

Finance Commission Minutes

Date: Thursday, May 13, 2021 at 6:00pm via Zoom
Attendees: TOW: Robbie Powers, Steve Calla, Terence Delehanty, Rachel Kelly, John Goodwin
FC: Richard Ferrino, Brent Farrell, Jim Letterie, Karin Chavis, Shannon Poulos, Tracey Honan, Matt Gorzkowicz, Bill Gault, Jan Twombly, Joe Hanlon
Public: Various
Absent: None

Meeting called to order at 6:00 pm by Letterie, Chairperson at recommendation of Chavis.

Chavis completed roll call with all commission members present and accounted for.

Primary purpose of the meeting is to meet with Town of Winthrop department heads – Rachel Kelly, Terry Delehanty and Steve Calla.

Rachel Kelly – Planning

- Extended offers to two candidates (Resiliency / Sustainability), have accepted
- Start dates end of May / early June
- Onboarding process underway and will be housed in Chelsea city hall
- Community based care for environmental, climate, racial equity, project implementation
- Program funded by Barr Foundation with a three-year initiative
- No funding or staffing for specific agent related to conservation for Winthrop, may occur in Year 2
- Grant awarded December 2, 2020 with calendar year structure
- Fiscal match of ~\$4K
- Projects working on are (i) flood mitigation / prevention checklist, (ii) RFP and rezoning of former Middle School, (iii) grants for EV charging station, (iv) DOT grant for Main Street corridor with new crosswalks and intersection feasibility, (v) North Suburban Consortium funding for down payments, financing and housing repairs, (vi) storefront upgrades and funding, (vii) Belle Isle marsh study and potential improvements, (viii) FEMA funding with MAPC, (ix) climate funding grant and (x) EB Newton clocktower upgrades, (xi) \$40K grant to add two new bus stops, (xii) various planning board miscellaneous items
- Poulos requested list of pending grant requests, etc.
- Powers requested public posting of awarded grants for residents to review

High level commentary regarding the various departments outlined below:

Police Department & Animal Control

- Presentation by Delehanty
- No layoffs and no unfilled positions
- Concern related to overtime costs and ability to fund
- Several positions being filled by reserve officers due to COVID limitations in academy
- All reserve officers need to go to 23-week academy
- Reduced budget for uniform allowances and educational opportunities
- Achieved balanced budget since 2009 for the department
- Telecommunication TPX increase allocated to department – no breakdown so should be booked to shared expenses
- Salary expenses and category errors and need to be further refined
- Upgraded motorcycle via equipment trade
- Building is failing and needs upgrades, insurance company requested upgrades
- HVAC system needs replacing, not believed to be in capital plan. YTD upgrades were \$25K. Cost expected to be ~\$40K to \$50K for full replacement.
- Ticketing slowed considerably in COVID, ramping back up

- Reserves being utilized for parking and traffic enforcement

Department of Public Works

- Presentation by Calla
- Significant vacancies, with 10 out of labor group of 29 creating backlog
- TOW cannot compete with entry level compensation of MWRA, Amazon delivery
- Agreed to two frozen positions, with four effective frozen positions. Only able to hire back six employees. Frozen one position with \$20K removed. Increases overtime and purchased services.
- Replaced 15 of 40 vehicles via grant from State Office
- Vehicle maintenance lines remained consistent due to age of other 25 vehicles
- Allocation of street light costs and expenses to DPW this year skewed budget somewhat, unaware of any lease payments, believed receiving credit from LED conversion
- Lease expense to Siemens – 4 payments of ~\$19K – preferred to go back to finance department as shared expense. Missing final payment in budget of \$19K?
- \$23K for maintenance of streetlights is underfunded, will not cover actual costs
- Concern that fuel cost budgeted line item is too light, especially considering rising fuel prices and 2021 YTD costs
- Poulos requested breakdown between increased ancillary costs due to vacancies

Cemetery

- Presentation by Calla
- Cemetery has one unfunded position for \$40K, highway department supplements need for level funded budget
- Removed old building and remapping cemetery electronically
- Belle Isle cemetery placed on capped landfill, causing significant settling issues due to subdrain removal
- Seeking funding to duplicate cast iron fencing and other options

Building Maintenance

- Presentation by Calla
- 7.5% increase shown for budget, core budget only increased 1.5% due to \$25K added to budget for identified needed repairs
- Seeking to complete most smaller jobs in house
- YTD costs at ~50%, with \$50K reserve prorated twice and frozen. Monies frozen will revert to free cash.

Water & Sewer

- Core expenditure line is level funded
- Preliminary assessments completed, with water expected to increase \$125K and sewer to increase \$144K.
- Water debt service increased and sewer decreased \$55K each
- One vacant position in water
- Requested \$5K increase in sewer purchased services line item related to camera'ing old lines and sleeving to reduce assessments
- \$10K increase for water supplies related to elevated cost of copper
- Reserve lines should be increased due to number of recent large failures and required improvements
- Retained earnings of \$671K with \$157K in capital fund
- Water loss study is ongoing. Town supplied background materials, compiling of information underway.
- Final 20% of water meter replacement process underway. 4,700 total accounts. Aim to replace all in the next two years.
- Per MWRA, large gap between billable and total consumption amounts. Leak detection survey completed annually with only small leaks identified.
- Audit and leak detection studies being paid by Town

- ~30 miles of water main need to be upgraded, with total cost of \$60 million
- If middle school building is demolished, service to ice rink will need to be modified

Regional Dispatch

- Presentation by Delehanty
- State is incentivizing additional municipalities to join, Town is pushing others to join
- Confident the \$412K will be cost due to feedback from board of directors
- Revere paid ~\$1.5MM into dispatch, allocated by population and call volume. Figures are confirmed by Town.
- No cost savings. Allowed town to deploy more services to the streets versus dedicated town employees.
- Preference for Everett and Saugus to join. Chelsea joining would have caused increased dispatcher compensation.
- Submitted budget presented at board level was reduced by \$100K for FYE 2022.

Meeting on Monday, May 17th with Health Department.

Ferrino motion to approve May 10th minutes, seconded by Honan. Awaiting May 6th minutes completed by Poulos and Hanlon.

Honan motioned to adjourn, seconded by Ferrino.

Roll call completed and meeting adjourned by Letterie at 8:20pm.