

**Selectmen Meeting  
Minutes  
March 22, 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. School Committee members Mr. Joel Bates, Ms. Tena Zapantis, Mr. Brendan Bailey and Ms. Debra Goodsell. Finance Chairman Latini opened the meeting at 6:02PM.

FY23 Budget Hearings

Mr. Latini invited Executive Director Debora Goodsell forward for review of the FY23 budget submission for the department.

FY23 Senior Center Budget Review

Executive Director of the Senior Center Ms. Goodsell was before the boards to review her FY23 budget request. Ms. Goodsell began review discussing all the services offered from the center. She highlighted the center stayed open and provided services throughout COVID adding additional services including the establishment of a food Pantry and coordinating many vaccine clinics. The budget is small part of the town budget, the services offered through the center are important to the community. She explained the collaboration with the WRTA offering van services to residents with the town covering part of the expense. She and the staff were able to secure grant funding to offer additional transportation services to seniors partnering with Clinton Livery. She added a request for an additional staff person, explaining this is an issue because currently this service is offered through the Aging Services of North Central Mass in home service is not able to be offered to seniors in need in the community due to the lack of staff. They are only able to provide assistance to 6 seniors 6 seniors are unable to receive service. They are supplemented by state funding but cannot provide service due to staff shortages. So she wants to be a leader in her network and offer this service though a staff person, a Home Care Provider working 19 hours per week. This staff person will check on seniors and assist with any needs they have like filling medications or helping with household need. She cannot sit back and ignore a service needed, she wants to be the leader in establishing this position in her community, hoping surrounding communities can follow to provide services needed. Mr. McGrail asked about the level of participation at the center for programming. Ms. Goodsell explained they are at about half, 6 to 7 thousand seniors have swiped in for programming compared to about 13,000 from past years prior

to COVID. She estimated about 70 seniors per day are at the center. Ms. Powell asked for an explanation of the summary of grant funding received. For example she sees \$15,000 is budgeted for programming, how much grant funding can be used to offset this amount. Ms. Goodsell reviewed she receives \$3000 from Central Mass agency on aging for respite care for caregivers, which partners with Oriel Health Care to provide service. Typically a grant has a specific use, for example the Mass DoT grant was used for partnership with Clinton Livery, once that ran out the Clinton Hospital Guild provided an additional \$10,000 to continue this service and support the food pantry for seniors. Ms. Powell asked about the front desk position added recently. Ms. Goodsell explained at this time she funds this position using the formula grant funding received, going forward her request is to fund this line item in the budget and use the formula grant funding in other places. Mr. Dziokonski asked about the Home Care Provider you budgeted for, what state agency is funded to provide this service. Ms. Goodsell explained it is the Aging Services of North Central Mass, who contract with Montachusett Home Health Care who do not have the staff to offer service to community need. Mr. Dziokonski explained yes but they have the state funding, it isn't a good practice to add service when it is funded by the state but not provided by their contractor. Chairman Kerrigan asked if certification or training is required for this position. Ms. Goodsell explained oh yes, she will only hire if they are a CNA, Certified Nursing Assistant. Mr. Dziokonski asked if she had reached out the State Representative and State Senators offices. Ms. Goodsell explained she had spoken to Senator Cronin's office and also the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. This is why she wants to action on it. Mr. Dziokonski stated he is unsure why you would lead the way for the state to leave their responsibility. Ms. Goodsell stated she can inquire about state reimbursement to cover the cost. Mr. Dziokonski explained he is doubted if they haven't agreed upfront they aren't going to cover. Ms. Goodsell explained she plans to advocate everywhere she can for social services.

Selectman Kobus recused himself from the meeting at 6:15PM.

### FY23 School Budget Review

Dr. Meyers was before the boards with a budget review presentation, he also with the help of School Committee Chair Mr. Bates distributed materials to all in the meeting. Dr. Meyers began the review explaining he had a preliminary budget he reviewed with the Tri-School Council in January, he has continued to work from there once cherry sheet information was available along with ESSERS funding he made revisions. The total operating budget proposed for FY23 totals \$29,464,000.00, this has an increase of \$2,254,000.00 from the prior year. The budget includes ESSER funding and the circuit breaker funding, the increase to General Fund request is 8.43% or \$2.1 million. He reviewed the increase to Chapter 70 is \$2.45million or 16% with a local contribution decrease to 3.32% or reduction of \$337,000 but there are indirect costs to education.

There have been positions added which include Health Insurance costs, if level funded this would offset the insurance costs. The contracts for the unions are in negotiations, he anticipated a 3% increase to all contracts. There is a decrease with vocational schools options, Assabet has enrollment for member communities only, if nonmember you may be selected through a lottery. He has been researching other technical schools in the area and budgeted for 10 students. He has added 15 new staff positions including teachers, guidance staff and a nurse. There will be an addition in the Business office, the addition of an Assistant Business Manager, to assist the part-time Business Manager. This role will take on the purchasing eliminating the purchasing agent and added her to the Administrative office. He is reviewing adding a Dean of Students for both the Middle and High Schools. He is aware these positions are not sustainable, they may change to Guidance Counselor. He explained the new teachers positions and the enhancement to the on line college inclusive studies with Mt. Wachusett and Fitchburg State. Including an additional nurse at the Middle School are new material costs the purchase of books. He explained the last two years have been overwhelming to the medical staff and they find it hard to take a lunch break and are not able to find coverage for the office. The Athletics costs are level funded and additional equipment are costs for security cameras and miscellaneous equipment like rugs and desks. Review continued with an explanation of the Chapter 70 funding and how it is calculated, the circuit breaker reimbursement and insurance costs in the budget. He reviewed the School Committee supports offering free tuition for preschool, the Chapter 70 increase will help with this cost. The ESSER funding is earmarked to be spent over the next 2 years, he reviewed the spending. Discussion continued with review of the School Choice revolving account, it is projected to be \$500,000 depending on the number of kids out of district. There is a Special Education adjustment where you get added funds to cover, so that makes the balance in the account a projected \$700,000. The Entitlement grants are \$240,000, and Title 1 make up about \$800,000 to 1 million to consider supplemental or additional services. Dr. Meyers concluded with next steps, to review student opportunity grants and spend to address certain initiatives. He has to file a plan with the state on how to spend the increase in Chapter 70 on additional services. There are a lot of different funding sources that come into play in the budget. He asked for questions, explaining for any members to please call or e-mail him for any additional information regarding the budget request.

Next joint meeting scheduled for March 30<sup>th</sup>.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15PM