

Finance Commission Minutes

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Date: Thursday, April 29, 2021 at 6:00pm via Zoom
Attendees: TOW: Robbie Powers
FC: Joe Hanlon, Richard Ferrino, Brent Farrell, Jim Letterie, Jan Twombly, Karin Chavis, Shannon Poulos, Tracey Honan, Matt Gorzkowicz
Public: Various
Absent: Bill Gault

2021 MAY -3 P 1:56

TOWN CLERK
WINTHROP, MASS.

Meeting called to order at 6:01 pm by Letterie, Chairperson.

Prior meeting minutes voted on for approval. Motion to approve minutes for January 14, 2021 and February 24, 2021 by Ferrino and seconded by Farrell. Motion to approve minutes for April 8, 2021 by Twombly and seconded by Ferrino. Motion to approve minutes for April 15, 2021 by Ferrino and seconded by Hanlon. All commission members voted yes for approval, except for those that had to abstain due to absence.

Primary purpose of the meeting is to complete a high-level review of the 2022 budget and outline schedule for future meetings with town department heads.

High level commentary regarding the various departments outlined below:

Town Council

- Request to flag all audit line-item expenses across town that may be impacted by CFO departure
- Note the 20K audit line is not really audit but other consulting services provided by our auditor
- ~\$50K remaining for FYE 2020 in the reserve fund
- Identify annual license cost of \$7,500. Provider is Granicus.

Town Manager

- ~\$83K spend year-to-date for 2021 on outside legal counsel; should consider increase in this line item
- Review input for salary teacher's longevity across entire budget
- Tabled any changes related to Town Manager salary, or \$5K auto-stipend etc. due to absence and lack of clarity going forward
- Review contractual annual raise of \$5,000 and Town Manager passing that to administrative assistant
- Identify year-to-date costs of ~\$10K related to HR director consultant
- Review costs to date and going forward related to Professional Associations – MAPC – \$10K, Mass Municipal Assoc. – \$4K plus others.

Planning & Development

- Budgeted at \$95K, \$100K salary approved
- Other governmental - \$4K for sustainability
- Letterie flagged department due to cutbacks elsewhere

Administration & Finance

- Powers provided description of attendance and payroll system
- Twombly noted part of town audit stated this would address audit concerns
- Ferrino noted system was implemented by state and was effective / efficient
- Current system is Harper's payroll
- CFO compensation TBD and flagged to be on radar
- Audit has 3-year contract
- OPEB – odyssey advisors – 3-year contract

Assessing

- Consulting increases due to pending valuation
- Training services of \$3K – need detail online item expense

Treasurer / Collector

- No commentary

Town Attorney

- \$54K YTD costs – budget was \$80K
- Listed as 2021 YTD Actual, need to adjust to Budget
- Error related to verbiage for \$35K "cut"
- K&P bills on time – fee for service

Human Resources

- \$4K training services line item fully utilized, and cost was much higher YTD
- Benefits coordinator allocated to town and school budget

Information Technology

- Retrofit is being replaced by Thrive
- Letterie requested analysis of line item 59100 Annual License Cost is across all departments, but Powers indicated Retrofit, Comcast, Opengov / Cleargov
- Letterie believes Town needs formal review of IT in future

Town Clerk

- Decrease in election personnel as only local, had national and additional elections in 2020
- Annual license cost 579100-line item is \$0 YTD
- IT Services \$7K in 2022 budget, but \$0 listed in FY 2021 Budget

Conservation Commission

- Concern related to not having an agent, only clerk services
- Need to look at giving assistance – exposure for fine from state
- Filings not being made, etc. causing issues for locals
- Thought 3 town collaboration was going to cover this
- Acting town manager should investigate funding position again
- Grant covering position in 2022 – check with HR and or planner

Planning Board

- No commentary

Building Maintenance

- Why have two positions held as Vacant but included in budget
- Number of open positions that need to be filled
- Discussion related to Building maintenance 524100 of \$120K - \$56K paid to date – pending projects include Library carpets, new flagpole, and stairs at EB Newton

Public Safety

- Lost certain number of longer tenure employees
- Quinn Bill had noteworthy reduction of \$17K

Fire Department

- Need to confirm number of positions for Fire Fighter and vacancy
- One more year of payments for existing engine to drop off then add new engine

Inspectional Services

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- Town implemented an online permitting system which allows towns people to submit online vs. needing to file hard copy paperwork and submitting to town hall
- Annual license cost - \$28K – response favorable from department head and town manager
- Have ever completed review of software costs versus benefits on workload?

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Appeals Board

- No commentary

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Regional Dispatch

- \$322K paid this year as opposed to \$412K because of available cash on hand at dispatch
- Need to understand expected cost for 2022 budget – flagged item
- Cost determined by population and number of services
- Approach fire and police chiefs regarding viability i.e., could we find a better cost-effective solution in house

Emergency Management

- Was heating repaired, noteworthy reduction in operating costs

Animal Control

- No commentary

Municipal Hearing

- No commentary

Public Works

- Electrician services previously under shared expense line item
- Misbudgeted in past to separate out line items
- "Improvements to Land" is cost related to clean out of compost disposal area

Snow & Ice

- Always underfund and run deficit
- Do not increase because you cannot reduce
- \$80K deficit this year compared to budget
- Need insight into impact of new equipment brought online

Airport Hazards

- No commentary

Cemetery

- No commentary

Health & Human Services

- Increase due to add of a coordinator
- Request for Meredith to explain increases due to COVID
- Some peer recovery coaches are covered by grants – show full salary with backout for grants

Council on Aging

- Request for Kathy to present due to decrease in services
- Try to prevent a reduction in services to part-time clerk only
- General office supplies of \$3,150 needed in its entirety? Combined with cleaning supplies?

Veterans Agent

- Cut by town manager

Library

- Number of vacant positions
- No fiscal 2021 comparison due to closure
- Request for presentation

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Northeast Regional

- Increase of 9 students coupled with increase in share of expenses

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North Shore Essex

- Awaiting detail related to costs
- Need to understand status of 6 applicants

Shared Expenses

- Electricity line item distributed out to DPW – street lighting and maintenance
- Trash contract removed and created own enterprise fund
- Fuel prices increasing dramatically
- Property insurance increase of ~15% included, renewals occur on July 1st

Debt Service Principal & Interest

- Note a new line item related to a judgement claim against the town which resulted in a 10-year bond, so with interest will be an increase of \$143K to the towns budget.

Employee Benefits

- Noteworthy line item that needs further input from Human Resources

Other Costs CBA / Salary Reserve

- Line item likely extremely low
- No dollars encumbered or set aside
- Includes town salaries – DPW, Fire, Police, etc.
- Need to ascertain a formulaic potential increase
- Request additional insight from department heads

Schools

- Does not include fiscal 2021 numbers
- Likely have flexibility due to prior encumbrances and federal government funding
- Request members to review and send questions PRIOR to the meeting
- Letterie cautions that even if things look better due to COVID this year we need to consider implications in the following year

Expected schedule for department head meetings on May 6, 10, 13, 17, 20 and 27. Additional meetings to finalize recommendations on June 3, 7 and 8. Submission of letter to town council by close of business on June 8.

Request of Powers to add FY 2021 YTD actuals into budget

Ferrino motioned to adjourn, seconded by Poulos

Meeting adjourned by Letterie at 8:45pm.