

Sturbridge Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 14, 2016 ~ Town Hall
7:00pm

Call to Order:

The chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00pm with the following finance committee members present: Kathy Neal, Chairman (KN), Joni Light (JL); Kevin Smith; Larry Morrison (LM); Jim Waddick (JW); Suzanne Smiley (SS); Mike Serio (MS)

Guests: David Zinther, Fire Chief (DZ); Leon Gaumond, Town Administrator (LG)

Line Item Budget – Fire Department – Joni Light

JL did a comparison between the reductions and increases from FY16 compared to FY17 to start discussion and review of the Fire Department budget. EMT Licensing fluctuates year over year based on the timeframe as to when a license is up for renewal. Licensing is not based upon calendar year. Annual testing of fire hose has increased due to length of hose. The department currently has 21,000 feet of hose requiring testing. Vehicle Safety Lane (vehicle inspections) includes inspections for 13 vehicles within the Fire Department fleet. DZ indicated that in some cases the inspectors will come to the safety complex and perform the inspections, whereas the fire apparatus vehicles need to be inspected at a facility in Hopkinton. CMED is for notification to the hospital for specific incidents requiring transport to a hospital. This is based upon historical data of annual incidents which anticipates a modest increase. Vehicle Maintenance is for routine maintenance of fire apparatus and fleet vehicles. It includes a portion for “unforeseen” repairs that may result for normal wear and tear. It includes an increase for the Brush Truck which was received in September of 2015. One Suburban is a 2011 for the chief; another Suburban is a 2000 for the inspector and ambulance calls; and a 1998 pick-up truck used for pulling (transport) and snow plowing. The TA has level funded this request. Radio Maintenance has been increased due to the aging of equipment, and more repairs have become more frequent over the past year. The TA has level funded this request. Annual Maintenance is inspection and calibration to the cardiac monitors and the LUCAS machines in each ambulance. The increase over last year is that in FY17 it will cover a full year contract for the LUCAS machines and the upgraded cardiac monitors which were put into service in FY16. There are two LUCAS machines as one was purchased out of Betterment in FY16. Software Support Agreements increased due to required software upgrade from OEMS for Ambu-Pro, and an increase to Red Alert due to the addition of the Fire Prevention module that was added in FY16. DZ told the committee that the upgrades send messages and alerts to fire personnel directly to their iPhones. KS asked if the town supplied the iPhones to fire personnel that is linked to the OEMS. DZ said it does not. This cost also includes new training and licenses. This is an annual contract. A five year contract would be less expensive and the chief would like to consider for FY18. Fire suppression and fire supplies are mostly for sensors and meters (i.e., CO2 meters), radio batteries, foam concentrate and other replaceable items. Also includes small equipment maintenance supplies.

DZ explained how the town is in year three of working to keep consistent records of the fire department’s maintenance schedule in order to obtain ISO Certification, and he is hopeful that will happen by the documentation he’s gone through since being hired. Part of the ISO Certification is to prove that the fire hydrants are properly maintained. There was a brief discussion on private fire hydrants, and DZ noted that the town is under no obligation to maintain, nor is the water department under any obligation to inspect. KS was curious to know if the town could force the owners to maintain them, and DZ indicated that the property owners’ insurance providers generally require such proof of maintenance and inspections in order to renew their policies, so it is in their interest to get this done properly.

Other discussion on the budget; ambulance maintenance has increased, and a Reserve Fund Transfer may be forthcoming for FY16 to cover recent unforeseen repairs. It can be precarious having only one ambulance available at times, and this can lead to increased calls to nearby towns if the need requires more assistance. Secondary calls happen often and the town needs to rely on neighboring towns for assistance if an ambulance is not available. Call volumes are increasing in the area and mutual aid is critical on all sides.

JL moved the motion to accept the Fire Department Budget, lines 90, 91 and 92 as follows:

90	12202-52000	Purchase of Services	\$86,527.00	KS seconds; motion accepted 7-0-0
91	12202-54000	Supplies	\$53,800.00	KS seconds; motion accepted 7-0-0
92	12202-57000	Other Charges	\$7,100.00	KS seconds; motion accepted 7-0-0

Discussion continued around the firefighter position, and JL noted that the “9th” position is included in FY17 budget, as it was also included in FY16. However, the ninth firefighter has yet to be appointed. This was approved by town meeting for FY16, and is included in the FY17 budget. The BOS has not yet approved or authorized a candidate to be hired. One qualified candidate was brought in as a part time paramedic. A full time firefighter has recently retired which will allow this part time person to move to a full time position. The staff is still in need of the ninth position. Currently, there is one firefighter on long term disability which brings the active staff to 8. This ninth position is even more crucial for the chief to have the ability to reduce the OT budget which he intends to do and can easily reduce the OT budget by \$25K. There is currently a grant for 4 positions through the Safer Grant which will pay the salaries, training and benefits of four firefighters for two years. This does not include gear as it is all custom fit. The town is under no obligation to keep these firefighters after the two years. However, it would be great to have an experience candidate pool to choose to fill positions that may become open due to retirements. There are currently two potential retirements over the course of the next year. Consideration will have to be made to fund these positions after year two.

JL noted to the committee that the chief had requested additional hours for his administrative assistant. The chief was looking to increase her work week by ten additional hours for an incremental amount of \$8,942.00. However, the chief would be happy with an additional five hour per week increase at an incremental amount of \$4,471.00. She is currently working 25 hours per week and is at a grade 3. By comparison, the DPW administrative assistant is a grade 4 at 40 hours per week; the police department administrative assistant is a grade 5 at 40 hours a week; and the BOH administrative assistant is a grade 4 at 15 hours a week, although the position is split between two people. The chief’s assistant does manage two departments, technically; the fire department and their administrative duties, plus the duties for the Safety Complex. Very likely the fire department assistant will assist the facilities manager in even slight ways when he/she is hired and on site at the safety complex. With all that has been said in the past about the need to better our fire department, and it is getting much better organized, this position has been overlooked for any such increase in hours. If the town wants an efficient and more professional fire department than JL feels the additional hours should be granted as a good administrative assistance can be invaluable to an organization. The Fire Department is a full time operation and warrants a full time administrative assistant. LG admitted that the chief made a compelling case to increase the hours of his assistant, however, he did not feel the workload was consistent enough to warrant the additional hours on an annual basis. LG did agree to look at this position, and others, to ensure they were being utilized accurately to the needs of the department(s). He offered that the chief could use some overtime funds to cover additional hours as needed and felt this was reasonable. MS continued that in the past the Fire Department had one such position that was split between Fire and Police. Over the years it was proven to need two for each department, and these positions helped make the operation more efficient. KS said he would not support the additional hours if the current budget could cover the additional hours when needed.

JL moved the motion to accept the Department Head Salary Account 12201-51120 in the amount of \$100,859.00; LM seconds. The motion was accepted 7-0-0.

JL moved the motion to accept the Salaries/Wages Account 12201-51130 in the amount of \$851,414.00; LM seconds. The motion did not pass at 2-5-0 (JW, SS, MS, KS, KN opposed).

JL moved the motion to accept the Salaries/Wages Account 12201-51130 in the amount of \$846,943.00; LM seconds. The motion was accepted at 5-2-0 (JW, KS, opposed).

JL moved the motion to accept the Overtime Expense Account 12201-51300 in the amount of \$202,263.00; LM seconds. The motion was accepted 7-0-0.

Line Item Budget – Public Safety Complex – Joni Light

Again, JL continued with the Public Safety Complex budget by comparing FY16 to FY17 increases, and additional needs through the year. The Cross Connection Fee is for pressure valves that require annual inspections that were not done in the past. Inspections are performed by Veolia. The item for Bottled Water is not new, merely putting it into the correct line item. This water is for fire apparatus and ambulances, and is for on-site distribution to firefighters and victims as needed. The Security Cameras are for the Police Department and due for repairs as the equipment is old. Interior renovations were approved, and the front entrance to the building will be included. The roof repairs approved for FY16 should be done so by end of fiscal year. There was further discussion on the anticipated purchase of the ladder truck, the majority of which will be covered by a grant for approximately \$950,000.00.

JL moved the motion to accept the budget for the Public Safety Complex as follows:

75	11972-52000	Purchase of Services	\$96,415.00	LM seconds; motion accepted 7-0-0
76	11972-54000	Supplies	\$13,300.00	LM seconds; motion accepted 7-0-0

Review of the Special Town Warrant (document “STM WARRANT 6-6-2016 without info.doc”)

LM asked the LG about Article 44, and how a resident would be able to vote on one of the two separate items, as noted in the Article, if the Article is presented as written? LG said they could vote by substitute motion. LM further asked if it was now practice to put unlike things together. LG noted that some are, such as Article 45.

Review of the Annual Town Warrant (document “ATM WARRANT 6-6-2016 without info.doc”)

ARTICLE 29 - PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING FEASIBILITY STUDY

It was noted that this is not the Fire Chief’s article, but he was in agreement with it. LG noted that it was a goal of his set before him by the Board of Selectman to do a feasibility study on the Public Safety Complex and the DPW building. He did not that the costs may actual be lower than what is typed onto the document at this time. The study will be very comprehensive and consider the structural integrity as well as the external environment and potential for future expansion. MS asked if the answer after the study is that the town needs a new complex, will the study provide the anticipated cost? LG said the town would then have to hire a designer for all of that detail, which is generally 10-15% of the total cost. KS further commented on their concerns to put before the town several high expenditures to the residents, such as a potential Senior Center Building, renovating and expanding the fields at the Town Barn, and the much needed Ladder Truck; all multi-million dollar projects. The need for a plan is critical. LG felt strongly that discussion would take place with the BOS and Finance Committee to come up with a plan before anything is put before the town residents. LM

reminded everyone that from start to finish Burgess took 13 years to complete, and residents need to understand the timelines involved when making their votes.

Further review at a high level continued with LG and notes were taken to make necessary adjustments to certain Articles. LG noted that the BOS voted on all but 2 Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles.

JL mentioned the Facilities Manager position and asked LG for his comments on the salary put forth. He felt it may be increased, and would support it if it were decided to do so. JL noted that the committee would hold off until more information was given after the next Personnel Committee Meeting. LG further shared that his calculation was based on a full time position at \$50,000.00 per year and reduced it based upon the 28 hour work week as presented.

Additional discussion went on about the Town Restrooms currently on the OSV property that they are taking back for their use. LG said the 20 year lease is up in May of 2016. He was not certain as to what would happen to the building; OSV keeps it or the town has to remove it; a meeting was forthcoming and LG would ask for confirmation.

Line Item Budget – Building Inspector – Mike Serio

MS had a lengthy discussion on the increase in workload in the Building Department. Permits increased from \$100,000.00 in FY15 to \$120,000.00 in FY16, of which has not concluded. The inspector has asked for an increase to his administrative assistant, as well, but was not granted the hours. As noted and discussed at length in the Fire Department’s budget, the reasoning is similar. The workload has increased, and in order to “professionalize” the department, the additional hours for the assistant would be essential. As for the Building Inspector himself, he would like to be considered for an increased work week; the position is currently 28 hours. He feels the workload justifies it. There are certain aspects of the position he is not able to spend much time on, such as sign enforcement and being able to bring building parcels up to code. JW asked about the revenue stream this department brings to the town, and MS shared that detail again by way of permit fees. JL asked to confirm the pay grade for the assistant and MS confirmed it was grade 3. MS would seek out salary increases from the Finance Director and revisit the line item budget for salaries and wages.

MS moved the motion to accept the Building Inspector budget as follows:

95	12412-52000	Purchase of Services	\$1,620.00	<u>KS seconds; motion accepted 7-0-0</u>
96	12412-54000	Supplies	\$2,501.00	<u>KS seconds; motion accepted 7-0-0</u>
97	12412-57000	Other Charges	\$700.00	<u>KS seconds; motion accepted 7-0-0</u>

New Business – none

Old Business

LM asked KN if she wanted to review the Tantasqua Agreement at the next meeting and she agreed.

Public Access – none

KS moved the motion to adjourn at 9:38pm; SS seconds. Motion passed 7-0-0.

/jml