

Sturbridge Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 08, 2014 ~ Sturbridge Town Hall
7:00pm

Call to Order:

The chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00pm with the following Finance Committee members present: Joni Light (JL), Prescott (Scott) Arndt (SA), Mike Serio (MS), Kevin Smith, Chairman (KS) Kathy Neal (KN), Alex Athans (AA), Larry Morrison (LM) and Bob Jepson (BJ)
Absent: Arnold Wilson (AW)
Guest: Thomas Ford, Chief of Police (TF), David Zinther, Fire Chief (DZ)

Police Department – TF was present to discuss the details of the FY15 budget requests. TF explained some key changes to the budget, specifically in the training, were due to mandatory training costs that have now shifted to the municipalities. TF added that the training includes costs associated with the hiring of a new officer; the request is calculated for two officers in the event that two were approved. TF has a grant for the K9. KS asked if the K9 supplies would come out. TF confirmed the amounts in the budget could be removed.

KN asked for explanation on what is included in the travel expenses. TF explained the travel expenses are for things such as tolls, event parking and the like. JL asked what was included with the Verizon contract. TF explained the Verizon contract covers the officer's cell phones, the supervisor's cell phones and the digital cost for the modems in the cruisers. LM asked for confirmation of the supplies cost in that they covered such things as cruiser repairs, snow tires, and winterizing the jet ski and motorcycle. TF confirmed the costs covered in the supplies budget. KN asked for explanation on the difference between tuition and training. TF explained that the tuition is for maintaining college tuition reimbursement, currently at 75% plus books and fees, for dispatchers. JL asked if the part-time dispatcher would be at 20 hours. TF explained he had requested a full time dispatcher; at this point he will work with the 20 hour position to fill shift vacancies.

KS asked the reason for overtime increasing. TF explained the increase was due to the coverage of numerous special events, flea market activity, and training for individuals going to class at an overtime rate. TF added that he did not budget last year for the Blue Grass Festival and it hit hard; he did not want to get in that situation again this year. There was discussion around the many events that require additional police support as well as bringing in additional outside support. LM stated that he endorses the chief's judgment and recognized that public safety services help the town. KN asked what was included in the animal control line item. TF explained the purchases and services amounts deals with animal control, rabies testing, heat costs for the animal shelter, and cell phone for the officer, along with maintaining the vehicle. TF explained the supplies budget is used for dog tags, repairs, animal food and kennel supplies. TF stated he has an animal control officer at 20 hours per week and is currently working on balancing the hours to make adjustments for night call outs. TF thanked the committee members for having him and told them to feel to contact him with any further questions. KS made the changes to amend the budget as discussed.

As a result BJ moved the motion to approve the Police Department Budget Line items as adjusted as follows:

Account 12101-51120 for \$114,206; LM seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0.

Account 12101-51130 for \$1,665,826; LM seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0.
Account 12101-51300 for \$255,304; LM seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0.
Account 12102-52000 for \$76,551; LM seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0.
Account 12102-54000 for \$57,055; LM seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0.
Account 12102-57000 for \$5,200; LM seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0.
Account 12102-58050 for 46,150; LM seconds. Motion accepted 8-0-0.

Fire Department - BJ explained to the committee he did not see how they could vote until such time they have finalized if there is going to be another hire. DZ explained that he had attended the first executive session, to explain a restructuring schedule to hire one person to decrease overtime expenses. MS asked if this would reduce the need for overtime. DZ felt that by hiring one more firefighter the overtime would be reduced by as much as 50% and the Town would gain another employee. DZ added to the issue of overtime by explaining that currently costs to cover benefit days are \$60,000 alone. KS asked if he was correct in looking at the savings in the amount of \$40,000 - \$50,000. DZ confirmed the overtime will be significantly reduced, the base salary will increase due to the hire but the net cost will be less. KS asked if the department only hires individuals who are also paramedics. DZ confirmed the posting is for an individual who is trained as a paramedic.

Discussion continued around the balance of the purchase and services. JL commented on the break out that was presented, it was not done in the past and she thought it was very helpful. Discussion moved to the return on ambulance billing. DZ explained that currently the rates are at the bottom of the 10-Town Survey and he is working on bringing up those numbers. Next to be discussed was the service contracts increase. DZ explained that many of the service contracts increase is due to vent systems, annual inspections of compressors as well as breathing equipment and the inspection of extraction tools. JL moved the discussion to the commercial washer and gear extractor requested by the department. DZ explained the need for these machines and the benefits they would provide, enabling the gear to remain in-house, and be cleaned at regular intervals. The current cleaning operations do not meet the recommendations in place to clean the gear after every fire. DZ went on to explain the commercial washer would allow the cleaning of towels to be done on site as well as any clothing that has been contaminated. DZ pointed the committee members to the IPS bid not the Maytag. JL had concerns with the installation cost above the cost of the units. DZ explained that the room currently has plumbing and he felt the cost would be minimal. KS asked DZ if he anticipated any large unforeseen costs. DZ responded to the question, stating the decontamination shower was the last item on the urgent list.

MS moved the motion to recommend the Fire Department Budget as follows: Motion accepted 7-0-0.
Account 12201-51120 for \$95,300; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.
Account 12201-51130 for \$668,315; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.
Account 12201-51300 for \$193,116; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.
Account 12202-52000 for \$75,225; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.
Account 12202-54000 for \$48,746; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.
Account 12202-57000 for \$5,250; KN seconds. Motion accepted 7-0-0.

DZ thanked the committee for their time and excused himself from the meeting.

Old Business:

KS moved through the line item budget book noting the items that have been approved and voted.

New Business: KS reviewed the e-mails.

KS moved to the ATM Draft Warrant. The committee acted on the Warrant Articles as follows:

For Article 1 – Town Reports, KN made a motion to approve the article as written; second by MS. So voted, 8-0-0.

For Article 2 – Community Preservation Committee Report, MS stated Penny was willing to come to a meeting and speak to this report. Committee will hold off on voting this article.

For Article 6 – Town Budget, MS made a motion to approve as written; second by AA. So voted, 8-0-0.

For Article 9 – Sewer Department Project Debt, MS made a motion to approve the article as written; second by BJ. So voted, 8-0-0.

For Article 10 – Community Preservation Debt Services, MS made a motion to approve the article as written; second by BJ. So voted, 8-0-0.

For Article 14 – Capital Improvements, MS made a motion to approve the article as written; second by AA. So voted, 8-0-0.

For Article 15 – Ambulance Stabilization Fund, MS made a motion to approve the article as written; second by BJ. So voted, 8-0-0.

For Article 16 – Ambulance Stabilization Fund, MS made a motion to approve the article as written; second by BJ. So voted, 8-0-0.

For Article 18 – OPEB Trust Fund, BJ made a motion to approve the article as written; second by MS. So voted, 8-0-0.

For Article 19 – Tax Rate Relief, BJ made a motion to approve the article as written; second by MS. So voted, 8-0-0.

For Article 24 – Transfer of Funds – Purchase School Bus, MS made a motion to approve the article as written; second by BJ. So voted, 8-0-0.

KS moved to the Special Town Meeting Warrant to do a first pass of the articles.

For Article 39 – Transfer of Funds – Sewer Department – Pickup Truck, MS made a motion to approve the article as written; second by BJ. So voted, 8-0-0.

For Article 40 – Transfer of Funds – Water Department – Pickup Truck, MS made a motion to approve the article as written; second by BJ. So voted, 8-0-0.

KS will follow up on questions and add the comments the committee has on the balance of the STM Warrant Articles.

BJ moved to adjourn, MS seconds. Meeting adjourned 9:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted - Cynthia Poirier

