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Advisory Board  
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**2/1/2010 Advisory Board Meeting Minutes**

Advisory Board members present:

Ron Mikol, Dan St. Jean, Joe Dean, Dana Metzler, Christine Muir

Advisory Board members absent: Harold Simmons

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Meeting began at 7:00 p.m.

Review of FY2011 budget requests

The main purpose of tonight's meeting was to take a first look at the FY2011 budget requests that have been received from the various departments in town. There are approximately 32 requests that have not been received as of last night.

Throughout the budget review, Joe Dean copied each department's requested budget information into the Recommended column so we could see where full funding would leave our budget surplus or deficit. These amounts are not the board's final recommendations.

Joe's spreadsheet includes some color coding, with the following meanings:

- Light red items are salaries.
- Green items are the input from other tabs (budget requests).
- Orange items require additional information (we have questions).

Listed below are the questions that were raised for various line items within several of the departments. If a department is not listed below, their request did not raise any questions or has not been received yet.

*Highway*

We would like more information on two line items in the highway's requested budget:

- \$4725 Communication
- \$20,000 wages for a part-time position shared with the Water Dept.

Can highway use chapter 90 funds for the sander and repeater, instead of a warrant article?

Should the snow removal budget go up to the \$300,000 range because of the previous override specifically for this purpose?

*Accountant*

Is it necessary to have an audit this year? We understand that an audit was done with Kim took over for Roberta, so it may be reasonable not to include in the FY2011 budget.

*Assessor*

Will a new associate assessor take the same salary as Vic Stewart?

It was noted that the Assessors Salaries line item is \$900 to cover \$300 for each of the elected Assessors. The Assessors Associate salary is significantly higher because he's the one doing most of the field work.

### *Treasurer*

We discussed the need to re-read the Treasurer's narrative regarding the need for another person to be an assistant to the Treasurer. This person may also fill other responsibilities, so perhaps a new job description needs to be written.

### *Town Rentals*

The heat and water are on at 160 Pleasant Street. It seems that there was past discussion of renting this property, but some feel it is not habitable. The building is also full of old documents and records from the time it was used as a town hall, when Town Hall was under renovation. We discussed changing the Recommended amount to \$0.

At this point, the board also talked about asking Danice Palumbo for more accurate records of town hall expenses. We have approved many transfer requests in the past for these expenses, but could eliminate that process if we fund more accurately to begin with. Dana said Kim or Bonnie has summaries of the town hall expenses from 2005-2009.

### *Police*

Salaries are the largest component of the police department budget. The police chief's salary clearly includes the 3% cost of living increase, but it wasn't immediately clear if the officers' wages included that 3% or not. It also wasn't clear if the 3% COLA for officers was based on their base salaries or the total of base salary plus specialty items. We also questioned whether the salary for the requested full-time administrative assistant was included in the FY2011 Requested Salaries line item.

After some calculations from the Police Chief's original, expanded budget request, we determined that the officers' 3% increase was based only on their salaries (as it should be) and that the \$38,000 for the admin was also included in the Requested \$412,000 line item for Salaries. We think the Admin salary should be separated out.

We'd like clarification on the cruiser lease line item.

Will overtime wages decrease if the department hires a full-time administrative assistant? If so, that would help support the request for a new position in the department. Currently, overtime averages 16 hours/week according to the narrative.

What revenue do police bring in? Carol Skerrett, town clerk, takes in the money from drug and speeding tickets. We're wondering what that total amount is.

### *Fire*

This year's budget request includes a pay increase of \$10/hour for the firefighters. The average in surrounding towns is \$12.50/hour. We question whether this is the year to ask for such an increase. Dana suggested that if this is to help staff the fire station, particularly for burning permit requests, maybe we should consider not offering permits 7 days a week but just Thursday-Sunday.

There is a line item for \$8000 in communications, which is the dispatch arrangement with Pepperell. In the past, there has been discussion with Groton to take on our fire communications at no charge, since they already have police and emergency services for us. Perhaps giving in on that arrangement would help fund the wage increase request.

The energy line item is reduced by almost \$20000. Why is it so much lower?

### *Board of Health*

We have two goals for the BOH this year: to move sticker sales to the fiscal year instead of calendar year, and to increase participation from seniors since their cost is significantly lower than the regular cost.

*Library*

There are questions about the amount of the library's energy bills (they seem high), and whether some payments are being made from trust funds, which doesn't seem like the right use of those funds.

*Technical Expense and Other Supplies*

The board would like additional information on the plan for the website overhaul and new computers.

*Cultural Council*

Should we be funding the cultural council at some amount? What is the history of this department's budget?

Transfer request

We unanimously approved a transfer request of \$17.60 to zero out the balance in a Middlesex account.

Past Meeting Minutes

We unanimously approved the meeting minutes from January 4, 2010.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.