

**Selectmen Meeting  
Minutes  
March 10, 2022**

Joint meeting with the Finance Committee, Selectman Kobus, Selectman Devault and Selectman Perusse were in attendance. Finance Committee members in attendance were Mr. Robert Latini, Mr. William McGrail, Mr. Michael Dziokonski, Ms. Erin Powell, Mr. Paul Cherubini, and Mr. Bernard Hastings. Attendees were Town Accountant Ms. Diane Magliozzi and Town Administrator Mr. Michael Ward. Finance Chairman Latini opened the meeting at 6:02PM.

FY23 Budget Hearings

Mr. Latini invited Superintendent of Public Works forward for review of the FY23 budget submission for the department.

FY23 DPW Budget Review

Superintendent McGown was before the boards to review the FY23 budget requests for the Public Works department. He explained there are 4 departments to the review including three enterprise funds, Water & Sewer Enterprise, Landfill Enterprise and Rubbish Enterprise funds. He prepared the budgets not including any raises, the union contract will expire at the end of the year. He began review of the Road Department budget, explaining he including funding for overtime to cover the additional time maintaining the downtown. The cleaning and maintenance is done on off hours typically in the early morning creating overtime hours for the employees. One line item with an increase is the fuel purchase line item, he increases it to \$110,000 from \$95,000 and may need to increase more he is watching the fuel cost continue to rise. He added \$10,000 to the Snow& Ice expense. Chairman Latini asked for it to be increased more. Ms. Magliozzi explained it was \$70,000 in FY21, once this amount is increased it cannot go back down, she recommended sticking with it as is. Discussion continued with road resurfacing discussion, it was reviewed the Chapter 90 funding is inadequate for the amount of resurfacing needed. Funding from the landfill project was used to offset the costs of the downtown project, eventually it may be a good resource to use for additional road resurfacing. Mr. McGown continued the review with the Water/Sewer Enterprise fund, this year the department got a 1 ton dump truck which is part of the w/s debt schedule including the interest. The debt schedule is a big part of this budget but there is a lot that will expire in 2024/2025 &2026. About half of the debt is due to expire and there will be the ability to borrow more. Mr. Dziokonski asked if there is still work being done on the infrastructure and aging pipes. Mr. McGown explained yes and it will continue through the year, the EPA is mandating it be done, especially in areas where

there has been back up, these are problem areas which will need to be fixed. The account is in good shape there is half a million in retained earnings. Selectman Perusse asked what an example is of miscellaneous spending. Mr. McGown explained the phone bills and other expenses, as much as possible is expended through that line item. The purchase of new equipment, miscellaneous supplies, and subcontractors used to clear sewer lines, along with pump stations expenses. He reviewed the Rubbish Enterprise fund, it is similar to last year, the debt payment is used for lease on trucks, and generally the old truck is replaced with a new one, we rotate the lease payment. Mr. McGrail asked about the cost of fuel and its significant increase. Mr. McGown agreed this is in one item that will increase. Selectman Perusse asked about the longevity line item. Mr. McGown explained that is a payment to the union employee based on the service time. Review continued with Landfill budget, Mr. McGown reviewed this is the last year to operate as of October 31, this should be done. He has put out to bid the pond dredging and estimates the cost of it with the landfill capping to be approximately \$6 million. He is aware there is money in the reserve fund and the stabilization fund. He plans to prepare a warrant article for the additional funded needed. He plans to complete the pond dredging and then with cap landfill the town can put solar panels on top with the money collected to maintain the landfill. He reviewed there is 9 million in the surplus of the landfill enterprise fund, and \$5 million in the stabilization fund. Selectman Kobus asked what he anticipates the cost to dredge the pond. Mr. McGown explained the dredging will be about \$3million and the capping will be about \$3 million. It is tough to estimate about 15 companies have taken out plans, the numbers I think that re reasonable would be between \$3 or \$3.45 million, he stated he would be shocked if it came back at \$4million. Mr. McGrail asked if it will be done by October 31. Mr. McGown agreed explaining the materials have to be brought in by that date or else they will have to be dumped somewhere else. Mr. McGrail asked if there is a penalty if not completed. Mr. McGown sated yes that is why he has the dredge project out to bid. Mr. Hasting asked what will happen to employees at the dump. Mr. McGown explained the employees at the dump, one will relocate to Water Filtration plant and the other will retire. Currently there are three at the department which will return to the department. Mr. Cherubini asked who is responsible for the amount take out of pond. Mr. McGown explained it will be down to the sandy gravel. Mr. McGown explained he plans to submit a few warrant articles he is still working on. The boards thanked him for the review

#### FY23 Treasurer/Collector Budget Review

Mr. John Kittredge explained he is a joint operation, 4 full time staff made up of 2 offices. The miscellaneous line item is spent, all of it, the department lives within its means. This amount is needed to support the department. He reviewed the debt schedule, explaining

some amounts will be refinanced in FY23, he explained the number presented is the amount owed. At this time there are three town meeting articles not spent that are outstanding, including the feasibility study for Middle School of 1 million. At the end of June he will see what kind of money has been spent and BAN as much as needed to be spent. He explained the BAN is a temporary borrowing with a low cost interest rate of about 1.5% or 2%, he estimates about \$2.2 million will be needed to borrow. He is aware next year there will be more articles approved and more borrowing needed. He reviewed the Health Insurance will have some changes, Fallon announced they be leaving so the plans being offered will change. To replace Fallon there is a comparable Blue Cross Blue Shield plan the rates are increasing by 8.5%, which is approximately an increase of four or five hundred thousand, based on the current enrollment and the rate increase. If more employees join it will affect the numbers. He explained Collector's office implemented a new on line collection software, it is City Hall payments. This has transformed the online payment process. It has shown many improvements to the process. Selectman Kobus asked about the debt service information, what is outstanding is the item farthest right column. Mr. Kittredge agreed, he explained it is about \$9.6 million and will end up at \$7.9 million, \$2.4 million will be part of the BAN. Selectman Kobus asked about the Rauscher Farm anticipated pay off. Mr. Kittredge explained they have dates indicated on schedule, some are debt excluded. Ms. Magliozzi explained she is working with Mr. Ward an updating the schedule and will provide what is borrowed and what is paid off. Mr. Kittredge explained the town has done tremendous things over the last five years and is in good shape with bond council.

#### FY23 Facilities Department Budget Review

Mr. Brian Farragher was before the board to review the budget request for the Facilities Department. He began with review of the department salaries, he added a part time position that will cover the cleaning and maintenance of the School Department Central office, at this time he is outsourcing this service but has decided to change that. He reviewed the union contract is expiring in June. A majority of the salaries are maxed out and have no other steps to move and the COLA hasn't been set yet. He explained he has included summer employees in the line item, which are 4 part time positions. He level funded the overtime, but intends to take a deeper look this may increase by \$10,000, the reason is an employees is entitled to overtime once they work over the 40 hours. He reviewed a bid change is in equipment, the Middle School needs a generator and boiler. The boiler does not pass the state inspection and the building cannot operate on one. He has been able to get a rental to have on standby incase an issue arrived, for 3 months the cost was \$15,000. Per month. This amount will increase if installed. He is reviewing the cost to buy versus rent with the new school anticipated. He hopes the cost will go down depending on the vendor plan. The generator at the school wasn't working, so he has decided to rent one until the new school is completed. This unit is portable and can

be moved from building to building depending on the need. This is an expensive rental at \$3500.00 per month. The town may want to buy a portable unit, he intends to research more, now until the end of year he will continue to rent. Mr. Cherubini asked where he got the funding this year to support these expenses. Mr. Farragher explained he held off on making equipment purchases. He continued review with the tree removal line item, he raised this from \$35,000 to \$50,000. He has been collaborating with National Grid in trying to identify the hazardous trees that need to be removed. He has 5/6 currently on his radar, the funding supports removing those on the tree list. A lot of work was needed when the micro burst hit the town, there was a lot used for cleanup. The Capital Improvements line item has been level funded, he has some building assessments that he is waiting for the final reports. The main focus is on the contractual obligations, he has added items where it was known to him, more to come. He explained he will have some warrant articles regarding the HVAC systems for the schools, the boilers. A replacement A/C unit is needed at the elementary school. Mr. Cherubini asked about the water shut off valve at the Fuller Field. Mr. Farragher explained that has been allocated for this year but a difference of opinion at the Park & Recreation meeting, so a revised quote was more than what had been budgeted for the original quote. This is on the radar and falls under facilities. Discussion continued regarding the maintenance of the downtown. Mr. Farragher explained this is not in his budget, the DPW have been maintaining the downtown.

#### FY23 Police Department Budget Review

Police Chief Brian Coyne began review explaining this is his first time creating the budget so he welcomes input and feedback. Currently the Department is made up of 29 sworn officers, 1 civilian administrator, and 10 dispatchers. The Union contracts expire on June 30. He reviewed the salary numbers will change with the contractual obligations. There are a lot of retirements coming up. Everything is down due to a lot of officers starting out, the costs are lower. One change is the Administrative Assistant will be made full time. Currently the department is down four patrolmen, he plans to interview over the next 2 to 3 months and try to schedule the academy for July. The overtime budget will have an increase. The Dispatch Center combined 4 years ago with the Fire Department, it works well now, and there has been a lot of turn over. Some costs are higher than anticipated. Discussion continued regarding the overtime figures, they are a lot higher than anticipated to cover the department when understaffed. This will change once the hiring process is complete but that is months out, due to academy training required. Chief Coyne explained this cost is impacted by investigation work as well. Review continued regarding the hiring process under Civil Service and the status of the community if they leave Civil Service. Chief Coyne explained he recently attended a Chief's Association meeting, there is a lot of turnover at this time. Over 100 new Police Chiefs in MA. In the Department there are 2 new Lieutenants, creating opening for new Sergeants. A long time Detective will be

retiring soon, so that position will have to be appointed. With retirements you lose experienced staff, but the new guys have a lot of energy and new ideas. He continued review with the costs for new radios, this has an increase from \$2000 to \$5000, which includes maintenance and repairs. He continued with the training and education, this is about \$3000 per new officer and the training costs for the department are about \$40,000, covering the mandated training required for dispatch and officers. He explained he is asking for a new software system that will cost about \$46,000 with an annual maintenance fee of \$8000, totaling about \$54,000.00. He also would like to update the cameras in the interview room. There is an added cost for the Fire Alarm system, when the dispatch merged there was a dispute on the bill for the call boxes in the amount of \$4000, currently this is in the Fire Department budget. There is also a \$250.00 per month cable connection fee associated with the system, he plans to work with the Fire Department to cover the costs. The rationale is the Dispatch should pay bill. Administrator Ward explained this will have to be discussed with the Fire Chief to offset the cost, there is no oversight from dispatch of the system, and this is an annual maintenance cost and monthly fee. Mr. Ward explained it is used for the Fire Department. Mr. McGrail asked for guidance on which budget to include the cost in. Police Chief Coyne continued review with the IT services, including fixed costs of \$19000.00 for membership fees and accreditation costs. He also has expense of cell cleaning which is a company used all over the state. The new equipment would be the software costs, which will include updates for medical calls for dispatch, a screen comes up and a script to follow. He concluded he review addressing new to the department will be the return of Bicycles for certain shifts and he is investigating body cameras and for new equipment he is going to purchase ballistic blankets. He is also redesigning the shield used by the department, he is working with the department on a new design.

Town Administrator Ward distributed a presentation he completed with an overview of the budget process including a timeline. He asked for the members to review and if they have questions please ask at the next meeting. He also provided a raw spreadsheet of the current revenue expenditures. This is made up of the quick submittals that have been collected to date, it doesn't include any warrant articles or the school budget new hires, which will impact the health insurance cost. He did include the new Chapter 70 funding along with ESSER and SOA funding. He reviewed the free cash number is \$4.125 million which is double over what we have seen in prior years. Mr. McGrail asked about the Tax Title revenue or the Cannabis impact fees. Mr. Ward explained those haven't been collected yet, that will be in next budget. Other funding sources would be ARPA funds. Next meeting scheduled for March 22. Meeting adjourned at 8:15PM