

FINANCE COMMITTEE  
Minutes  
Zoom Meeting 918 4781 0903

Date: March 6, 2021

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Present: Kuphal, Gillmore, Wells, Cooper, O'Connell, Cooney, Kupcinkas

Absent: None

Meeting called to order at 9:03 a.m.

Justine Caggiano, Human Resources and Sean Hendricks, Town Manager were present for our meeting.

Rich Hamilton, Fire Chief, was in to discuss his budget.

Rich Hamilton: We cut \$5,000 last year in purchase of services. We eliminated the 2 vacant positions that have not been filled from the budget. We are holding slots from retirees. There is a 1% increase in salaries. Our Purchase of Services is level funded and the Supplies is level funded. We also level funded the Professional Development. Capital Outlay is for paving and painting at Station 3. Sean said that the DPW should be able to do this. It hasn't been done since 1973. We need to hire an OPM before we can put our project out to bid. We should be ready to ask in the fall for the new fire station.

Sean Hendricks: WE are taking the Capital Outlay cost out of the budget and putting it into the Free Cash Article. We are not denying the Capital requests, just putting them in the article. Cruisers will also be included in the article.

Russell Wells: What is an OPM?

Sean Hendricks: It is an Owners Project Manager.

Rich Hamilton: They would be part of the bidding process. They are paid by the hour.

Charles Cooper: Why is the paving and painting separate from the other Capital Outlay?

Rich Hamilton: The paving and painting are a major job. The rest is routine maintenance.

Jennifer O'Connell: When will you be breaking ground on the Fire Station?

Rich Hamilton: Most likely in the Spring of next year. It will take 18 months to complete.

Jennifer O'Connell: How many firefighters do we have?

Rich Hamilton: We have 50 active firefighters.

Charles Cooper: How are you doing with PPE?

Rich Hamilton: It was hard to get at first, but we received some from IBA, Gorettis, Rays True Value and Millbury National Bank. We are looking at getting some grants through Senator Moore.

George Gillmore: I heard that there was more funding through this new stimulus package.

Jennifer O'Connell left at 9:23 a.m.

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Brian Lewos, Police Chief, was in to discuss his budget

Brian Lewos: Salaries are up due to the contract. I am looking for an increase for the Administrative Assistant.

Kevin Kuphal: Did we move the salaries for the dispatchers?

Justine Caggiano: I can send you the actuals. The increases are at 1% plus step increases. The Town Manager and I will be going into negotiations with the union.

Sean Hendricks: I had no differences in what was originally there. We are still operating without a Finance Director. When the previous Finance Director left, we had some huge access problems. Some of the links were not working.

Justine Caggiano: The Administrative Assistant position is not a union position.

Sean Hendricks: I do not disagree that this person is below market rate. The plan is to do part of her raise this year and the rest next year.

Russell Wells: The #14 full time officer is going from \$67,000-\$84,000?

Brian Lewos: This would be for a lateral transfer. He/She would be coming in at the top step. We have been having problems finding a person to fill this position. We budgeted high because we don't know what kind of experience this person will have.

George Gillmore: Are there any significant issues within the budget coming up?

Sean Hendricks: Everyone is working within their budget at this time. I hope that with the last few months, it stays the same.

Nicole Cooney: Did you agree to put on an additional Resource Officer?

Brian Lewos: I would have to hire an additional officer. I do not have the staff to add another SRO. I would like to bring my staff to 25. I do not have enough officers per shift.

Kevin Kuphal: The training line went from \$20,000 to \$31,500.

Brian Lewos: The physical fitness tests went from 2 a year to 3 a year. There is a \$500 stipend for passing each test.

Nicole Cooney: Why did you take out the new officer uniforms?

Brian Lewos: There was an article at the Special Town Meeting that covers this.

Sean Hendricks: I plan to dive into past expenditures in the future and add a 3-5 year comparison. Monthly expenditure reports will be available for the Finance Committee. I update the Board of Selectmen monthly.

Kevin Kuphal: Are the police cruisers in the Free Cash article?

Sean Hendricks: Yes, they are.

Charles Cooper: Computers/IT, is this for the cruisers?

Brian Lewos: We had some computer towers that were failing. We are upgrading some of these. We may look into replacing the DSX Card System. It was originally installed in 2003-2005.

Sean Hendricks: We will have a complete inventory of what we have between July 1st and September 1st.

Brian Lewos: There was a survey done on salaries for the Administrative Assistant in the surrounding towns. She is an outstanding employee and I wanted to bump her up to a more fair salary. She handles the detail revenues. She has been with us for 24 years. I would hate to lose her to retirement or another municipality. She handles the payables and the payroll, both weekly and bi-weekly.

Justine Caggiano: She has more of an executive assistant role. She deals with a lot of confidential items.

Kevin Kuphal: Jen had asked what the update was on the School Department.

Sean Hendricks: We are pushing back to the original plan. I have already spoken to Mr. Bedard and Mr. Myers about this.

Keith Caruso, Operations Manager, was in to discuss the DPW budgets

#### Tree Warden

Keith Caruso: The new truck has been ordered. We should have it in the next month or two.

There are no other changes in the budget except the stump grinding. We are concentrating on cutting trees around the power lines. Warren has done a great job.

Kevin Kuphal: Are there any capital items?

Keith Caruso: Not at this time.

Charles Cooper: When will the tree removal be completed around the power lines?

Keith Caruso: Warren has been going around the town checking. The only cost to the town is the police detail.

#### Public Works Administration

Keith Caruso: There are not many changes in this budget.

Nicole Cooney: When are you planning to put in the 2 administrative positions?

Sean Hendricks: The Director's position is the only one not filled at this time. The question is whether or not the person needs to be a PE. The Charter would have to be changed to hire without a PE. We will look at the organization of the department once the Charter has been voted on. We hope to have a Special Town Meeting to vote on a new Charter.

#### DPW Maintenance and Ops

Keith Caruso: The only change to the budget is salaries. I would like to change some of the seasonal positions to laborer positions.

Kevin Kuphal: Are there any capital items planned for this budget?

Keith Caruso: Not on this budget.

#### Highway Department

Keith Caruso: We are asking for more money in Purchase of services. We do sub some of our work out. One of our lease vehicles will be paid up in this budget. The other one has a couple of years left on it.

Russell Wells: What is the "Lease TD North"?

Keith Caruso: That is for the lease of the loader, chipper, catch basin truck and SUV.

#### Snow and Ice

Keith Caruso: This is level funded.

Albert Kupcinskis: How much more difficult was it to do snow removal in the center of town?

Keith Caruso: It was challenging, but we did it.

### Street Lights

Keith Caruso: We own all of the Street Lights in town. There were some issues with the contractors that installed them. We are trying to be conservative with this budget.

### Transfer Station

Keith Caruso: Casella's prices were a little lower. We are in the 2nd year of our contract. This went up a little due to recycling.

Albert Kupcinskis: Where we are paying to get rid of recyclables, is it cost effective to just send them to Wheelabrator?

Keith Caruso: We are mandated by the State to recycle.

Russell Wells: What is the status of the solar project?

Keith Caruso: The State wants to investigate it more. It will be about another year.

Russell Wells: Compactors would save us money on the recycling.

Keith Caruso: We pay by the truck. With compactors we would eliminate some of the truck loads.

### Sewer Enterprise

Keith Caruso: I would like to thank Gary Nelson and his board for all of their help. Employees that retired will be replaced with a laborer's position. We had a line break previously at the Upper Blackstone which makes our numbers high.

Gary Nelson: I/I will be a requirement for at least the next 10 years.

Sean Hendricks: As long as there is sewerage, this will always be there.

### Parks Maintenance and Ops

Sean Hendricks: This budget is pretty steady. There is an extra \$10,000 in Purchase of Services. The need for increased cost is associated with the downtown project. The drainage of the rain gardens needs to be cleaned every 6 months.

Kevin Kuphal: Is the new truck replacing a vehicle or adding one?

Keith Caruso: This will include a plow and extended cab to bring workers to the sites. It is a brand new truck under state bid. This is adding a truck. We only have one truck at the moment.

Sean Hendricks: This will be in the Free Cash Article.

### Cemetery Department

Keith Caruso: Everything stayed the same. We are working to complete the irrigation.

Sean Hendricks: The Capital Outlay will be in the Free Cash Article. Fencing will be replaced to make it look more pleasing. Irrigation will be used to help with the upkeep.

Russell Wells: Have you utilized the prison system to help out?

Keith Caruso: We have utilized them in the past. It is tough to get them with so many towns wanting to use them also.

### Gas/Diesel

Keith Caruso: As of yesterday, we are at \$37,000 in the budget. It is a tough budget depending on how the winter is. This is a conservative number. Our mechanic orders the fuel. Once the meter starts flashing, we order it.

George Gillmore: I would like to see a report on the Employee Benefits, Health Care.

Sean Hendricks: This will be reflected in my report.

Russell Wells: When do you think the year to date information will be available?

Sean Hendricks: I have it and will send it out to everyone on Monday. I don't have everyone's email at the moment.

Motioned by Cooney, seconded by Kupcinskis to adjourn at 11:30 a.m. Cooney, yes;  
Kupcinskis, yes; Wells, yes; Cooper, yes; Gillmore, yes; Kuphal, yes

Charles R. Cooney Jr.  
Russell Wells  
Nicole L. Cooney  
Jill Conkall