

Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

January 11, 2022

Remote Meeting via Zoom

In Attendance: J. Strehle, G. Danis, N. MacDonald, B. Black, D. Cooper, R. Curley, K. Dziergowski, M. Goulet, C. Kirk, A. Macdonald, A. McElaney, S. Melia, T. Sherwood, Town Accountant S. Nickerson.

Absent: D. Anderson, E. Sheehan

1. Call Meeting to Order

At 7:00 pm, Chair Strehle, read the following statement:

“This meeting is being held remotely as an alternate means of public access pursuant to an Order issued by the Governor of Massachusetts dated March 12, 2020, Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify the Chairman at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the Chair may inform all other participants of said recording.”

Chair Strehle asked if any participants were recording the meeting, no responses.

2. Comments from the Public Regarding Items Not on the Agenda

None.

3. Budget Hearings:

a. Historic Preservation – Mr. Curley presented this budget.

Historic Preservation Administrator Andrea Young presented the Mission and Services of the Department. She is requesting \$83,633 in salaries, an increase of \$6,441 (8.3%) and \$7,213 in expenses, a decrease of \$150, for a total budget of \$90,846 (7.4% increase). There is an additional request of \$3,000. The salary increase is a result of the wage reclassification. Historic Preservation maintains two funds: 1) the Greenbush Historic Preservation Trust which has a beginning balance of \$1,244,700 with earnings of \$93,000 last year; and 2) the Preservation Projects Fund which has a beginning balance of \$126,719. Vice Chair Danis asked for an explanation of the Annual Assessment for Monuments in the budget. Last year the department requested monies from Community Preservation Committee for monument repair. Ms. Young explained that the Assessment proposed in the budget is in addition to the money added to the budget last year to do an assessment of all the monuments and create a schedule of five monuments a year on a rotating schedule. The \$2,000 allocated last year is not enough to get any bidders. The monies requested of CPC are for the actual restoration work to be performed. Ms. Strehle asked how often an assessment should be done and if we expect this to be a recurring cost. Ms. Young said it should be a recurring cost. Mr. Curley recommended the requested budgets.

b. Building Department – Ms. Cooper presented this budget.

Building Commissioner Mike Clancy requests salaries of \$262,791, an increase of \$19,306 (7.92%) and expenses of \$15,960 (no change), for a total budget of \$278,751 (7.44% increase). Ms. Cooper explained that salaries are covered partly out of our operating budget and partly

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from a Fund created by fees for Building Department services; expenses from the Fund must be related to the fees collected. Vice Chair Danis asked about the Fund balance for FY21 where expenses were greater than revenue. Mr. Clancy said that there were vehicle purchases. Half of the Commissioner's and Assistant salary are paid out of this Fund. If the trend continues, the revolving fund will be depleted. Ms. Nickerson noted that the decrease in revenue was due to COVID, and she expects that to come back. Ms. Cooper recommended the requested budgets.

c. Trustees of Bathing Beach - Ms. Dziergowski presented this budget.

Bathing Beach Trustee Ed Johnson presented Mission and Services of the Department. He requests salaries of \$27,372, an increase of \$4, and expenses of \$13,300, an increase of \$1,550, for a total budget of \$40,672 (an increase of 3.9%). The uniform allowance has increased due to more seasonal employees; repair and maintenance expenses are for the dune fence and sand. Chair Strehle asked about the new Beach House and if the utility expenses are shared with the vendor. Mr. Johnson indicated that the vendor is paying all the utility expenses. The community room has not been able to be used due to COVID; once we can use that room, we should have revenue for renting out that room. Ms. Dziergowski recommended the requested budget amounts.

d. SSRECC – Ms. Cooper presented this budget.

Ms. Cooper also presented the Mission and Services of the South Shore Regional Emergency Communications Center (SSRECC). The department request a budget for the assessment of \$974,510, an increase of \$33,328 (3.5%). Ms. Nickerson noted that the SSRECC Board has not voted on the budget, so this is a placeholder, and this number could go up as our call volume is up. Mr. Curley asked if there are more detail numbers; Ms. Nickerson said she gets a detailed budget for the assessment. Additionally, each of the Town Administrators in the four Towns are Board Members and they all review the budgets. Vice Chair Danis asked how the budget is formulated. Ms. Nickerson said that they develop the budget that they need and the assessment for each Town is assessed based on population and call volume. Ms. Cooper recommended the requested budget.

e. Public Safety Utilities – Ms. Cooper presented this budget.

The budget request for Emergency Water is \$453,251, paid to the Weir River Water System; and Street Lighting Expense is a flat fee charged by HMLP to the Town of \$105,000. Mr. McElaney asked about maintaining water in the system and noted that as water is always in the system the fee seems high. Ms. Nickerson noted that this was a fee we paid Aquarion and now pay to the Weir River Water System. Chair Strehle said this question should be deferred to Russell Tierney when the Water budget is proposed. Ms. Cooper recommended the requested budget.

4. Discussion re: Wage and Classification Schedule and Impact of Personnel Costs on Town Budget

David Pace from the Personnel Board was invited to present to the Advisory Committee. Mr. Pace discussed the process the Personnel Board uses to assess wage classifications and salaries of Town employees. They are also in charge of collective bargaining with six unions in town. This past year the Board implemented a new wage plan. He noted that there are wage pressures in all industries. The results went into effect in June 2021; this was the first review in 20 years. It involved reviewing/updating all job descriptions and the review our wage scale against the 20 benchmark towns; create a wage scale. This resulted in a 3% wage increase as well as equity adjustments. The next union negotiations will be June 2024.

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5. Review of Updated Advisory Committee Handbook

Ms. Black reviewed the edits to the Handbook. AdCom cannot vote to approve the changes until the Select Board votes to approve the gender-neutral language changes to the Town By-laws, including By-Law 14 that establishes the Advisory Committee (Section 3 of the Handbook).

6. Liaison Reports

a. Sustainable Budget Task Force

Vice Chair Danis reported that the task force is in the process of finalizing their report. The next step will be a presentation to the Select Board. Mr. McElaney asked if the Task Force is aware of the strategies of the Personnel Board. Mr. Danis said yes, the Personnel Board presented to the Task Force last month.

b. ACES/Education

Vice Chair Danis reported that School Board began deliberating the budget. The next meeting is this Thursday. The Administration presented a budget of \$47.8MM, a 3.38% increase; a SPED of \$14.7MM, an increase of 4.45%; and a VoTech budget of about \$175K. The total budget is about \$62.7MM. This does not include their Capital requests. There is a reduction in Out of District placements which makes the SPED budget appear to be decreasing; he explained this is a onetime only reduction and is not necessarily a trend. All other expenses were up 4.8%. Mr. McElaney asked about the collective bargaining done with the School Department. Mr. Curley noted that contracts were finalized last year. There are current MOAs covering July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2023, with five of six bargaining units (teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians/maintenance, transportation, and the administrator's association). The Food Service unit agreed to roll over their contract for a year in 2020, so that agreement runs from July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2024.

c. Foster School Building Committee

Deferred

d. Harbor Development

Deferred

e. Public Safety Facility

Ms. MacDonald reported that additional tests have been done on the site; borings were done to assess the condition of the soil. Hingham Net Zero continues to provide input and is recommending additional space and equipment for future growth in electrical needs.

f. CPC

Ms. MacDonald provided reported that CPC is meeting on January 12th and will vote on their final recommendations.

g. Cleaner Greener

Ms. Sherwood reported that there will be a Warrant Article reducing the size of their committee from nine to seven as they are having difficulty filling their slate.

h. CAPC

Ms. Black reported that the committee is working to get a Carbon Inventory done for the Town. They posted an RFP to hire their own consultant but received no responses.

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7. Warrant Article Process Discussion

Chair Strehle provided an overview of the Warrant Article process

8. Discussion of Advisory Committee Housekeeping Items

Chair Strehle provided an overview of upcoming meetings.

9. Matters not anticipated within 48 hours of meeting

Ms. Cooper reported that the requests for Capital Outlay are more than \$3MM which does not yet include the request from the School Administration. Some requests may become Warrant Articles.

10. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:48 by roll call vote 11-0.

Documents Distributed for this Meeting

- Agenda
- Final Version of AdCom Handbook
- Draft Minutes – 01/04/2022
- Budget Books (Electronic)
- Elder Services Accounting Documents

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy MacDonald
Advisory Committee Secretary

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