

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes – March 29, 2016

Meeting brought to order at 6:30 pm

Members Present: Dylan, Skip, Ralph, Mary, Jeff, John, Bill

Members Absent: None

Others Speakers Present: Kevin Scarborough, John Paresky

1) The first item was to accept the minutes from the March 22nd meeting. Vote was unanimous.

2) The next item was to distribute to the Committee answers to the questions raised in the SCEMS presentation the week before

- What does the line item “Liability Insurance” within the SCMES budget specifically cover?
Zach: I would defer to Barbara as to which policies cover which risks
- When one of our EMT’s wants to advance to a paramedic, who pays for the classes and does the EMT take classes on his time or does he get paid to take the classes? *Zach: The individual pays for the schooling out of their own pocket. Attending the classes is on their own time. We do allow for easy swaps between employees so they can attend classes without having to take vacation time, and we have a culture in the department that promotes and advocates for continuing education and training*
- Line item 603-230-5400-503-0 what is this for and why was it increased from \$7,000 to \$17,000? *Zach: This is Education/Training, it was increased to cover the contracted price for the all-inclusive ED/Training/CQI/Remediation services provided by Community911Training in Greenfield. This all-inclusive amount actually covers more than we would be able to do ourselves in-house, even at the same price*
- Can you please provide how much money is being spent on overtime? *Zach: A ton, which is why we’re adding the 9th FT person shortly. I have bi-weekly reports, but I’ll see about getting a larger report from Brenda.*
- What is Zach’s level of compensation at this time and how will it be going up in FY17? *Zach: My current level of compensation for FY16 is \$66,664.00. We haven’t discussed an increase in this for FY17, but the recommendation from Matt Russo was to budget for \$70,000.*
- What is the vision of the ambulance service 1 year down the road and 5 years down the road? *Zach: Zach’s operation thoughts: 1 year – limit or eliminate the regular staffing difficulties through the additional FT hire and upgrading EMTs to Paramedics. I have high hopes and confidence that the struggles we’ve experienced in the first year and half will be taken care of with the changes we are making right now. 5 years: More community paramedicine/ regular services beyond 911 responses. Deciding (as a department and community) where we want to draw the line on A2 staffing and the frequency that we rely on Mutual Aid. This will largely depend on the opinions of the community, the number of calls we are doing annually, whether they are increasing or holding steady, and what the bottom line and budget/fiscal situation is in the three towns.*
- Does SCEMS plan to maintain 2 or 3 ambulances into the future and how often will they be replaced? *Zach: The current replacement schedule is an ambulance every 5 years. The department needs a minimum of 2 ambulances to cover the call volume we have. Operationally this means that with only two ambulances, we do not have any reserve for*

additional community services or when a vehicle is down for maintenance. With a 5-year replacement schedule the front-line truck will be 1-5 years old and the safest with the most recent medical equipment. The second line truck will be 5-10 years old (10 years is customarily considered the end of life for an ambulance). If after 10 years, a vehicle is still safe and usable, my recommendation is to keep it in service to provide the reserve needed to maintain a 2-ambulance service and community programs. If this third-line ambulance is taken out of service, at this point there is no plan to replace it immediately, choosing instead to maintain only a 2-ambulance fleet and wait until the next vehicle is scheduled to be replaced. This is an on-going discussion and one that will obviously be re-visited in the future. As of today, we only have one ambulance in our fleet that is less than 10 years old, which is why we have applied retained earnings to replace an ambulance in FY17 and get 2 ambulances of the fleet within the 10-year mark.

- 3) The next items discussed were a number of budgets which had been before the Committee previously and which had specific outstanding questions that were resolved, experienced small revisions which needed to be re-voted, or were small amounts which had not been prepared to present to the committee before tonight**

122-5400	Selectmen/Administrator Expense	\$9,500
141-5110	Assessor's Clerk Salary	\$51,049
171-5400	Conservation Commission	\$800
172-5400	Open Space Committee	\$250
175-5400	Planning Board	\$7,500
192-5430	Town Office Expense	\$25,500
196-5400	General Insurance	\$74,464
292-5400	Canine Control	\$15,964
422-5110	Highway Dept Salaries	\$433,735
511-5400	Board of Health Salary	\$31,586
751-5900	Interest on Maturing Debt	\$206,386

All items were recommended unanimously

- 4) The next item discussed was the WWTP Salary budget**

- Each line item was reviewed and some questions were raised regarding steps and grade, this will be researched and corrected if needs be. It seemed the FY16 numbers were off making the comparison to FY17 requested amounts confusing
- Retirement benefits were absorbed by the town in the past, but are now included within this budget
- There was a discussion regarding town building/dept usage of sewer, and WWTP charging them like any other user. Kevin had some estimated numbers, and knew which meters he may need to add in order to accurately measure the usage, and his plan would be to start charging for this for FY18
- A question was raised here regarding the ability for the town, as per its bylaws, to increase a salary via COLA to a level greater than the Step 10 level as articulated in the town compensation schedule

5) The next item discussed was the WWTP Expense budget

- As per Kevin, the plants have been seriously underfunded for many years and that is the reason that the repair parts and sewer lines have increased as much as they have. He believes that we should have been putting away funds to pay for the upkeep of the system
- The issue we face now is that because our rates are so low, and because we have not been investing in the facility, the USDA is not going to consider us for grant funding
- The town of Orange was used as an example of our situation – an article had just appeared in the Recorder saying that Orange faces large increases in sewer rates and the prospect of a ~\$20mm project in the near future
- We may be able to get a MassWorks grant (which could fund as much as 98% of the project costs), but it could also take many years for us to qualify – it took three cycles to secure the MassWorks funding for the River Road project
- Kevin was unsure of what happened to the FY16 sewer maintenance line item – why it was so low and such a specific number – Dylan/Doug to look into this and report back
- The town's administrative costs related to WWTP are now in the budget instead of being absorbed by the town, that changed in FY16
- For some equipment at the facility, we can no longer buy parts to fix them because they no longer make them

6) The next items discussed were the requested Capital Items

- a) Ford F550 to replace F350 - \$80,000: This item is part of Kevin's Capital Replacement schedule, the 550 is needed bc the 350 is often overloaded in its daily use
- b) Highway Dept Tractor - \$72,000: Also on the schedule, older item which is required for mowing and other uses. Cost to overhaul almost as much as new machine
- c) Defibrillator – \$20,500: Chief Paciorek had presented this item last month – estimated life for equipment is 10 years. Would purchase 11 units for numerous locations in town buildings
- d) Library Photocopier - \$2,099: Question as to if it should be a capital item or part of the Library budget
- e) Headworks Project Engineering - \$130,000: This work is both necessary for current use and also a first step towards a larger project at the WWTP. Weston & Sampson is the firm doing the work, and Kevin has been happy to date with their input. At the conclusion of this design work we should have a shovel-ready Headworks project
- f) Library Carpet Replacement – \$13,787: looking to install carpet tiles which can be replaced as certain areas wear more than others. Some question about how this improvement folds into larger renovation plans at the Tilton Library
- g) Library Air Conditioner Replacement - \$15,500: Heat Pump / AC system that should be more energy efficient. Current system is very old and while functioning, many in the room attested to how hot it gets in the library in the summer. These units would be usable at the library or elsewhere in town even in the event of a larger library project. Kevin had thought about ways to locate and protect the units from the elements or damage

- h) Fire Detection System upgrade - \$2,500: Looking to install central station fire monitoring at town hall. There will also be an annual monitoring fee which will appear in the relevant budget
- i) Town Hall Door Replacement Project - \$5,500: Replacing double doors that are in need of replacement by all accounts
- j) Town Hall Re-Keying - \$6,500: Still exploring a few different options on this project, but all agree new locks and keys are needed and overdue. Kevin will circle back with various options, costs, and his recommendation
- k) Senior Center Carpet Replacement: \$13,900 - Three areas were requested to be re-carpeted in the Senior Center – Kitchen Area, Lounge Area and 'Bingo' area. The Bingo area is most in need, and new floor would be laid over old tiles. Capital Committee did not recommend the other two areas.
- l) SCEMS Ambulance - \$285,000: This replacement is coming a year ahead of the original Capital Schedule. Will be funded entirely out of Retained Earnings

The Capital Planning Committee intends to put together a 5-Year plan to be used beginning with the FY18 budget.

The SCEMS budget was not voted in this meeting to allow for the March 30th Public Presentation to see what other information would be presented. That was to be at 7pm at the Whately Town Office.

The Finance Committee's next meeting will be April 5th, 2016 at 6:30 pm. The committee will be voting a number of remaining budget as well as the Warrant Articles. A joint meeting with the BOS is planned for Wednesday April 6th. There will be a public presentation of the budget on Tuesday April 12th to go over the budget and answer any questions from townspeople.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.