

FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes
Zoom Meeting 817 6887 2430

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MILLBURY, MASS.

Date: February 26, 2022

Time: 9:00 a.m.

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

Absent: Gillmore

Meeting called to order at 9:02 a.m.

Jen O'Connell: Welcome to our annual Saturday Budget Meeting.

Motioned by Cooney, seconded by Kuphal to accept the minutes of 9/27/21, 10/26/21 and 2/15/22 as written. Kuphal, yes; Cooney, yes; Cooper, yes; Pratt, yes; Wells, yes; O'Connell, yes

Jennifer Barrett, Finance Director, Sean Hendricks, Town Manager and Scott Despres, Board of Selectmen were present at the meeting.

Keith Caruso, DPW Supervisor, was in at 9:04 a.m. to discuss his budget

Public Works Budget

Keith Caruso: We are proposing an additional person. We want to keep up with the Downtown Project.

Sean Hendricks: We are adding a person to help get us through. We had to put back 50% of the Director's salary. There are some reductions in the budget.

Jen O'Connell: Have you started the hiring process for a Director?

Sean Hendricks: This will be more of a Co-Director. We have an appropriate job description and will post in probably March. The plan is to have a Director of Highway and Parks Operations and a Director of Engineering and Facilities. We would like to maximize the skills of a Town Engineer. We need to have him act as an Engineer instead of an Administrator. This person would work closely with the Highway Director and will also aid in helping the Planning Department. The 2 positions will split the duties. We added an additional person at the Fall Special Town Meeting and will be asking for another one at this Annual Town Meeting.

Jennifer Barrett: There is a reduction of one Seasonal Employee.

Russell Wells: Didn't we agree to add someone last year?

Sean Hendricks: Yes, that was at the October Special Town Meeting.

Russell Wells: Are we suggesting that we will need more with the 2nd part of the Revitalization, or are the two positions enough?

Sean Hendricks: These additional positions will take care of our needs. Keith and I have already researched this out.

Nicole Cooney: East Millbury Park wasn't cut last year. With losing a seasonal, would we still be able to maintain all of our parks?

Keith Caruso: That is the positive of having a full-time laborer over a seasonal laborer. The hours for a seasonal worker are limited to after school. Will still have seasonals, but the full timer can float wherever we need them.

Jen O'Connell: Are you suggesting that we keep the seasonal position?

Nicole Cooney: Yes, that was my thought. We are talking about only \$10,000.

Keith Caruso: The full time position will be filled by one of our seasonal workers that has been with us for a couple of years.

Sean Hendricks: We can always use more people. We just need to prioritize.

Kevin Kuphal: Do you have more applicants for seasonal positions, than you have positions available?

Keith Caruso: We offer first to our previous people. Some have moved on and some come back.

Jen O'Connell: How do you determine how many people you need?

Keith Caruso: We have 2 equipment operators and they are out every day. The laborers move around. We would like to avoid using our equipment operators for jobs that the laborers can do.

William Pratt: How often is it a problem that you don't have enough people? I am looking for specific data to support the increase in personnel.

Sean Hendricks: We could start maintaining a log on all calls that come in. There are some situations that we cannot control, mainly catch basin problems, or animals in the road, that we have to respond to. We don't typically track the calls. Vacations and sick time also make it difficult to determine manpower. We know we need people focused on the Downtown Revitalization. We can, going forward, start tracking the calls.

Highway Department Budget

Jennifer Barrett: We moved the Police Details to the Police Department Budget.

Jen O'Connell: Will you lose visibility as to who is using the details?

Jennifer Barrett: This would save time by combining it into the proper department. This saves a lot of time and paperwork by having it in one budget instead of three.

Charles Cooper: Will this now put added hours and time to the Police Department if they need to make sure that this line item is kept within budget?

Jennifer Barrett: The departments will work collaboratively on this to maintain the account.

Sean Hendricks: It is not always programmable or predictable with DPW details. It will be a collaborative effort. There are still checks and balances in place.

Jennifer Barrett: We will still have to do the billing on Special Projects.

Russell Wells: Who makes that call on the size of the detail, the Police Department or DPW?

Keith Caruso: It is a combination of the Police and the DPW. We more than likely only have one officer on our details.

Russell Wells: I see a reduction in Highway Supplies.

Keith Caruso: This is based on what we have used in the past. I am trying to cut corners.

Jen O'Connell: The reduction of the seasonal person in the Parks Department, is that the same person that we are replacing with a full timer?

Keith Caruso: Yes, it is.

Snow and Ice Budget

Jen O'Connell: There is a \$65,000 increase in this budget. Is this because we have been over budget in the past? Is this to lessen the gap at the end of the year?

Jennifer Barrett: Yes, the difference has been raised on the re-cap every year. This affects the tax rate. We should be paying the tax in the year that it is spent, not the following year.

Street Lights Budget

Jen O'Connell: What is the difference to date? This seems higher than what we have had in the past.

Jennifer Barrett: This isn't just for the electricity on the lights. We are paying professionals to do the maintenance on these lights.

Transfer Station Budget

Jen O'Connell: Hauling has gone up \$10,000?

Jennifer Barrett: We are reducing that by \$40,000.

Keith Caruso: We have been tracking the loads and what we pay per load.

Jen O'Connell: Did we buy additional trucks for hauling?

Keith Caruso: We purchased 2 trailers for a very low price for fairly new ones. WE have a container specifically for construction debris.

Gasoline/Diesel Fuel Budget

Jen O'Connell: Did you budget enough for fuel, given the current situation overseas?

Sean Hendricks: We are hoping so.

Jennifer Barrett: We are already over budget this year. I have bills that I cannot pay. I will have to bring this up at your next meeting.

Jen O'Connell: I am not convinced that we have enough in this budget.

Sean Hendricks: We will keep an eye on this. We may have to come back and change this before we finalize the budget.

Jen O'Connell: Just by looking at current pricing, we are potentially looking at an additional \$50,000 or more for this budget. We will look at the rest of your budgets and if we have any questions, we will have you come back at a later date, before voting on the entire budget.

Gary Nelson, Sewer Commissioner, was in to discuss his budget at 10:02 am

Sewer Budget

Gary Nelson: The Upper Blackstone Assessment shows \$1.4 Million. It is actually \$1,211,820. The Capital Expenses reads \$220,000. We have an article to transfer \$250,000 from the Sewer Enterprise Fund for this. We are asking for a new Jockey Pump to help with the main pump. Our increase is about 13% over last year.

Jen O'Connell: Are we anticipating extending the sewer and water lines up Rt 146?

Gary Nelson: We are doing a study right now to see what it would cost to extend the sewer and water line.

Sean Hendricks: The sewer portion of extending the water and sewer line to the Sutton line would be about \$80,000-\$85,000.

Gary Nelson: Sutton has shown some interest in seeing what it costs.

Sean Hendricks: We plan to tie in to Farren Circle for the water line for a distance of 1500 feet. The sewer would tie in from Herricks Lane. We are just looking to see what the cost is so that projects, up the road, can tie in. We are working with DOT on this.

Jen O'Connell: Will any of this be on the Warrant at the Annual Town Meeting?

Sean Hendricks: No. We are looking at a probably \$25 Million project. It is still in the early stages. There is some industrial development land that people would be interested in if the utilities were already there.

Jen O'Connell: How much is in the Enterprise Fund?

Gary Nelson: There is over \$3 Million in the Enterprise Fund and \$900,000 in the Retained Earnings.

Brian Lewos, Police Chief, in to discuss his budget at 10:13 am

Jen O'Connell: You added back the second cruiser.

Brian Lewos: Yes, I did. If it is not feasible this year, I can get by. We plan to trade in 4 of our old cars.

Jen O'Connell: You are adding a new officer?

Brian Lewos: We are at 21 officers at this time. There was an officer added to our budget this year, but we haven't filled that yet. The closest academy was Plymouth. There is an academy opening in July in Boylston. We cannot get a seat in the academy at this time.

Jen O'Connell: Will you be putting in the Civil Service Article back on the Warrant?

Brian Lewos: Yes. We did more research and have been in contact with the Union on this. I think we are in a better place this time. If you approve the new position in this budget, it would bring me to 23 officers, once we fill this past year's, too.

Brian Lewos went over some statistics concerning phone calls they handle, including the many calls from the Shoppes at Blackstone Valley.

Jen O'Connell: Do the detail officers respond to the calls at the Mall, or does the response come from the department?

Brian Lewos: The details take care of calls that they can handle without calling for assistance.

Charles Cooper: Has anyone approached the Mall about having a security company come in to help out?

Brian Lewos: The Movie Theater has their own security guards, but they call us to handle situations that arise.

Jen O'Connell: Are you still having issues when it comes to vacation time?

Brian Lewos: Patrolmen can earn up to 30 vacation days, depending on years of service. Dispatchers can earn up to 15 days.

Sean Hendricks: The 30 vacation days are after many years on the job.

Brian Lewos: We currently have 4 full time dispatchers. We filled the position that was vacant due to a retirement, but it is short term. This person is in the military. I was speaking with the Town Manager to try to upgrade the dispatcher salary. This is a hard position to fill. We do have a permanent part time position to cover certain shifts. I would like to create a Dispatch Supervisor position. We are required to look at the calls and evaluate the dispatchers. We cannot have the dispatchers do this. It would not be ethical to have them grade themselves on their job performance. We may lose our funding for grants if we don't do the evaluations. If I cannot get a Supervisor, I would ask that the part time position be changed to full time.

Jen O'Connell: Why is there such a reduction in the Crossing Guards?

Jennifer Barrett: That was missed. We will be putting the \$3,600 back in the budget.

Brian Lewos: Our details are tracked using our detail book, as we have always used. There is a 10% administration fee for every detail except for the Town and the DOT.

Jen O'Connell: Is retirement based on base pay or does it include their details?

Jennifer Barrett: The only thing the Town is responsible for is the base pay and medicare.

Jen O'Connell: Professional Services is up?

Jennifer Barrett: That is because of the new structure of the allocation of funds in the budget.

William Pratt: Cruisers were part of the Stabilization Fund when I was previously on the Committee. What are the metrics of the number of officers and cruisers needed?

Jen O'Connell: We used to use the Stabilization Fund or Free Cash to purchase large items. We decided to put it back in the budget.

Jennifer Barrett: Because it is a recurring expense, we put it in the budget. If we need more than 1 or 2, we would put it in an article.

Jen O'Connell: What is the lifespan of a cruiser?

Brian Lewos: It depends on how much it is used. We try to take care of our fleet. National Standards recommends that there are 2.2 officers per 1000 residents. If we went by that, we would be at 30 officers. I do not like to have less than 3 officers per shift.

Russell Wells: What percentage of calls are Mall related? I am just looking for a ballpark figure.

Brian Lewos: I would say about 10%, maybe a little higher. I can look that up for you.

Jen O'Connell: Your dispatchers handle all 911 calls?

Brian Lewos: Yes, they do. They handle Police, Fire and Ambulance, anything that comes over the 911 system.

Sean Hendricks: Chief Gasco is away, so he was not able to come today. I would rather not discuss his budget as it is his first one and he should be the one to present it and answer questions.

Jen O'Connell: We can have him come in at a Monday evening meeting.

Meeting was recessed at 11:05 am

Meeting reconvened at 11:17 am

Town Manager Budget

Jen O'Connell: The School Department has paid part of the Human Resource position. How is this shift to Assistant Town Manager going to affect their budget?

Sean Hendricks: The Town is going to get out of having the School pay any part of the salary. The Treasurer/Collector's office has been handling some of this. The new HR person could administer to the Town and Assistant Town Manager. This would bring the salary to about \$110,000. I wanted to talk to the Finance Committee to get their input. There is no salary in the HR department budget right now. It is in the Town Manager budget.

Kevin Kuphal: Are you looking for someone that is aiming for a Town Manager position?

Sean Hendricks: Most Towns, with an Assistant Town Manager, have that person responsible for the HR duties.

William Pratt: How do you see that this is an added value? What can the Assistant Town Manager position benefit better than an HR person?

Sean Hendricks: They can help with collective bargaining negotiations and property and liability insurance claims. The Town would benefit from having an Assistant Town Manager to help out with some of the issues that come up on a daily basis. The Town is moving in many directions.

Russell Wells: The Town Manager's hourly rate is going up?

Sean Hendricks: That is the Administrative Assistant. She is not at market rate. She works a lot of hours.

Town Planner

Jen O'Connell: What does this look like with the departure of Laurie Conners? Will we have to go up on the salary?

Sean Hendricks: Based on the market research that I have done, I think we are in a good spot.

Sean Hendricks: Getting back to my budget, what is the feeling of the Finance Committee on an Assistant Town Manager?

Jen O'Connell: I think it will be a tough sell at Town Meeting. It depends on who is there.

Charles Cooper: It makes sense to have a #2 in line just in case something happens and you cannot be there.

Kevin Kuphal: Would you be able to share, at Town Meeting, the amount of extra hours you put in to get the job done? It would give the citizens a better idea on what we need.

Sean Hendricks: I can do that.

Jennifer Barrett: Benefits Management would also be part of the duties of the Assistant Town Manager. The Treasurer/Collector has been completing this on Saturdays for about 4 hours every week, and sometimes on Sundays.

Russell Wells: I would like to see a detailed list of what the duties of the Assistant Town Manager/HR and I would like that the salary broken down in the Salary line.

William Pratt: You have to have a justification on what you cannot get done in a timely manner without this person.

Charles Cooper: There was, at one time, an Assistant Town Manager. What happened to that?

Sean Hendricks: He was not the Assistant Town Manager. He was the HR Director who then became the Interim Town Manager.

Charles Cooper: I am in agreement with adding this position. I do not envy you to have to explain this at Town Meeting.

Jen O'Connell: We can leave the budget as it is right now and if we have to change it, we will. We can just think it over right now.

Sean Hendricks: I will be using a lot of my man hours on the TIP Project on McCracken Road. This is something that I will not just hand over to someone that is not familiar with it.

Nicole Cooneyd: The addition of an Assistant Town Manager will not change the hours that Sean is already working.

Next Meeting Monday, March 14, 2022.

Discussion will be the rest of the Town Hall Departments

Library

Asa Waters

Fire Chief

Jen O'Connell: I would also like to discuss with Keith about whether or not the fees will be increasing at the Transfer Station.

Jen O'Connell: Did any of the members make it to the School Committee meeting?

Jennifer Barrett: They voted their budget as you see it in the paperwork you received.

Jen O'Connell: Are we at the levy limit?

Jennifer Barrett: We are above the levy, but below the maximum allowable. It is a very tight budget. We are within the exempted levy.

Motioned by Cooney, seconded by Kuphal to adjourn at 12:15 p.m. Kuphal, yes; Cooney, yes; Cooper, yes; Pratt, yes; Wells, yes; O'Connell, yes

Jennifer O'Connell
William Pratt
Sean Hendricks
Nicole L. Cooney
Russell Wells