



**OFFICE OF THE  
Advisory Board  
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January 23, 2017

Present: Amie Stevens, Harold Simmons, Christine Muir, Dana Metzler, Pam Crocker,  
Absent: Ron Mikol  
Also present: Tracey Hutton (on phone)

- Christine opened the meeting.
  - Tracey confirmed that the assessment for GDRHS may be an extra \$30K due to increased enrollment.
  - There may be a need for a reserve fund transfer for police wages but cannot confirm this until June or July.
    - An officer also recently went out on FMLA which will result in higher wages due to coverage needs.
  - Chief Rich confirmed the town will not receive the new fire truck until January 2019. First payment won't be until FY2019. This is the line item for \$350K.
    - Mr. Simmons asked if we paid some of the equipment upfront years ago.
    - It was stated that this is not allowed anymore by the state per procurement laws.
  - Dana said that the town managers salary was voted \$80K for FY16 but wasn't paid in full. FY18 the item is reduced to \$77,500 due to health insurance costs and contractual obligations.
  - Dana asked about the reserve fund.
    - Tracey stated that all departments trimmed all budgets down to operating only. This is a change in philosophy from previous years. Previously the departments would budget for unforeseen items.
    - Dana and Christine looked at the police item from 2016 and inquired where the "what if" money was spent in the budget.
      - Chief Dow stated that its not an easy thing to calculate and would take time.
    - Christine inquired about the change in philosophy on the reserve fund, i.e. fund it higher...
      - Lorraine (town accountant) said that this is because the town is asking the departments to focus on operating needs only. Because of this, the town needs to build up their reserve fund to cover unforeseen circumstances.
      - Christine asked if this is a better way of understanding what departments need.
        - Lorraine stated this is a better way as it allows them to manage to their needs and only rely on the reserve fund for unforeseen circumstances.
        - It keeps people more attuned to their budget.

- Chief Rich and Chief Dow understand the new formula of building up reserves but worry there might not be enough.
- Dana asked why Chief Rich's fire department budget increased.
  - Tracey mentioned that it's only a \$2K increase which is in line with inflation.
  - Christine mentioned that we have meetings scheduled with all department heads so we can drill down into the bigger department budgets.
  - Harold asked where the cuts in the budgets are.
    - A lot of the budgets seemed to have gone up?
    - Where are the cuts that took place?
    - Christine suggested that we get a breakout of what makes up the "combined" line items on the budget. Where did things go up or down?
- Dana asked how comfortable we are with town's building engineers budget this year?
  - Tracey is suggesting making this a revolving fund to ensure it goes to the Town engineering. A&R is the permitting that is required and this is eating into the budget.
- Harold asked about the library budget. Tracey is meeting next Thursday with the library trustees. Christine suggested that we meet with the library on 2/6 after our water and highway meetings.
- Dana has three questions on the police
  - Is the cruiser leased or purchased? Tracey confirmed this is the second half of a lease and the purchase of one for 2018. 2019 should be a purchase of one cruiser.
  - How many officers does the town have?
    - Chief Dow confirmed we have 8 total full time officers and staff and 14 in total including part time officers. 50% of overtime is part timers currently but that could change.
    - On average the part time employees work a total of 80 hours.
  - Dana brought up the police chiefs salary as we have discussed this for the last 5 years. Why is the first years chief's salary higher than someone who had 20 years experience
    - Tracey confirmed this salary represents step one on the wage and classification scale.
    - This was a recommendation of the personnel board which the selectmen approved.
    - The selectmen will look at the wage and classification chart every 3-5 years.
      - Tracey confirmed that the town will follow the annual 2% COLA increase we shouldn't fall as far behind as previous years.
- Dana had a question on the override from last year. Should part of the money go to the schools since the town did pass the override.
  - Dana questioned why we didn't do an override to help the library stay open on Saturday?
    - Christine claimed that this was not part of the override and the town voted to close the library on Saturdays.
  - Dana questions why the override piece for the schools doesn't go to the schools
    - Christine stated that the override last year was for both municipal and schools
    - We voted \$5,407,056 and were assessed \$5,244,976. Difference of \$162K. There is a \$220K increase from 2017.

- In FY2017 we voted to give the schools an extra \$162K more than our assessment. If we were to give them last year's assessment plus this year's assessment we would give them an additional \$321K. The question is where do we put the resources.
- Topic switched back to fire. Chief Rich said that they do their budgets very early and things change, i.e. unforeseen increases.
- Dana asked if the entire debt for the school is excluded? Does it include the voc debt too?
  - Yes, all debt has been excluded.
  - Dana said that the proposed \$587K excluded number may be a bit light because we may be missing an interest payment.
- Audience member asked about the capital plan of the schools from the last meeting? Has the board discussed the schools capital plan situation?
  - Tracey confirmed there hasn't been any discussions since the last meeting. Christine suggested that this board could look at the capital plan to see our options, i.e. excluded debt, CPA funds etc.
  - Christine stated that someone on the school committee needs to own the capital plan and integrate those priorities with the education's priorities.
    - The interim business manager is looking into different options.
    - Is the superintendent going to take ownership of the capital improvement priorities?
- Audience member stated that we need to know exactly where the money is going and that it will be spent on capital improvements.
  - School committee needs to balance the education needs vs. the capital improvement needs.
- Dana inquired why the board of health budget increased by 50%.
  - Tracey confirmed they requested more administrative help.
  - Increased hours from 4 to 7 a week.
  - Dana requested justification for this increase.
- Where did the savings come from on their transfer station
  - They are hauling less trash hence the savings.
  - Board of health is looking at other options for trash hauling
  - Harold commented that the containers going to the recycling company are half full. Tracey cannot verify this.
    - Who manages the transfer station: The Board of Health.
- Christine asked how "final" this budget is?
  - Tracey said there may be some tweaks in how we account for our buildings per the facilities management report.
    - The report was done by a third party. Tracey is currently reviewing.
- Tomorrow 1/24/17, Fincom is meeting with water department and capital planning.
- **Committee Updates**
  - Operational review committee: Christine was at this meeting. The school committee is looking to hire a firm to review the schools budget to find cost efficiencies. There is a bid to potentially go to two firms to cover two parts of the RFP, the other firm to do the other two sections. The dollar amounts of the bids were approximately \$50K, the other was \$100K bid. Total of \$150K. They could look to fund from E&D.

- Sustainability committee: Tracey gave an update. They have a meeting on Thursday to review.
- Public safety: Dana stated nothing to report. Meeting scheduled for tomorrow
- Affordable housing: Dana stated nothing to report. Meeting scheduled for tomorrow.
- Capital Planning: Supposed to meet this week but had to reschedule.
- Annual Report
  - Christine has to write the forward for the annual town report that is mailed out for FY16
- Harold made the motion to approve unpaid bills, Dana seconded, all approved.
  - Dana had questions on the unpaid bills.
    - How did the greenscapes invoice not get reviewed. It was in relation to Larter field.
- Christine called for any new business?
- Pam asked if the solar farm in Dunstable/Tyngsboro was up and running?
  - It is not finished so there is no revenue yet.
- Harold asked how we are going to fund the Town's capital plan.
  - Christine suggested to Tracey that we put this on the upcoming meeting calendar.
- Harold motioned we adjourn, Dana seconded, all approved.