

FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes
Zoom Number 815 7286 6434

2024 MAR 19 AM 7:47

WEDNESDAY, MARCH

Date: February 10, 2024

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Present: Pratt, O'Connor, Wells, Cooper, Kuphal, O'Connell, Cooney

Absent: None

Meeting called to order at 9:35 a.m.

Motioned by Cooper, seconded by Wells to accept the minutes of February 5, 2024 as written. Unanimous.

Jennifer Barrett, Finance Director and Karyn Clark, Acting Town Manager were present at the meeting.

DPW-Keith Caruso, DPW Director

Keith Caruso went over staffing.

Keith Caruso: We started a floater position which is split between the Parks Department and the Highway Department. This was approved last year and filled this year. It is working out well. During the summer this person works in the Parks Department and in the winter he works for the Highway Department.

Keith Caruso went over the Responsibilities of the DPW

The DPW is responsible for the Highway Department, Parks Department, Cemetery Department, Transfer Station, Fleet Maintenance, Tree Department, Snow and Ice, Fuel Station and Street & Traffic Lights.

Tree Warden-Warren Gardner, Tree Warden

Keith Caruso went over the Core Responsibilities

Keith Caruso: We used to outsource a lot of work. Since we now have a bucket truck and a chipper, we save about \$2,000 a day doing the projects in-house. Because we are doing some tree cutting and trimming, it reduces the amount of calls for fallen trees during storms, and have had less power outages due to falling trees or branches.

Jen O'Connell: If a tree on private property needs to be trimmed because they are interfering with the power lines, who is responsible?

Warren Gardner: If a tree on private property overhangs in a public way, I communicate with them to trim them. I sometimes do not get a response.

Nicole Cooney: Do we bill the homeowner if we have to remove the debris from their trees?

Keith Caruso: We just clean it up to keep the road open and safe.

Keith Caruso: That is for the sub-contractors to come in. This is based on what we have had previously.

Jen O'Connell: Do you think this will be enough?

Keith Caruso: I am hoping so.

Keith Caruso went over the Highway Department Metrics

Keith Caruso: We have completed $\frac{1}{2}$ of the paving and resurfacing of West Main Street and Millbury Avenue. We have to coordinate with National Grid, Eversource etc on when they are doing work on the roads. We would like to get back to adding money towards the roads. We do receive money from the State, but the Town also added to that amount when they could.

William Pratt: When a developer comes in, are they responsible to pave the existing road coming into the project?

Keith Caruso: We recommend it, but that is under the direction of the Planning Board.

Jen O'Connell: Why don't we bury the electrical lines when we pave the roads.

Keith Caruso: That would be the responsibility of National Grid. Having them above ground makes it easier for them to work on. We have tried to do a lot of the work in-house. Drainage is one of the in-house items we do.

Charles Cooper: You mentioned that you had a 5-year plan. Do you have it documented?

Keith Caruso: I do. I put together a rough list that has to be done then try to coordinate with the utilities. Sometimes it works out.

Russell Wells: Do you have a time period on when a road can be done again once it is completed?

Keith Caruso: We try not to do the road again for at least 5 years. Unless there is an emergency, we try to leave it alone. We do crack sealer and preventative maintenance during the interim.

Russell Wells: How many miles of road are you responsible for?

Keith Caruso: We have over 95 miles that we are responsible for.

Keith Caruso went over the Metrics of Fleet Maintenance and Fuel Station

Keith Caruso: We now have 2 mechanics. Most of the work is now done in-house rather than outsourcing. The jobs were outsourced to the 2 mechanics we now have. WE maintain 91 vehicles and 55 pieces of additional equipment. We want to start buying stainless steel bodies for our trucks. The cost of these is \$60,000, compared to spending much more for a brand new truck. These could be swapped out in the summer. This would save the Town a lot of money. The cost for a new vehicle is around \$320,000.

William Pratt: What is the life cycle of the vehicles?

Keith Caruso: Due to the salt in the winter, you can probably get 20 years. We run our pickup trucks through the ground, because it isn't worth it to trade it in. We have been very conservative on the Fleet Maintenance budget. If we go over the amount, we would bill it to the individual department. The only maintenance that has to be outsourced are the fire trucks.

Keith Caruso went over the Metrics of the Transfer Station

Keith Caruso: Hauling is outsourced because our truck is not road worthy. Outsourcing keeps our staff at the Transfer Station. For safety reasons, we need to always have 2 people there. If we did the hauling, we would have to hire another person. Class A people are hard to find, if we

need to hire someone. I would like, in the future, to get another laborer to share with my other departments.

Jen O'Connell: How is the tonnage at Wheelabrator?

Keith Caruso: We haven't gone over the limit. We haven't seen a bill, so we are good.

Jennifer Barrett: We receive a check when we don't hit the maximum tonnage. We received a large amount last year.

Keith Caruso went over the Metrics of the Cemeteries and Parks

Keith Caruso: The expansion of Central Cemetery will be starting soon.

Jen O'Connell: How many plots will you get with the expansion?

Keith Caruso: It is hard to say. Each grave will be allowed a certain amount of cremations.

Keith Caruso: The part timers are listed under Parks, but work at both. Four out of five of our new hires were previously our seasonal helpers. We need to start thinking about replacing the salt shed.

Slides on the condition of the salt shed were shown.

Keith Caruso went over the Needs for Optimal Service for the DPW, Cemeteries, Parks and Transfer Station.

William Pratt: Keith's presentation actually showed a return on investment, where other departments did not have the same explanations to support their requests.

Sewer Department-Mark Hollis, PE-Director of Engineering and Facilities and Sewer Ops-Gary Nelson, Sewer Commissioner

Mark Hollis went over the Core Responsibilities of the Sewer Department.

Mark Hollis went over the Staffing Pattern

Mark Hollis: We are looking to fill a laborers position and a seasonal position.

Mark Hollis went over the Metrics of the Sewer Department

Mark Hollis went over the Trends and Needs for Optimal Service

Purchase a new Crane Truck

GIS Map-about 85% accurate

Budget Presentation

Mark Hollis: There is an 8.5% increase for the Upper Blackstone. We have added some new users from the new developments. With the Rice Road Project, we would be collecting the betterment fees and the I/I fees from the developers.

Jen O'Connell: Does the fee change if 40B is involved?

Mark Hollis: They want to talk about that.

Judith O'Connor: What is the betterment fee?

Mark Hollis: It is \$7,500.

Judith O'Connor: On a project that has one building, but many apartments/units, they only get charged \$7,500?

Mark Hollis: It would be \$7,500 for the building and \$3,750 per unit.

Jen O'Connell: What percentage of clean water goes through the system?

Mark Hollis: It is between 10-20%. There are some sump pumps hooked into our sewerage system. We will evaluate the force main in the spring to get ahead of breaks in the line. There are 2 pump stations that need to be replaced. They have the old style pumps.

Charles Cooper: With all of the departments that we furnish I-Pads to, is there a way this cost can be combined?

Jennifer Barrett: I have met with Worldband. They have a list of all of our hardware. This does not include the I-Pads, but we can add them. We will put them in the cycle for replacement just as the laptops and desktops. Each user is assigned a 365 license. We audit what is used.

Facilities-Mark Hollis, PE

Mark Hollis: This budget was previously known as the Municipal Office Building. It includes a new central supply depot. I oversee the professional services related to Town Hall. I also oversee the custodial staff for all Town buildings.

Proposed Staffing

Mark Hollis: The new position that we are looking for is a Facilities Foreman.

Jennifer Barrett: This would be considered a working foreman that would be able to step in when needed.

Jen O'Connell: This is a position that was asked for last year.

Karyn Clark: The current staffing is not capable of handling all of the buildings. We need a full time person. We have changed the structure of this department. With the new software, we should have all the data to justify any additional staffing.

Mark Hollis went over the Metrics of Facilities

Mark Hollis: We have started using Operations Hero as a maintenance tracking system. Four of our municipal buildings have roof leaks. The Town Hall and the Library have HVAC problems.

Mark Hollis went over the Trends and Needs of Facilities

Mark Hollis: The Town Hall HVAC system has several issues. The roof is aging and has an active leak. The cost for a new roof is approximately \$500,000. We are looking to patch and repair where necessary.

Charles Cooper: Can you pool some resources with the schools?

Karyn Clark: We are exploring our options. We are looking to share information on training.

Jennifer Barrett: We are working on Version 2 of the budget. The Health Insurance numbers are in. We hope that by the middle of next week we will have the new numbers.

Jen O'Connell: Regarding Monday's meeting. I have not heard back from BVT. I will give them a call to see what the status is.

Motioned by Cooney, seconded by Wells to adjourn at 12:25 p.m. Unanimous.

Jen O'Connell
Jennifer Barrett
Charles Cooper
Mark Hollis

W. R. Adams
Chad Cipe