

# Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

**Date: March 25, 2021**

**Place: Remote Meeting via Zoom**

***In attendance:*** Committee Members Bob Curley, Julie Strehle, Andy McElaney, Evan Sheehan, Dave Anderson, Davalene Cooper, Kristin Dziergowski, Victor Baltera, Tina Sherwood, Alan Macdonald, Brenda Black, Eryn Kelley, Nancy MacDonald, George Danis, and Town Accountant Sue Nickerson.

***Absent:*** Libby Claypoole

1. ***Call meeting to order:*** Chair Curley called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm and 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.

2. ***Comments from the public on items not on the agenda:*** None

3. ***Further discussion of Forecast, Financial Policy, Fund Balance, overrides and debt exclusions, ACES recommendation:*** Chair Curley noted that we have a new Forecast that reflects a balanced budget. The \$6,588 surplus in the March 17, 2021 Forecast has been moved to the Capital Outlay Budget.

Mr. Baltera inquired as to the make-up of the fund balance amount listed in the Forecast. Chair Curley noted that the total represents the one time use of fund balance monies for the lost revenue on the municipal and school side, the anticipated one time money from the American Rescue Act, and the money from the two Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief funds (ESSR), Town Accountant Sue Nickerson itemized the total shown (\$2,367,817) as equal to the total of lost revenue from local receipts (\$1,430,380) plus the lost revenue from schools (\$545,437) plus one time school expenses (\$392,000).

4. ***Review and discussion of draft Comment on Article F:*** Julie Strehle presented this Article and Comment which summarizes the FY 22 budget. The Comment includes a description of additional expenses (including people), the source of funds used to

balance the budget, and raises the concern that an override may be necessary in order to balance the FY 23 budget and avoid a drastic reduction in expenses which would include municipal and school staff reductions.

Ms. Strehle noted that the FY 22 budget reflects the impact of COVID-19 and the increased needs in both the School and Municipal Departments. Ms. Strehle noted that the proposed budget includes \$5 million dollars in one-time funding. This total is comprised of \$2.4 million in fund balance and \$2.6 million in federal stimulus money. The federal stimulus money reflects \$1.2million from the American Rescue Act and \$1.4 million in ESSR funds. Ms. Strehle further noted that the Town has received broad guidance on the use of funds from the American Rescue Act and believes this guidance allows the Town to use the funds as specified here. If the Town is unable to use the federal funds as described here, and if Town Meeting approves the proposed budget, then the Town will use additional funds from fund balance to fully fund the Town Meeting approved budget.

Mr. Baltera asked if the American Rescue Act funds could be used for new hires and Town Administrator Tom Mayo stated that, based on current understanding of the guidance, the Town could use the funds for new staff additions.

**5. Review, discussion and vote on all budgets:** Chair Curley announced the process that the AdCom would follow in approving the FY 22 budget recommendation for the Town:

1. Chair Curley will first read the payroll and expense budgets for each of the municipal departments and the schools;
2. Chair Curley will then ask the respective liaison for any updates or changes to the amounts or to their previous recommendation;
3. Members wishing to discuss any budget are asked to place a “hold” on that budget;
4. The AdCom will then vote all budgets without a “hold” before considering any budgets with a “hold”;
5. Once the regular budgets are approved the AdCom will repeat the process with the Town Administrator (TA) additional spending recommendations (including Capital items).

Chair Curley proceeded to read the proposed budget for each department and noted where differences existed between the original amount recommended by the AdCom liaison and the current amount. Variances were generally caused by increased charges for water, payroll adjustments, or updated information in the case of group insurance. Departments with adjustments include Board of Selectmen, Land use and Planning, Town Hall, GAR, Fire, Public Safety emergency water, DPW, Landfill and Recycling, Library, Trustees of the Bathing Beach, South Shore Country Club, Employee Benefits group insurance, and mandatory Medicare.

A file with the regular budget amounts, TA recommended additional operating budget spending amounts, and additional TA recommended Capital Spending amounts is attached to these Minutes.

AdCom member Victor Baltera placed a “hold” on two budgets in order to abstain during the vote..The two budgets Mr. Baltera held were group insurance and other post-employment benefits.

Town Administrator Tom Mayo next presented a list of additional spending requests that he recommends. These requests include a new assistant town administrator, a mental health clinician for the Police Department, a Senior Planner, a heavy equipment operator for the DPW, a consulting contract for communication services for the Town, additional funding to address structural deficits in the legal services and snow and ice removal budgets and money to implement the Fields study recommendation of having the Recreation Department assume responsibility for Town owned fields.

AdCom members questioned the role of the additional assistant town administrator and the history of staffing at both the TA and ATA position. Mr. Mayo reviewed the roles, responsibilities and history of the positions. Mr. Mayo further discussed the need to restructure the roles from an overall management standpoint, the overall complexity of the TA function as Town services and the annual budget increases, and the need to provide additional support for financial planning and analysis.

Questions were also raised about the heavy equipment operator and if it would result in reduced overtime. Some reduction in overtime is expected but the position also is needed to address the increase in traffic and trash which has been exacerbated by COVID-19.

AdCom members also asked if the additional funds for the Recreation Department for fields maintenance were a one-time expense or an annual one. Mr. Mayo stated that this would be an annual expense.

The Ad Com voted the budgets as follows:

- Regular budgets, no holds: The total requested spending for this group of budgets is \$121,660,521. The AdCom approved this amount by roll call vote of 13-0-0 (Libby Claypoole was absent);
- Held budgets: The total requested spending for the two held budgets (group insurance and other post-employment benefits) is \$8,413,922. This amount was approved by roll call vote of 12-0-1 (Libby Claypoole was absent, Victor Baltera abstained);
- Additional TA operating budget spending: The additional spending requested by the TA is \$784,204. This amount was approved by the AdCom by roll call vote of 13-0-0 (Libby Claypoole was absent);

- Capital Outlay budget: The total requested spending, including TA additions, for this budget is \$2,493,580. This amount was approved by the AdCom by roll call vote of 13-0-0 (Libby Claypoole was absent).

6. **Review and approval of Minutes from Meeting of March 16 and 18, 2021**: The Minutes of March 16 and 18 were both approved, with edits, by a roll call vote of 13-0-0 (Libby Claypoole was absent).

7. **Warrant Articles update and any remaining business relating to Warrant Articles**: Chair Curley reminded committee members to forward all Warrant Articles to the editors as final copies are due to Town Hall on March 30, 2021.

8. **Liaison reports**: None

9. **Discussion of Advisory Committee housekeeping items**: Chair Curley updated the AdCom as follows:

- The scheduled March 29, 2021 meeting will be cancelled;
- The next scheduled meeting will be on April 27, 2021;
- There will a brief AdCom meeting on May 8, 2021 (or the date of Town Meeting if it is postponed);
- Town election is scheduled for May 22, 2021.

10. **Matters not anticipated within 48 hours**: None

11. **Adjourn**: Motion to adjourn at 10:06 pm approved by roll call vote of 13-0-0 (Libby Claypoole was absent).

Respectfully submitted,

George Danis, Secretary

List of Documents Distributed for this Meeting:

- Agenda
- Warrant Articles
- TA Recommendation PDF
- TA recommendation Excel spreadsheet
- TA FY 22 budget recs PDF
- Forecast March 23, 2021 PDF

Approved with revisions on 04/27/2021 by roll call vote 12-0-0 (Libby Claypoole, Tina Sherwood and Evan Sheehan were absent for the vote)

