

Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes
December 18, 2023
7:00 PM

Present: Christi Andersen (Chair), Jason Cole (Vice Chair), Steve Noone, Esha Gangolli, Dave Wellinghoff, Roland Bourdon, Scott Sullivan and Vlad Kan

Ms. Andersen called the meeting to order.

1. Joint meeting with the Select Board to receive the presentation of the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget

Mr. Mangiaratti presented the Town Manager's recommended Fiscal Year 2025 level-services budget, and the FY25 capital recommendations. The total request in capital projects was approximately \$17 million, and the recommended capital projects requests for FY25 were reduced to approximately \$7.7 million. The three borrowing projects recommended for FY2025 were the DPW fueling station, replacement of the aerial ladder truck, and complete streets Hayward/Main intersection. Free cash projects recommended for \$1.2 were traffic calming intersections improvements, bridge/culvert design and construction, SCBA replacements, railroad crossing improvements of 10.29%, cyclical data collection for real property, and facility study priorities. The Town Manager's recommended level service budget for FY25 was \$42,502,476 with a percentage increase of 10.29%. In order to cut \$2.8 M to meet a 3% budget target recommendations are to reduce capital investments, operating budget and ambulance and transportation subsidies. Dave Wellinghoff, Finance Committee – questioned if there was a summary FTE head count on the Town side included in the budget; Mr. Mangiaratti will Select Board Meeting Minutes, December 18, 2023 consider adding it to the budget report, Mr. Wellington questioned the increase in salaries by 4.4% and if the 3 positions were not filled the increase would be less; questioned if there could be a temporary solution to the fueling station that would cost less, Mr. Mangiaratti noted that the project and usage is a regional partnership between AB School District, Town of Acton and CASE transportation. Roland Bourdon, Finance Committee – question the total amount of personal property valuation if it is the total of commercial property value; delinquent tax collections; life expectancy of a ladder truck; fuel depot project and a possible study on how many town vehicles for staff are in use and if there could be a reduction – switch to electric/hybrid vehicles, requested a dedicated town vehicle parking location for closer access to buildings from visitors to Town Hall and Library. Steve Noone, Finance Committee – questioned the number of vacant positions; questioned professional salary line item increasing by 9% with one new position accounting for the increase and the rest for annual salary increases. Mr. Charter suggested adding hours of staffing at AML and shutter services to West Acton Citizens' Library. Mr. Martin suggested to the Chair that

the Board come back to the capital needs at a future meeting as he felt there were some disagreements with the projects recommended and the Board's priorities. Ms. Nicol questioned about the life of the ladder truck; Mr. Mangiaratti noted the life is 10-15 years and according to NFPA that anything over 15 years should be put into reserve use. Additionally, it was noted that the budget would include the increase in the health insurance rates. Ms. Nicol also questioned the savings with leasing town vehicles vs. purchasing them, Mr. Mangiaratti noted there are yearly savings and the Town currently uses this practice with the lease to own program for heavy duty DPW vehicles, and is currently researching the possibilities of the Town to lease all new vehicles moving forward. Christi Andersen, Finance Committee – questioned the maintenance costs for all town parks; questioned the school's cost on sharing the fuel depot – Mr. Mangiaratti commented on being optimistic of having a partnership rather than going to the retail market; questioned about cutting 10-15 positions to get to the 3% - Mr. Mangiaratti noted it would be 10-15 positions, including those that are currently not filled; Ms. Andersen questioned if the proposed hiring for DPW would offset the overtime. Esha Gangoli, Finance Committee – questioned about overtime expense, noting FY23 was approximately 56% over budget, FY 25 request is on the lower edge of the range and the likelihood of an increase over the proposed budget – Mr. Mangiaratti noted that overtime fluctuates especially in public safety. Ms. Gangoli questioned about an increase in debt level- Mr. Mangiaratti noted the projects are now going short term borrowing and thinking they would have been borrowed long term, project approved a few years back were short term with a package for long term borrowing but decline to borrow due to high rates. Select Board Meeting Minutes, December 18, 2023 Jason Cole, Finance Committee – borrowing money from OPEB does not reduce from level services, just borrowing from the future to pay for now; would not recommend a 10% growth in the budget, doesn't recommend expanding capital. Terra, West Acton – requested an FTE per populous of 1,000 residents, suggested using volunteers to staff the Citizen's Library, recommended pulling out the Hayward and Main Street project in the capital plan and having a separate vote. Mike Gowing, Harris Street – questioned the fuel station and if the town was under contract for fuel costs; suggests utilizing the overlay for \$200K; requests clarification for the useful life of a ladder truck; questioned if there has been discussion with the unions regarding health insurance.

Mr. Sullivan moved to adjourn. Mr. Bourdon seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

FY2025 Recommended Level Service Budget and Presentation

