

FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes

Date: March 15, 2014

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Present: O'Connor, Hebert, Girard, Kupcinkas, O'Connell, Bartosiewicz

Absent: None

Meeting called to order at 8:00 a.m.

Motioned by Kupcinkas, seconded by Hebert to accept the minutes of January 21, 2014 as written. Unanimous.

Rob McNeil, DPW Director, Bob Spain, Town Manager and Brian Turbitt, Finance Director were present to discuss budgets at 8:00 a.m.

Bob Spain: I did 2 rounds of cuts. I did keep the 60/40 split in mind. I am actually cutting the Town side of the budget. This means that I have budgeted less than this past year. If there are more years like this, I will have to make drastic cuts.

Tree Warden Budget

Rob McNeil: This budget is remaining about the same as last year.

Albert Kupcinkas: Are we using one contractor to do the stump grinding? Is that what we were doing in the past?

Rob McNeil: It is done under a single contract now. It is a much better rate. I wanted to put this under the Tree Warden, since that is where it belongs. It has been coming out of the Highway and DPW budgets and should be under the responsibility of the Tree Warden. I also wanted to let you know that the Police details are going up next year.

DPW Administration Budget

Rob McNeil: We still need to negotiate my new contract.

DPW Maintenance and Operations

Rob McNeil: There are contract increases.

Bob Spain: There was no contract in place at this time last year. Their contract is retroactive to last year. That is why it looks like a large increase.

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Michael O'Connor: There are names next to the full time employees. If they don't get these increases, will these people be leaving?

Rob McNeil: Some of those are on workers' comp.

Michael O'Connor: Are we anticipating them coming back by the end of the year?

Bob Spain: Yes, I am.

Rob McNeil: In my experiences, I have had some problems with accumulated time in regards to retirements. We had some retirements this year and we had no way of counteracting the payouts. Everything comes out of my budget. We normally cannot replace someone that is retiring until the next budget year.

Bob Spain: We are in the process of putting in a mechanism to cover this type of expense.

Jennifer O'Connell: Is every position, except the operations manager, a union position? If so, how can you cut the position?

Bob Spain: They are union positions. We have based the cuts on the assumption that some of the employees being out for a period of time.

Jennifer O'Connell: Will this number go down next year since you won't have the retroactive amount?

Bob Spain: We still need to fund it. It looks higher this year, but it brings it up to the percentage that they are supposed to have.

Rob McNeil: We are also negotiating the uniform contract this year for the next three years. I anticipate an increase in this contract.

Highway Department

Rob McNeil: This has essentially a \$10,000 cut.

Michael O'Connor: Will we be using the whole \$80,000 this year for contracted services

Bob Spain: Without a mechanic at the time, we will use that and more.

Snow Removal

Michael O'Connor: How much have we gone over this year?

Brian Turbitt: About \$250,000.

Street Lights

Bob Spain: The cost is going up because of the cost of electricity and the fact that every street we accept, we also accept the street lights and hydrants.

Solid Waste Management

Rob McNeil: This has been cut by \$500. We are dealing with a situation. The trash number is down and the recycling is up. It is costing us more to haul away the recycling. We are proposing compactors for the recycling. If we can decrease the number of pulls on the recycling, we will

be more financially sound. We have a one-year contract at this time for the recycling. The compactor project should take about 9 years to pay off.

Michael O'Connor: If the debt exclusion on this passes, there will be a lot of discussion at Town Meeting.

Michael O'Connor: What if we closed the transfer station and had a private hauler come in? How much would we save in a year?

Rob McNeil: Are we required to provide trash service in the Town?

Bob Spain: No, we are not. I think it would cost more to have a hauler come in to do curbside service.

Parks Operating and Maintenance

Rob McNeil: This is for the three seasonal employees for 4 parks, the senior center, Municipal Office Building and the Asa Waters.

Cemeteries

Rob McNeil: This budget was cut. The position of administrative clerk was eliminated.

Gasoline/Diesel

Bob Spain: The decrease in this budget was based on current usage and the current cost.

Sewer Enterprise

Rob McNeil: There are 2 big items in this budget. The Upper Blackstone is up 5.7%.

Bob Spain: The cost will continue to go up as our flow figures go up.

Rob McNeil: The other large item is the 146 Bridge Area Sewer Reconstruction. The traffic signal will be eliminated and there will be 2 roundabouts put in. The plan is to replace all the sewer lines in the area. They were installed around the early 70's.

Bob Spain: The cost is closer to \$400,000. We may fund this through Retained Earnings rather than have it in the budget.

Rob McNeil: This is a Mass DOT project. The State isn't paying for our part of the project. This is our elective to do this.

Rob McNeil left at 9:40 a.m.

Kenneth Howell, Police Chief and Lieutenant Andrea Augustine-Daye were in to discuss the Police Department budget at 9:45 a.m.

Chief Howell: The increases are due to contracts, laptops and additional personnel.

Michael O'Connor: There are two positions that I focused on. There was a request for a new Sergeant and a new officer. The new officer is in the budget but the new Sergeant is not. What could be done with this budget to accommodate a new Sergeant?

Bob Spain: The positions were in this year's budget, but did not need to be funded until January. I had to fund the other ½ for next year. My goal was to get him to 20 people, which was promised to him. If the overtime gets better, he could fund the Sergeant instead of the officer.

Michael O'Connor: How much is in the budget for overtime?

Chief Howell: There is \$199,000. I don't intend on hiring someone on July 1st.

Michael O'Connor: If you do hire a new officer this year, there is no money in the budget for the academy.

Chief Howell: I understand that.

Bob Spain: I felt that the firearms needed to be replaced. This budget still gives him the flexibility to purchase what he needs.

Michael O'Connor: Can you explain the MDT terminals?

Chief Howell: The terminals are old. They really need to be replaced.

Bob Spain: These are in a separate article.

Chief Howell and Lieutenant Augustine-Daye left at 10:30 a.m.

Michael O'Connor handed out some information concerning Blackstone Valley Tech.

Town Moderator Budget

Bob Spain: This budget is level funded.

Town Manager Budget

Bob Spain: There is a slight salary increase.

Jennifer O'Connell: Is your pay increase contractual?

Bob Spain: Yes, it is.

Jennifer O'Connell: Did your executive assistant take on more responsibility?

Bob Spain: Yes, she did. She is now an exempt employee, so there is no overtime involved.

Jennifer O'Connell: Are the copiers under a combined master contract?

Bob Spain: No, they are not. They were all acquired at different times. They are all leased with the exception of the one in my office.

Reserve Fund

Level funded

Finance Director/Town Accountant

Brian Turbitt: I asked for a Human Resources person, but was denied. It was not a time to add a person.

Town Audit

Level Funded

Board of Assessors

Brian Turbitt: The only significant change is the cut of a clerk position.

Treasurer/Tax Collector

Brian Turbitt: There are no major changes in this budget.

Computer Operations

Brian Turbitt: This is down slightly, but I will make it work. We may need to purchase a new server next year. We are upgrading the switches this year.

Michael O'Connor: What is the IT Consultant giving you in the next budget year that you haven't received earlier?

Brian Turbitt: That includes managing monitors and keyboards for the year.

Town Clerk

Bob Spain: This is basically even. The postage is up but we will deal with it.

Elections and Registrars

Bob Spain: This is up due to additional elections.

Conservation Commission

Level Funded

Planning Board

Level Funded

Town Planner

Bob Spain: Laurie has reached her 10th year. Other than that, the budget is level funded.

Municipal Office Building

Bob Spain: This is up per an agreement with the union. The custodian is now at the correct step.

Dan Girard: Why is the snow/emergencies for the mansion under this budget?

Bob Spain: Our head custodian works at both buildings and it is all covered under this budget.

Town Report
Level funded.

Ambulance

Bob Spain: We are looking into changing vendors. It should be this dollar amount.

Debt Exclusions

Blackstone Valley Tech

Bob Spain: This is a \$2.9Million bond. This is to create several new programs. There are two students in another program that will be able to continue here. I met with the Superintendent along with the other 12 Towns. It is only the 1st or 2nd time that all Towns met with him. In order for this to not pass, 5 other Towns would have to vote against it.

DPW Articles

Transfer Station-\$396,000

Fuel Stations-----\$364,000

HVAC-MOB-estimated \$250,000

SCBA-Fire Department-\$341,504-This replaces all of them.

Bob Spain: When you meet with the Fire Chief on Tuesday, you will get more information on this.

Michael O'Connor: With these five articles, how much would this change the tax rate?

Brian Turbitt: The SCBA's would increase the rate by \$.06 and the remaining articles would add about \$.15.

Bob Spain: The Blackstone Valley article would not affect this until 2017.

Much discussion concerning the Town's Health Insurance Plan

Michael O'Connor: When will we have the final budget?

Bob Spain: I can't say exactly, but within the next three weeks. I hope to have the numbers next week so we can work on them. I first have to get the warrant ready for you.

Michael O'Connor: I would hope to have a final budget on the 27th of March. After this week, our hands will be tied until we get a final budget. I would ask that we get the warrant for our

meeting a week from Tuesday, so we are not waiting for figures. If I could get the warrant by Friday, I can get it to the members to look at.

Bob Spain: I will work on that and try to get it to you by Friday. I may be able to get it to you earlier.

Motioned by Bartosiewicz, seconded by Girard to adjourn at 12:10p.m. Unanimous.

Mark Lee
Albert P. Kupcinich
John Baly
Gunter Brown
Dan
Steve Albert