become more challenging.

B. Protection

Chief Reardon was present on behalf of the police department. He said there has been a 30% increase in productivity and responses. He said that before he was Chief, the town was not handling its own sexual assault cases and now these cases are handled in-house.

He said that the child advocacy center is growing and is a good use of un-used space, making the department more useful and viable to the community.

Chief Reardon also talked about the school system as a subset of our community and said that the department has a great relationship with the schools and that the Headmaster has agreed that the program is going well.

Chief Reardon said that another additional service that the department provides is tending to vehicle lockouts, a service that doesn’t take much time and the community appreciates.
Chief Reardon said that the vast majority of the budget increase for the police department is for personnel as he is proposing an additional 3% over what he has in the past. He explained that the department will lose another officer to a State agency as it is difficult to compete with most other agencies offering $2 more an hour, and noting that part time positions at the County level offer a higher wage than our town offers for full-time positions.

Lucas Butler asked about recruitment and retention.

Chief Reardon said that recruitment and retention has been challenging, especially having to rely on reserve officers. He also said that although he makes a point of drawing attention to the town’s excellent benefit package, potential new hires look at dollars per hour when deciding to accept or decline position.

It was discussed that costs associated with hiring a new officer include academy tuition, training, uniforms, and all else that it takes to equip a new officer along with having to pay overtime to part time officers covering shifts left open by a vacancy, equal 2.5 to 3 times the amount of retaining an existing officer.

Marc Poulin said that an additional 3% is a modest request. He proposed recommending an additional 3%, for a 6% increase in wages for the police department.

The committee discussed the suggestion.

The Town Manager said there is a question as to whether the proposed increase would fall under COLA or a wage adjustment which will come in steps, and asked if it might be better to increase the wage line which would add flexibility and allow the discretion as to how the increase could be applied. He noted that in some instances, the town hires experienced officers and they need to be placed on a higher step in the pay scale than entry level.

Resolution 001-030420
MOTION: Gaudion, seconded: Clark, to recommend an increase to the police department wage line by $7,400.00.

David Johnson, Office Manager/Finance Director expressed concern for the retention issue and said that a financial incentive might be best if offered to officers who maintain employment for a specific length of time, rather than an officer with a potential to leave their position with the town.

Board of Selectmen Chairman Edgerly said that retention is not only an issue with the police department and that these issues exist in the public works department also.

Town Manager Clukey said that the police department officers have to be academy trained and with public works, training is required to operate equipment, although costs are not as high as police academy training. He said he does not see that there is an equivalent with other departments. He said that this is a multi-faceted issue and that employee retention is key, so the town must have the ability to offer competitive wages and benefits.

Vote: Unanimous (8-0). Motion passed.

Chief Reardon said that other proposed increases to the police department budget are nominal such as supplies, maintenance, utilities, and ACO training.
He said there is also a proposal for capital for a ramp at the police station since the existing ramp was built to last for 10 years and was built 18 years ago.

C. Hydrants/Fire
Town Manager, Jack Clukey said that the hydrant budget is to pay the water district for supplying and servicing the hydrants and is part of the fire department’s budget structure.

Fire Chief Joe Guyotte was present to discuss the budget for the fire department. He said that the department has been in the grant writing process and that the department has received a grant to replace the exhaust system and currently there are two SCBA grants in the process for replacement of air packs.

Chief Guyotte said that Dave Johnson and Brian Gaudet are writing grants to replace the 1985 rescue truck and there is a plan to make improvements to the fire station. He said that work will be done through the Charleston Correctional Restitution Program.

He also talked about the need to replace a used snowmobile and hopes that this can be done through a grant program. He said that the department is applying for grants from Stephen King, the Libra Foundation, Connor McGregor, Mackenzie Foundation and Fire House Subs.

Chief Guyotte noted an increase in the budget for testing and inspections and a proposal for another set of gear.

Chief Guyotte said that it is challenging to keep a full roster and that membership is declining.

Town Manager Clukey said that proposed capital for the fire department has increased and that proceeds from grants for air packs and a rescue truck will determine what the department can spend on equipment.

D. General Government
The Town Manager noted an increase in the election budget due to the minimum wage increase and having to hold an additional election for the primaries.

He said that there is a small increase in planning proposed for training and also for Consultant, Gwen Hilton who works with the land use committee.

The Town Manager said that there is also an increase of 2% for COLA and a 3% wage adjustment. He also said there is not a lot of turnover in the administrative office.

He noted a decrease in the budget for the Registry of Deeds due to finding that the appropriated amount was higher than needed.

The Town Manager also explained that the general government budget includes insurance benefits, social security, liability insurance, and workers compensation for all municipal departments in the town. He said that the Maine Highlands Senior Center is owned by the town and is energy efficient.

The Town Manager said that contracted services has been added to the budget proposal for a heater/boiler issue at the municipal building.
It was discussed that heating oil is purchased through a package deal and that the roof being highly insulated has allowed for better heat retention.

The Town Manager said that the general government budget is in good shape as far as capital equipment. He said that the server has been upgraded in order to keep up with technology and security.

E. Contingency and Abatement
Town Manager, Jack Clukey said he is proposing an increase from $20,000 to $30,000 for the contingency portion of the budget. He explained that this is due to the town needing to remove dangerous structures over the past few years.

He explained that there are two types of abatements-an abatement issued when there is an error in assessment or new information requiring a refund of taxes assessed on a property and there is an abatement due to inability to pay because of poverty or illness.

He also explained that abatements are not bound by the amount in the budget as the town is legally required to abate an error in valuation or if the town recognizes an inability to pay.

F. Debt Service
Town Manager, Jack Clukey said that no debt is being proposed in the upcoming fiscal year for municipal government or the wastewater department. He also said that the town has not borrowed in the traditional sense in some years because it has been using the method of lease purchasing.

G. Welfare
The Town Manager explained that the general assistance/welfare program is State mandated and required to be funded. He said that in adopting the State’s model ordinance, a percentage of what the town pays out will be reimbursed.

The Town Manager said that the social services aspect of the budget will be on next week’s agenda and that representatives of the agencies have been invited to next week’s meeting to give a presentation regarding their requests. He explained that the process is that an agency will make a request for a specific amount and the town will make an allocation. He said that a new request has come from Valley Grange and that there is a request from Piscataquis County Search and Rescue which he did not include as he felt that the services they provide are duplicate services of the town’s own fire department. He said that it is up to the budget advisory committee members as to whether they want to include the request of Piscataquis County Search and Rescue.

Jamie Gaudion asked for an explanation of the funeral line item in the welfare budget.

The Town Manager said that the town is asked to utilize the General Assistance program to assist with burials in the case of no next of kin or if the next of kin is unable to pay.

IV. ADJOURN
The meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.
Respectfully submitted by the Town of Dover-Foxcroft Budget Advisory Committee,

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Chris Maas, Chairman  Marc Poulin, Vice Chairman

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James Annis  Kimberly Cavanagh

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William Clark  Jamie Gaudion

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Sean Letarte  Kathleen Thibault