



TOWN OF DARTMOUTH MASSACHUSETTS

Finance Committee
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Peter Friedman, Chairman
Greg Lynam, Vice-Chairman

Pursuant to a call to order and notice duly given in the manner required by law and the By-laws of the Town of Dartmouth, a meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Thursday, March 20, 2008 at 7:00 P.M. at the Old Town Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Greg Lynam, Peter Friedman, David Ferreira Melissa Haskell,
Stewart Washburn, George Jacobs

MEMBERS ABSENT: Shannon Jenkins, Larry Fox

BEGINNING RESERVE FUND BALANCE: \$ 639,438.60
ENDING RESERVE FUND BALANCE: \$639,438.60

AGENDA

DARTMOUTH FINANCE COMMITTEE

March 20, 2008

Old Town Hall, 7 P.M.

7:00 PM Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes

7:05 PM Park Department

7:45 PM Legal update (M. Gagne)

8:05 PM Miscellaneous Budget

8:45 PM Adjourn

REVIEW OF PARK AND RECREATION BUDGETS

Tim Lancaster, Superintendent of Parks reviewed the Park Department and Recreation budgets. Mr. Lancaster pointed out that as part of the Park Department Budget, the Park Foreman was not being filled. It has not been filled for the past two years. Many of the truck driver positions have been filled by former policeman and these adults are more responsible than younger students who have filled the positions in the past. As a result, the Park Foreman's position is being eliminated. The line item for lifeguard positions looks like those positions have been cut. However, Mr. Lancaster pointed out that by closing the facilities on rainy days they may be able to have sufficient coverage with this lower funding amount. Alternatively, the beach season can be cut by a couple of weeks if need be. The Park Department has been particularly mindful of fuel consumption and has encouraged the use of the smaller vehicles to save fuel, when possible.

Gregory Lynam asked about the number of beach stickers sold in 2006 versus 2007. Mr. Lancaster said that the year-over-year number of stickers sold decreased, but revenues increased substantially.

Review of Recreation Department budget.

It was pointed out that the funding of the Recreation Department is a General Fund expense and the funds collected go back into the General Fund. A general appropriation is necessary to get the Recreation budget started. The appropriation is necessary to get the programs started and funds are sent back at the end of the year. This is in part why there was a discussion of a revolving fund for the Recreation budget last year. Mr. Lancaster said that he would welcome the opportunity to discuss a 53(e) account with the FinCom members again. The use of a 53(e) account is the more up to date way of handling Recreation funding.

Greg Lynam asked for an update on the Bucket at Apponegansett Beach. Mr. Lynam thought that the rental revenue for the bucket was originally going to be \$50,000. Mr. Lancaster said that the long lead time and Town Meeting vote required to produce such a contract caused the businessman that was interested to abandon the prospect. The base rental is now \$3,000 and the renter will make improvements.

Mr. Lynam asked what would be added back to the budget in the event that an override were to pass. Mr. Lancaster indicated that he would add back the seasonal office assistant position and add back the lifeguard positions. Concerns about the pay scale were expressed by Mr. Lancaster because it may cause him to have trouble filling some of the less desirable positions. Minimum wage went up to \$8.00 per hour. The Personnel Board recommended that the rate for all go to \$8.00 per hour with no differential by position.

LEGAL UPDATE

Michael Gagne reported that the 2008 appropriation for legal expenses was \$214,686 and there is a balance of approximately \$52,000. There is a lawsuit pending with regard to the Vocational School assessment methodology. Town Counsel is preparing for a trial in April over land that was taken on Fisher Road in 2003 for well protection. The cost of the preparation and appraisals should be borne by the Water Department and the Water Enterprise Funds or it will cause a serious overrun in the legal budget. He thought it was likely that the \$52,000 would be used and maybe slightly more, but it would be close. Mr. Gagne reminded everyone that the legal costs in 2007 totaled approximately \$333,000.

Mr. Friedman asked what the rationale would be for the Water Department not bearing legal costs. Mr. Iacaponi answered that in the past the bills have been paid out of the General Fund and back charged, but this year we are paying these bills directly from the account that will ultimately be charged. He suggested that there may be a need for a retained earnings appropriation because the Water Department purchased more water than they expected. Ms. Haskell said that she thought there was a positive spread on the purchased water. Mr. Iacaponi pointed out that the revenues may have come in, but there was only so much funding for expenses appropriated by Town Meeting.

George Jacobs asked where the *pro tanto* moneys came from. Mr. Gagne said that they had come from the Water Department. Mr. Jacobs pointed out that the funds should then come from the Water Department.

Mr. Gagne went on to make the Finance Committee aware that there were a number of arbitration cases filed by the Police Brotherhood based on decisions at the Select Board level. They were splitting the cost of the arbitration, but it could be a few thousand dollars. Mr. Jacobs pointed out that there are a number of entities moving away from American Arbitration because of the upfront costs. He wondered if the collective bargaining units would be open to other entities and pointed out that some have a permanent arbitrator. Mr. Gagne said that was something they could discuss in contract negotiations.

Mr. Friedman asked if there was 25% of the Legal budget left weren't we in pretty good shape. Mr. Gagne said that if the costs only related to Town Counsel that would be true, but we have arbitration issues lingering. He did not think the costs would be as high as last year, but they would be higher than \$214,000. Mr. Friedman asked if there was a possibility of the enterprise funds being charged instead of the general fund. Mr. Iacaponi responded that they are creating line items for legal expenses under each budget. Mr. Washburn asked if the March bills were reflected on the statement and Mr. Gagne responded that they were not.

MISCELLANEOUS BUDGETS

There was a discussion about what could be cut from the legal budget if the override did not pass. Mr. Gagne said that the paralegal shared by the Select Board office would have their hours reduced. Currently 50% of the paralegal's salary is from the Legal Department and 50% is from the Select Board office budget.

Mr. Gagne pointed out that if the override does not pass, there may need to be complete elimination of programs to make up the funding. Mr. Iacaponi said that they were trying to budget as conservatively as possible without knowing all the facts.

Town Hall Building.

Michael Gagne said that there has been no backfilling of maintenance positions. There is less and less maintenance like painting being done. There is a cleaner position in the schedule. Some individuals have a broader spectrum of talents that could be used to do some of the work. A cleaner would be paid at a much lower rate than the maintenance person.

A retired person has been plowing the Police Station, Library, Town Hall and Counsel on Aging and he has been coming back and doing the plowing, fixing the sander and he gets paid at an hourly rate.

Zoning Board of Appeals.

The hours of the Zoning Board of Appeals may need to be reduced to 10 hours per week and the ZBA may only be open 3 days a week. There are some concerns about meeting statutory deadlines with this kind of reductions.

Soil Conservation

Mr. Gagne pointed out that the fee structure will have to change to cover the cost of the number of pits and inspections necessary. This service is not a general public benefit and only benefits the person who sells the soil.

Animal Control

If no override passes, this position would need to be reduced further from 1 full time position to ½ time position. If the override passes, there will be a full time animal control officer and a weekend or holiday person would be paid on a per call basis.

Natural Resources

Mr. Gagne pointed out that this position would drop from 10 hours per week. The Harbor Trustees Funds have not come through for this position.

Sealer of Weights and Measures

Ed Iacaponi pointed out that this is a legal requirement and there is only one person out there checking volumes. Peter Friedman asked about the fee structure and Mr. Gagne responded that each pump, for instance, is a single fee. The merchants are charged and the funds go into the general fund. He further pointed out that the revenues generated from the fees are equal to about \$20,000 per year.

Youth Commission

Mr. Gagne pointed out that if the override were to fail, the hours for the Youth Advocated would be reduced. Mr. Lynam pointed out that the Youth Advocate said he would not be able to stay in the job if the pay was reduced. He asked if this might be one department that was subject to total elimination. Mr. Washburn suggested there may be enough support by appealing to the Town the way the library and counsel on aging had. Mr. Gagne said there was the possibility of setting it up as a not-for-profit.

Counsel on Aging

Michael Gagne pointed out that a reduction in funding would impact three positions: the administrative assistant, the director, and the custodian. The COA director has resigned. They are internally moving assistants from the senior social day program and shifting responsibilities. The person running the social day program is acting as the director for the COA and running the social day program.

MOTION

George Jacobs moved that the meeting be adjourned. David Ferreira seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Haskell

