

Jennifer Tabakin
Town Manager

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TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

GREAT BARRINGTON SELECTBOARD and FINANCE COMMITTEE

JOINT FY 18 BUDGET MEETING

TOWN HALL, 334 MAIN STREET

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 15, 2017 at 6:00 PM

PRESENT:

SELECTBOARD:

STEVE BANNON
DAN BAILLY
ED ABRAHAMS
BILL COOKE

FINANCE COMMITTEE:

MICHAEL WISE
WALTER ATWOOD
EGUENE CURLETTI
JANET LEE
THOMAS BLAUVELT

TOWN MANAGER
TOWN ACCOUNTANT

I. Call to Order.

Steve Bannon called the joint meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

II. Audit Review.

Drafts of audit review were presented to the Board.

Patricia Squillante presented an overview of the audit review letter. Patricia stated that Great Barrington is in good financial standing, as evidenced in the upgrade in the AAA bond rating. Jennifer Tabakin asked, "when the OPEB number is decided upon was it assumed that the Town is paying 100% of health care for retirees and not just a portion Medicaid?" Patricia responded that OPEB is decided based upon whatever the Town has adopted as policy. Patricia pointed out that the Town has \$3.7 million in unassigned funds, this is 14% of the total operating budget. Patricia reviewed the FY17 statement of revenues, mentioning that Great Barrington ended the fiscal year with 1.1 million in the positive. Patricia noted the top sources of revenue are taxes (room and board) and excise taxes. In review of the management letter Patricia noted that no

material weaknesses or significant deficiencies were found. Patricia's main suggestion was for the incoming cash to be tracked more efficiently, using one method and to follow that method consistently. There was no evidence of any money missing, however the tracking of cash pools (permits, fees) was found to be an area of improvement.

Patricia raised the point of pension standard, the data submitted to the actuary will be subjected to an audit. Patricia suggested submitting the census data along with the reinforcing documents so the information is verifiable in an audit.

Michael Wise asked what the efforts are in continuing to update our software. Karen Fink said that the Treasure/Collector department is transitioning from manual methods to having all payments tracked online. Jennifer Tabakin further clarified that Munis will be used for everything going forward and software trainings will be set up within the next few weeks.

Responses from the Town will be included in the management letter final draft. Karen Fink noted that some larger outstanding balances were foreclosed on this year and that will significantly reduce the tax title balance.

III. FY 18 Budget Overview.

Michael Wise announced that he is going to step down from the Finance Committee after this meeting. He explained that as Moderator for the Annual Town Meeting it is uncomfortable to offer his opinion on the proposed budget after serving on the Finance Committee.

Jennifer Tabakin presented a PowerPoint to the Finance Committee and Selectboard. An Estimate of 15.4 million will be proposed to the School Committee, the Town Operating Budget is 11 million, and the Capital Budget is 4.2 million, totaling a proposed expenditure of 30.9 million. The next slide showed a pie chart segmenting the budget. The top three expenditures are; education 50%, Capital 14%, and Public Works 7%. The Town's FY18 proposed Budget of \$11 million is an 1.7% increase from the FY17 Budget. Priorities for FY18 were outlined as such; fair and productive labor contracts, meet public service needs, best practices in operations and management, promote community economic development, implement master plan initiatives, and implement next steps in technology. Another slide identified the savings in the budget, the top three are; capital grants- \$1.25 million, reduced debt payments- \$91,785, and health care costs plan change- \$82,968. The Wastewater Treatment Plant has an increase in \$72,529 in the total operating budget. Ms. Tabakin explained that this is due to sledge haulers increasing the rates.

The Selectboard and Finance Committee moved on to look at the revenues proposed for FY18.

21.6million will be obtained by property taxes. New growth in tax revenue is estimated to be \$144,000. Mr. Atwood asked the Assessor, Chris Lamarre what his evaluation of the Town is. Mr. Lamarre responded that for FY17 the taxable value is 1.4billion and that value has steadily increased over the last few years. There is a total of \$665,945 increase in the tax levy limit from FY17. The proposed tax rate for FY18 is 14.95, an increase of \$.35 from FY17. The average home in Great Barrington will pay about \$132.00 annually. The Town Manager noted that the Town is 1.3 million under the tax levy.

The Town Manager reorganized the travel and training budget under each department so that funds are properly tracked. Union raises have been left out of this draft due to ongoing contract negotiations. However, it is reflected in the total proposed budget without specific allocation.

IV. Department Overview:

Parks and Recreation

Paul Gibbons and Sean VanDeusen presented the Parks and Recreation Budget. Mr. Gibbons noted an increase in the Parks Programming line, last year the contract with Berkshire South was extended to accommodate a shorter than average school year. Improvements are anticipated for Lake Mansfield's recreational area as well as Memorial Field. Mr. Gibbons recommends hiring a third lifeguard on weekends when there is an increased volume of patrons.

Libraries

Amanda DeGiorgis, Library Director presented to the Selectboard and Finance Committee. Ms. DeGiorgis identified her priorities; upgrading the library website, re-launch technology classes at both libraries, staff training for new staff, and talent development for seasoned staff. Mr. DeGiorgis announced several achievements from the prior fiscal year; circulation and attendance is up 5%, a survey indicated that patrons of the library are very pleased with the staff and service. Amanda announced that she is not seeking any increases in the library budget for FY18.

Council on Aging

Polly Mann, Council on Aging Director presented to the Selectboard and Finance Committee. Polly spoke about new developments such as the memory cafes, which have been found to be helpful to those affected by Alzheimer's disease. The Council on Aging is in the process of working with BRTA to service the Senior Center. An upcoming project is improving the sound quality of the dining room with acoustic paneling. Jennifer Tabakin pointed out that this budget is offset by an annual grant of \$10,000 received through elder services. Steve Bannon asked the Town Manager to briefly describe the increases. There was a new Assistant Director hired this past year. The repairs and maintenance equipment budget increased this year in order to replace the tables and chairs in the dining hall.

Veteran's Services

This is a shared service among the surrounding towns. The Town is partially reimbursed. Dan Bailly asked if the Veteran's Officer has officially moved to the new location. The Town Manager responded that the Veteran's Officer is out of the Town Hall and into her new office.

Human Services

The Town Manager presented this budget to the Selectboard and Finance committee. \$40,000 is proposed for grant and aid funding. The Town gives 14 organizations from these funds; CHP, VIM, Greenagers, Berkshires Center for Justice, Construct, GB Land Conservancy, and The Brien Center are a few of the organizations. The grant applicants are asked to quantify how they service the Great Barrington community, funds are awarded based on this information. Bill Cooke asked the Town Manager if there is a committee who decides which organizations are awarded these funds. Ms. Tabakin responded that as of now herself and her Administrative Assistant decide, however a subgroup of staff will be formed in the future.

IV. Set date and time for next Jt. Budget Meeting.

After discussion the Selectboard and Finance Committee decided to reschedule the February 28th joint meeting until March 6, 2017

V. Set date and time for Finance Committee Public Hearing.

The Selectboard and Finance Committee decided to hold the Public Hearing on Wednesday, March 22nd at 6:00 PM.

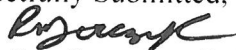
VI. Citizen Speak Time.

None.

VII. Adjournment.

On a motion made by Steve Bannon, seconded by Dan Bailly, with a unanimous vote the meeting was adjourned at 7:50PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Recording Secretary- Rebecca M Jurczyk