



SELECT BOARD BUDGET WORKSHOP

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 20, 2022

5:00 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING

Select Board Members Present: David Martin, Dean Charter, Jim Snyder-Grant, Fran Arsenault, Himaja Nagireddy

Finance Committee Members Present: Christine Russell, Adam Nolde, Michael Majors, Stephen Noone, Dave Wellinghoff, Jason Cole, Roland Bourdon, Christi Andersen, Esha Gangolli

Absent: None

Mr. Martin called the Select Board meeting to order at 5:00 PM. Ms. Russell called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:02 PM. This was a joint virtual meeting with no Board or Committee members in physical attendance. It was broadcast via Zoom.us virtual meeting platform.

I. Budget Workshop

Mr. Mangiaratti informed both the Select Board and Finance Committee that budget presentations will follow the current FY23 Budget Book.

West Acton Citizens' Library

Jennifer Friedman reported that the West Acton Library joined the Minuteman network in November and has been met with great success, that expanded curbside pickup will continue indefinitely, and presented her budget request.

Council on Aging

Sharon Mercurio reported that the FY23 budget request includes a new position to work 15 hour/week partially funded through the formula grant to coordinate volunteers and assist the front desk. There are over 5,300 residents over 60 years of age with 35% of the senior population served at the Senior Center. The only increase in the budget was the increase of dues for FY23.

Finance

Steve Barrett, Finance Director introduced the four divisions in the Finance Department: Accounting, Treasurer/Collector and Assessor. Mr. Barrett commented the Finance Division budget has increased \$430,000/3.31% due to the town's increase in pension by \$320,000. Health insurance increased by 10%.

Brian McMullen, Principal Assessor/Assistant Finance Director presented an overview of the Assessor budget. He reported that 94% of Assessor's budget is salaries for three full time positions; Principal Assessor, Administrative Assistant, and



Property Lister. The professional services line is increased by \$5,000 due to a change in rules from the Department of Revenue. There was over \$600,000 in property tax exemptions granted. The Assessor's Office sets the tax classification, offers senior tax relief, provides fair and equitable property assessments. Mr. Noone questioned regarding property values rapidly increasing in 2021 and if the office fairly captured the reassessment rate from 2020. Mr. McMullen based sales from FY20, and next year will base on FY21 sales. Mr. Snyder-Grant questioned about the number of Appellate Board hearings held per year. Mr. McMullen responded there have only been a few in the past couple of years, mostly commercial properties and were settled out of court. Mr. Cole questioned whether the \$5,000 for professional services was going to be included for future years; Mr. McMullen confirmed. Lisa Wojick, Town Accountant, presented information about the Accounting budget.

Fire

Chief Robert Hart introduced his proposed General Fund, Fire Alarm Network Revolving Fund, Ambulance Enterprise Fund, and the Emergency Management budgets. The new fire station on Harris Street is scheduled to be online in late January or mid-February. There are currently 44 full-time employees, with a proposed increase of 2 additional paramedics to staff an ambulance impact shift Monday-Friday day shift to capture a higher number of calls and decrease the need for mutual aid ambulance requests. The Department responded to over 4,700 requests for service in 2021.

Deputy Chief Anita Arnum, Emergency Management Director introduced the FY23 budget highlighting the previous year service during the COVID-19 pandemic providing testing, and vaccination clinics, and working alongside the Acton Nursing Services, Board of Health and Acton-Boxborough School Nurses.

Ms. Russell questioned about out-of-town costs/charges/rates if a mutual aid ambulance is needed for a medical call in Acton. Chief Hart explained that rates are generally in line with other town fee services. Mr. Noone asked about completion of the North Acton station. Chief Hart noted we were waiting for final internal completions.

Mr. Cole questioned the metrics for justifying the ambulance impact shift. Chief Hart noted that there were approximately 90 mutual aid calls last year. Mr. Cole questioned about the contractual services line item in the Emergency Management budget for \$25,000, Mr. Mangiaratti explained that the cost to match a grant received for the 53 River Street Dam project.

Human Resources

Marianne Fleckner, Human Resources Director commented that the overall budget decreased by 1%. During the pandemic, the HR Department successfully on-boarded 28 new employees in 2021 and had reviewed over 700 resumes. Overall, the Human



Resource Department oversees the benefits of approximately 800 people, both current employees and retirees. Due to the declining interest of senior residents to work indoors relative to COVID risks, there is a 20% reduction in the Senior Work program budget request. The advertising budget item has increased in anticipation of recruiting for potentially 10-15 positions, and the increase of costs from certain advertising groups. Dues and Memberships are increased by 11% due to including the new Human Resources and Talent and Acquisition Specialist position joining various HR memberships, and a 9.75% increase in Police and Fire Injury Insurance since it has not increased in 7 fiscal years to cover current injuries and future projected injuries.

Mr. Noone questioned on which union contracts are affecting next fiscal year and which are retroactive. Ms. Fleckner noted that only Dispatch is retroactive. Mr. Noone questioned the number of retirees, Ms. Fleckner clarified approximately 500 including former Acton Public schools prior to 2014.

Information Technology

Mark Hald, Assistant Town Manager introduced the IT Budget. This budget represents level service, with increases to cover expenses for hardware and services added in previous fiscal years and funded by the federal CARES Act. No further questions.

Land Use

Tom Moberg, Building Commissioner introduced his budget without any significant changes to note.

Sheryl Ball, Health Director introduced her budget with two increases in professional salaries and phone services due to the structural changes in the Land Use Department.

Tom Tidman, Natural Resources Director: The Natural Resources Division is composed of Cemetery Division, Conservation Division, and Recreation Division. The budget is level funded with exception to an increase in materials and equipment with a \$4,000 increase.

Melissa Rier, Recreation Director: The department is self-supported through a Chapter 53D Revolving Fund. Several increases in the budget are due to return of many programs, equipment and maintenance costs, and seasonal staff after the past two years due to COVID.

Kristen Guichard, Planning Director: The proposed budget is level with the primary budget consisting of salaries.

Mr. Majors questioned about an event in four years regarding the 250th anniversary of America and questioned if there was any planning. Mr. Mangiaratti noted that was out a few years and no funding would be needed in FY23.



Mr. Noone asked about building permit fees and costs. Mr. Moberg responded that the collection of building fees is increasing due to more people being home, and making modifications inside their homes. Mr. Noone questioned the amount of revenue that the Building Department generated; Mr. Moberg commented approximately \$1.9 million.

Memorial Library

Director Danielle Savin presented the library budget. Salary is decreased by 0.56% due to hiring staff at lower step levels, MIS and Software increase by 4.39%, and increase in Supplies by 9.83%.

Nursing Services

Nursing Director Heather York reported that Acton Nursing Services offers Home Care nursing services, and public health nursing operating as two distinct budgets. The Acton Nursing Services were part of the contact tracing and administering vaccines during the pandemic. Professional Salaries has increased by 15.47% due to steps and hiring of additional staff, and an increase in Purchased Services by 2.66%.

Police

Police Chief Rich Burrows introduced the FY23 budget and highlighted several members of the department that have been promoted and recent retirees. He reported that 10 out of 14 vehicles are currently hybrid units. There is a reduction in the budget due to retirements and new members with a lower step pay rate. Animal Control is level funded, and Dispatch budget has a slight increase due to contractual obligations. Mr. Bourdon questioned if the department will replace the remaining gas vehicles with hybrid. Chief Burrows will have two vehicles replaced in FY23. Ms. Nagireddy question the firearms stipend. Chief Burrows explained that it covers all of the specialized equipment officers are required to carry and utilize, not just firearms. Mr. Bourdon questioned what the regional dispatch will impact on the dispatch budget and when it will go online. Chief Burrows commented that it scheduled to be operational in calendar year 2023 and any changes necessary will be reflected in the FY24 budget.

Public Works

DPW Director Corey York introduced his FY23 budget, which includes the DPW Main Office, Highway Division, Public Facilities Division, Trees/Grounds Division and Engineering Division.

Mr. York highlighted changes in the DPW budget, specifically, position control with the addition of two new employees, increase in Tree Warden contracting ground maintenance services to free up the Tree Warden, a decrease in the fuel line item with new energy efficient fleet coming online, an increase in trash and recycling, and a decrease in the capital line item.



Mr. Bourdon questioned if any money would be invested in recyclables and seeing an increase in cardboard recycling demand. Mr. York responded not at this time.

Andrea Ristine, Public Facilities Superintendent updated on the status of the North Acton Fire Station, and the majority of the budget increase is due to finalizing the North Acton Fire Station building. The street lighting account has increased, and the addition of several capital projects planned for the Fire Department and Town Hall.

Town Clerk

Eva Szkaradek presented the Town Clerk budget, highlighting a change in precincts with an additional one being added, and the hiring of a Deputy Town Clerk. Professional salaries increased due to the addition of a full-time employee, and the Elections budget decreased due to utilizing town staff assisting at elections.

Community Services Coordinator

Laura Ducharme reported on the services her office has provided during the past year for any resident under the age of sixty. Ms. Ducharme assisted residents with several programs and services such as fuel assistance, housing, and a mortgage and rental assistance program through the CARES Act assisting 43 renters and 15 home owners, along with a child care grant allocating \$97,000 from February 2021 through June 2022, and assisted nine families with full-day kindergarten tuition.

Economic Development

Economic Development Director Julie Pierce Onos introduced herself to the Select Board and Finance Committee and shared her three service goals: initiate a communication strategy and measurable outcomes, sustaining and retaining existing businesses, and attract new businesses.

Transportation

Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Austin Cyganiewicz presented the Transportation budget, with a 21% increase in ridership. Provided travel services for vaccine clinics, weekly trips to the food pantry and Market Basket, and micro transit partnering with a local taxi company. There was an increase in contractual services due to restoring the fixed route service.

Sustainability

Sustainability Director Andrea Becerra reported that there was an increase in professional services due to contracting with a private agency to support the Town's goals to encourage clean energy options, and an increase on the enterprise and revolving fund to support an Environmental Compliance Analyst that will add support to the Sustainability and DPW Offices.



Town Manager

Town Manager John S. Mangiaratti discussed the budget changes for FY23. There are a total of eight full-time employees, with the addition of a Diversity Officer this summer. Assistant Town Manager Mark Hald noted the Town Meeting budget is level funded.

Veterans Services

Veterans Service Officer James MacRae for both Acton and Boxborough introduced the Veterans Service budget with an increase in printing and copying, and postage and courier. Mr. Bourdon questioned what percent of time is serving Boxborough veterans versus Acton. Mr. MacRae has added four additional weekly hours from 34 to 38 to serve Boxborough. Mr. Noone questioned about the veterans benefits line item and noted that only \$70,000 was spent out of \$90,000 in FY2021, and questioned if it is difficult to qualify for benefits. Mr. MacRae noted that for surviving spouses and single veterans there is financial threshold limit they can receive.

Ms. Gangolli moved, seconded by Mr. Bourdon to adjourn the Finance Committee and voted unanimously by roll call vote 8-0. Mr. Snyder-Grant moved, seconded by Mr. Charter to adjourn the Select Board and voted unanimously by roll call vote 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:07 PM.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Agenda, January 20, 2022
- Finance Committee Question and Answer Spreadsheet