



**OFFICE OF THE  
Advisory Board  
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May 30, 2018

Present: Adria Fischer, Eric McKenzie, Kieran Meehan, Bob Nelson, Harold Simmons, Leo Tometich  
Also attending: Town Administrator Tracey Hutton, Leah Basbanes, Fire Chief Brian Rich, Mike Martin and Paul Dalida from the Road Commissioners (Highway Department)

Board Reorganization

Motion to appoint Bob Nelson as Advisory Board chairperson - Harold - 2<sup>nd</sup> Leo. Vote: Unanimous to approve.  
Motion to appoint Harold Simmons as Advisory Board vice-chair - Bob - 2<sup>nd</sup> Kieran. Vote: Unanimous to approve.  
Motion to appoint Leo Tometich as Advisory Board secretary - Bob - 2<sup>nd</sup> Harold. Vote: Unanimous to approve.  
The Advisory Board also agreed to have regularly scheduled meetings the first Monday of each month at 6:00 P.M. Due to the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday, our next meeting will be at 6:00 P.M. on Monday June 25<sup>th</sup>.  
The secretary will send this AB reorganization information to the Town Clerk, Carol Skerrett.  
In general, the AB chair will organize AB meeting agendas and meeting notices, so please send agenda topics to Bob.

Transfer Request Process and Expenditure Ledger Review

Some expenditure ledger discussion about account structure; departments, salaries and operations, plus allocated, expended, ending and %variation dollar amounts as of ledger date. Note that departmental salary and operations budgets are defined during the normal budget cycle with approval at town meeting. Outside of the normal budgeting cycle, salaries to operations account transfers can only be done at the end of the fiscal year with approval from the Board of Selectmen and Advisory Board. While Town departments cannot transfer funds between salaries and operations budgets during the fiscal year, they can transfer up to 3% of their budget between accounts to compensate for budget changes throughout the fiscal year. Interdepartmental budget transfers above 3% of their operating budget require Board of Selectmen and Advisory Board approval. In addition, transfer requests can be paid from the reserve account, which is a budget line item approved at Town Meeting, to fund unanticipated and unexpected costs throughout the fiscal year. Spending from the reserve account is through a transfer request to the Advisory Board.  
To allow adequate time for transfer requests review prior to AB discussion and approval, we would like to receive transfer requests one meeting before making a decision on the transfer request. When this is not feasible, like some fiscal year end transfer requests, we will try to notify the AB before its decision meeting.

Transfer Requests

Per the discussion above, the board postponed discussion of pending transfer requests until our next meeting.

Known pending transfer requests:

1. BOH - Approximately \$3200
2. Water Dept. - Interdepartmental
3. Missed partial year salary step increase (March to June 2018) plus water department invoicing cost, approximately \$412
4. Street lights - Fiscal year 2019 correction, approximately \$2000
5. Police department - Mostly interdepartmental, but approximately \$2000 from the reserve account

Tracey will forward information related to these transfer requests to the AB for review.

Request for Earlier Notification of Town Meeting Warrant Articles and Peer Board Communications

Bob requested earlier notification of Town Meeting warrant articles to have more time for review. Since warrant articles are typically a work in progress until the very last minute, final versions are often not available before print date. Sometimes a draft version of warrant articles is available, but another option Leah suggested is for more joint BOS/AB meetings as warrant articles are being developed. Generally, the BOS meets every other Tuesday. Mike Martin requested that the Highway Commissioners be invited to any joint BOS/AB meetings. This evolved into the desire and need for enhanced communication between departments,

in this case Highway, BOS and AB, especially when discussing budget and personnel. One outcome of this discussion is to review the town meeting calendar and upcoming agendas that include budget related topics. As always, AB meetings are open to the public with time scheduled for unlisted additional topics from anyone at the meeting.

#### Free Cash Origins and Uses

Tracey, Bob and Paul had some discussion about free cash origin and typical uses. Free cash is monies rolled over from the previous fiscal year, and has varied considerably over the last several years. Some sources of the FY18 free cash were unspent FY18 budget allocations, new growth, a previous numerical error, and a previous budget override. One free cash example related to new growth is “local receipts”, which among other things, is a mix of housing permit revenue, partial year property taxes, and personal property taxes. The revenue from these items is inconsistent, so it is not considered a reliable revenue source and should not be used for recurring expenses such as salaries. While Dunstable has been using some free cash to balance its operating budget in recent years, it is a practice that should be avoided. As witnessed during our last town meeting, the majority of free cash usage was for one-time or capital expenses. Another example was to use free cash to pay for the police department collective bargaining agreement raises during the October 2018 fall town meeting. The police department CBA was not finalized by June 30<sup>th</sup> to be included in the FY18 budget, so some free cash spending was approved during the Fall 2018 town meeting to pay for police department CBA raises.

#### Capital Planning Requests

This led to some discussion with Mike and Paul that capital planning requests are due to the capital planning committee by the end of August each year.

#### Highway Department Personnel

Paul indicated that the highway department hopes to start the roads report implementation next spring (April) and needs two additional employees at that time. Contractors would be paid prevailing wage versus the currently lower highway department employee pay rate. This led to some discussion about work that existing highway department employees are doing and justifying additional highway department personnel. Paul indicated that the need for additional staff has been presented, referencing previous information indicating that the current Dunstable highway department is attempting to maintain approximately twice as many road miles per person as other local towns. The highway commissioners try to limit vacation time of the two employees during the winter so they are available for snow removal. This leads to vacation time during the summer months, further restricting road maintenance because many tasks require at least two people (equipment operation and safety). This would likely require additional equipment, but extra highway department personnel could possibly reduce town landscaping costs.

It is worth noting that one of the highway department employees has left in each of the last three years. This is likely a retention problem and the road commissioners should meet with the personnel board to review a possible wage adjustment.

#### Highway Department Time Allocation

In addition to working on road maintenance, current highway department personnel are also doing some vehicle maintenance. Kieran asked if some of the vehicle maintenance could be contracted to a local vehicle repair shop? It may cost more to contract out some vehicle repairs, but would allow highway department personnel to spend a higher percentage of their time working on the roads. Our goal is for the highway department personnel to do what they do best, maintain Dunstable’s roads.

In an ongoing effort to justify adding highway department personnel, the highway department will start tracking the amount of time personnel are spending on vehicle maintenance. If possible two categories, vehicle repairs or maintenance (brakes, tune-ups, etc.) and vehicle preventative maintenance (snow removal to summer patch repair transition and cleaning). The objective is to learn where highway department personnel time is spent so we can plan improved road maintenance together.

This vehicle maintenance discussion led questions about how other towns do highway department vehicle maintenance. Some other highway departments have a mechanic on staff. Given the relatively small size of the Dunstable highway department, having a full time mechanic is not practical. Eric asked if combining with other town departments (police, fire and highway) to form a DPW was an option? A quick estimate of town vehicles is listed here:

Police: 7 - Most repairs are done under warranty. What about routine or preventative maintenance?

Fire: 6 - Chief Rich seemed open to the idea, but some fire vehicle maintenance will require special equipment and/or training.

Highway: 12 - Includes backhoe, front end loader, etc.

A DPW typically has a different structure, paid administrator versus Road Commission.

Fire Department

Chief Rich noted that the fire department has received a grant for SCBA equipment valued at over \$100,000 and may need to ask for approximately \$5,000 to purchase Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus bottles to go with this equipment grant.

Motion to adjourn at 7:47 p.m. - Kieran - 2<sup>nd</sup> Adria. Vote: Unanimous  
Meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.