

Auburn Finance Committee
Minutes of the Meeting -March 11, 2020
Auburn Town Hall Selectmen's Meeting Room
104 Central Street, Auburn, Massachusetts

Members Present: Anne Cavanaugh, Ed Coleman, Kevin Kennedy, Malory O'Brien, Trevor Sansoucy and Michael Marshall
Absent: Kimberley Holstrom
Also Present: Chief Financial Officer Ed Kazanovicz, and Adm. Assistant to Town Manager Sharon Kwiatkowski

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by the Chairman Anne Cavanaugh. Ms. Cavanaugh gave an overview of the meeting agenda.

The Finance Committee reviewed the following budgets for FY2021.

#01161 Town Clerk - The Town Manager recommended a total appropriation of \$184,294.00. Town Clerk Debra Gremo was present on behalf of her budget requests for Town Clerk Department and Elections. She discussed the highlights of the requests for FY2021. Ms. Gremo advised that the salary for the Town Clerk is set by the vote of Town Meeting under Article 2. The Travel/Conference/Education Account includes funds for the Certified Municipal Clerk (CMC) Certification for the Assistant Town Clerk (3 year program).

Under the CIP for Town Clerk, Chairman Anne Cavanaugh asked about the request for Book/Map Repairs. Ms. Gremo explained the requirements to preserve documents, especially old paper documents.

Mr. Kazanovicz added that there was consideration for a warrant article for records management, but it was decided to delay it until the fall town meeting.

Chairman Cavanaugh asked about the salary requested for the Town Clerk. Ms. Gremo advised that the request was based on a salary survey of 13 comparable communities.

CFO Ed Kazanovicz said that the revised budget before the Finance Committee tonight reflects an adjustment to the Town Clerk's salary to get closer to her request.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of a total operations budget appropriation of \$184,294.00 for Town Clerk, as presented in the recommendation of the Town Manager (Motion made by Mr. Sansoucy; motion seconded by Ms. O'Brien) voted in favor 6 to 0.

#01162 Elections - The requested budget appropriation was \$33,594.00, which was an increase of 37.20%.

Ms. Gremo addressed her request and she explained that in FY2021 there would be more elections than in FY2020. There would be a State Primary in September, a Presidential Election in November and the Annual Town Election in May.

The Finance Committee voted to recommend approval of a total budget appropriation of \$33,594.00 for Elections, as presented in the recommendation of the Town Manager (Motion made by Mr. Sansoucy; motion seconded by Ms. O'Brien) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Ed Kazanovicz discussed revisions to the Capital Budget for the Cable and Community Television Division that he gave to the Finance Committee tonight.

Department of Public Works (DPW)

DPW Director William Coyle was present together with the Asst. DPW Director and Sewer Superintendent Joanna Paquin and the Superintendent of the Highway, Parks and Cemetery Kenneth Fairbanks.

Director Coyle gave an overview of the DPW Budget for FY2021. He highlighted two significant changes to the DPW budget.

- 1) One employee was hired recently with the intention to share his services between the Highway and Parks divisions. Mr. Coyle said that he has found that more of the employee's time was needed in Parks and so his wages have been shifted from the Highway Division to the Parks Division.
- 2) The assessment for the Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District has increased by 11%.

The Finance Committee reviewed each division /unit of the Department of Public Works: Engineer Division - The DPW requested an appropriation of \$692,636.00 for this division.

Stormwater Unit - The requested appropriation is \$379,516.00 for the Stormwater Unit. Mr. Coyle discussed his difficulty in hiring an Engineer dedicated to the Stormwater Unit and he said that they had advertised three times with no success due to the salary being too low. Mr. Coyle said that when Asst. DPW Director/Sewer Superintendent Jeff Mitchell retired and then Joanna Paquin was appointed to his former jobs, he decided to focus on hiring the Senior Civil Engineer to replace Ms. Paquin's position.

He did hire a Senior Civil Engineer about 3 or 4 weeks ago, but they are still seeking to fill the Civil Engineer position that is in the budget with the salary recommendation of \$60,000.00 in FY20 to \$70,000.00 because they couldn't get anyone at the lower salary.

Ms. Cavanaugh asked Mr. Coyle if he expected to submit any outside warrant articles for stormwater this year. Mr. Coyle replied that he did not expect any articles at this time, but that he would submit warrant articles as the needs came up. Also the Senior Civil Engineer that was just hired has a strong background in Stormwater and will be reviewing the Town's permit and making sure that we are where we need to be with that permitting. Infrastructure is deteriorating and if funding becomes available it would be something we will need at some point.

Mr. Marshall questioned the salary for the Senior Civil Engineer that is budgeted partly in the Engineering Division and partly in the Stormwater Unit for a total salary of \$70,054.00 and he noted that is a dollar more a week than the salary of the entry-level Civil Engineer position.

Mr. Coyle replied that they had advertised the Senior Engineer job at \$70,000.00 - \$80,000.00 and that the candidate that was eventually hired proposed a 4-day schedule (30 hrs. /week). As the budget accommodated the higher hourly rate, Mr. Coyle agreed to the proposal to be able to hire that candidate.

At the Chairman's request, DPW Director Coyle discussed the expectation for this year's Chapter 90 funds from the state.

Ms. O'Brien asked about the Public Education Account. Mr. Coyle replied that this was for public outreach that is required for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) permit.

Highway Division - The requested appropriation is \$1,384,556.00 for the Highway Division.

Chairman Anne Cavanaugh asked about staffing levels in the Highway Division.

Mr. Coyle advised that there are twelve (12) full time employees in the Highway Division of the DPW and the total of all the DPW divisions there are thirty-four (34) full time employees.

Mr. Marshall asked Mr. Coyle if he was going to back fill the Highway position that went to Parks. Mr. Coyle responded that he was going to wait and see how it goes. There has been an employee out on Workers Compensation that may return to work.

Malory O'Brien asked if the appropriation in the Snow and Ice Overtime Account was sufficient as it is budgeted slightly less than the 3-year average. Mr. Coyle answered that it was adequate because the department has expended less due to the mild winter this year and the account is in the black at this point. The salt shed is currently full.

Facility Management Unit - The requested appropriation for the unit is \$79,850.00.

Fleet Maintenance Unit - The requested appropriation for the unit is \$204,891.00.

Mr. Marshall noted the \$5,000.00 increase in the Motor Vehicles Repairs Account and asked if the Mobile Column Heavy Duty Lifting System that was approved by the January Town Meeting would impact the account because less vehicles would be needed to be outsourced for repairs. Mr. Coyle replied that the costs of parts has been increasing over the last few years. Also, he noted that some vehicle repairs would still need to be outsourced. The unit services all DPW vehicles, all Police and Fire apparatus including ambulances and the Town Hall Assessor's and Inspectional

Services vehicles. Some specialized Fire vehicles have to be sent out. All of the inside repairs and outside repairs are paid from this account.

Parks - The requested appropriation for the division is \$280,667.00.

Pakachoag Golf Course - The requested appropriation is \$365,951.00.

Mr. Sansoucy asked for an update on how the golf is doing so far this year. Mr. Coyle said that the golf course has recently opened because of the great weather. Mr. Coyle gave an update of the status of the course over the last few years. He advised that the past calendar year was the best year yet, realizing \$430,000.00. The fiscal year 2019 was the worst year due to a lot of rainy weather.

CFO Ed Kazanovicz pointed out that the golf course has turned a profit each year since the Town took over the operation.

Mr. Coyle discussed the Contingency Account with an appropriation of \$10,000.00 for Pakachoag Golf Course. He said that to this point they haven't had to use funds from the account.

Recreation - The requested appropriation is \$50,194.00.

Ms. Cavanaugh asked how the revolving account was split.

Mr. Kazanovicz said that the Recreation Director salary appears to be down, but he noted that this is because more of the salary has been shifted from revolving accounts to offset some of the expense. Mr. Coyle advised that most of what the Director does is program related.

Mr. Kazanovicz explained the break-out of the salary as: 68% or \$39,694.00 from Tax Levy, 22% or \$12,842.00 from Recreation Revolving Account Allocation and 10% or \$5,837.00 from the Golf Course Enterprise Account.

Cemetery - The requested appropriation is \$187,175.00.

Mr. Kazanovicz commented that most departmental budget requests are mirrored by the Town Manager's recommendation because the departments for the most part are just increasing their budgets by fixed costs.

Sewer Division - The recommendation of the Town Manager for the division is \$2,260,457.00.

Director Bill Coyle discussed the assessment that has increased 11%. He said that the Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District (UPWPAD) has to comply with EPA regulations. He explained the increase in the town's assessment was based on their increased rates partially due to the increase in flow from Auburn. Mr. Coyle said that the increased flow can be on account of development in the town or from a lot of wet weather that means more water goes into the system.

Malory O'Brien said that some neighboring towns are reducing water usage by asking homeowners to replace toilets with those that have lower volume flushes. She asked if this has been considered. Mr. Coyle said that it could be considered and he will talk to the Sewer Superintendent Joanna Paquin. He said that there may be programs and incentives for residents who can't afford to make the improvements to result in decreased flow.

Anne Cavanaugh asked Mr. Coyle if he expected an increase in user fees this year. Mr. Coyle said that they had just received the numbers and he would have to review them.

Chairman Cavanaugh asked about the Pinrock Road project for which Town Meeting had approved a 2.2 million borrowing. Mr. Coyle gave an update on the status of the project.

Mr. Coyle listed some of the roads on the road improvement list this year:

- Barbara Avenue neighborhood except Winchester
- Rice Road
- Overlook
- Bancroft Street
- Wyoma Drive
- Hilltop Road
- Cooper Street
- Jerome Avenue

Ms. O'Brien raised the issue of cars speeding through the town and she asked if any areas have been identified for speed bumps or line painting in the road that makes the road look raised for safety.

Mr. Coyle replied that speed bumps have not been discussed because they can create a hazard on town roads and especially for public safety vehicles. He said that the Federal Highway Administration does not recommend two dimensional road painting that looks like three dimensional.

Mr. Kennedy asked about flashing speed limit signs and flashing yellow lights near schools. He asked whose jurisdiction that would be, the Town or School District. Mr. Coyle said that he was not sure and he talked about solar versions of these signs like those he has looked at for the pedestrian crossing signs. Mr. Coyle advised that he could look at that.

The Finance Committee then voted to recommend approval of a total operations budget appropriation of \$5,885,893.00 for the Department of Public Works, as presented in the recommendation of the Town Manager (Motion made by Mr. Sansoucy; motion seconded by Ms. O'Brien) voted in favor 6 to 0.

The Finance Committee reviewed the Capital Budget for the Department of Public Works.

Specific items discussed were:

- Drainage in the Engineering CIP reduced to \$55,000.00 from \$105,000.00 in FY21 to allocate \$50,000.00 to share a Jet/Vac Truck with the Sewer Division.
- Highway Roadway Improvement \$100,000.00
- Sewer Line Repair for routine repairs and specific problems that come up with the sewer lines
- Two Zero Turn Mowers in the Cemetery Division

The Chairman asked Mr. Coyle about the EPA fee he referenced last year. Mr. Coyle stated that it was something they looked at about 10 years ago when the EPA permit was moving forward in Phase 2 and they did a study through a consultant. He explained the formula to tax residents and businesses for their impervious areas. When it was brought to the Board of Selectmen, the Board voted not to approve Stormwater as an Enterprise Fund, but to build it into the tax levy budget.

The Finance Committee considered the following transfer request.

Department of Development and Inspectional Services (DDIS) 01511 Public Health:

\$500.00 from Acct. #012412-5780 Education Account (Building Division) to Acct. #015112-5784-00 Education Account (Public Health Division), for training needs within the same department. The Finance Committee voted to approve the transfer (Motion made by Mr. Sansoucy; motion seconded by Ms. O'Brien) voted in favor 6 to 0.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 P.M. (Motion made by Ms. O'Brien; motion seconded by Mr. Sansoucy) voted in favor 6 to 0.

Submitted: Sharon A. Kwiatkowski
Assistant to the Town Manager, Admin.

The following documents were part of the Finance Committee's Meeting of March 11, 2020 and are retained in the Executive Office of the Town Manager:

- March 11, 2020 Agenda
- Transfer Requests - Department of Development and Inspectional Services (DDIS) Public Health Division
- FY2021 Department Budget Requests (including CIP) - Town Clerk, Elections, Department of Public Works (Engineering Division, Stormwater Unit, Highway Division, Facility Management Unit, Fleet Maintenance Unit, Parks, Pakachoag Golf Course, Recreation, Cemetery, Sewer Division)

