

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting No. 16, FY2010
March 8, 2010

Approved
March 18, 2010

Members Present: Jo Lown, Chair, Ian Johnson, F. Robert Brown, Bill Linnane, Brigitte Casemyr, John E. Arnold, Michael Meachen. Absent: Judy Lucas, Kevin Cronin.

At 7:00 p.m. Ms. Lown called the meeting to order in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

Open Forum

There were no requests to address the committee.

FY2011 Proposed Budget Review

Council on Aging

Alma DeManche, Executive Director, Dan Pavolis, Vice Chairman, and Council members Josephine Tingley and George Barrette appeared before the committee to present their budget request for FY11. The Council on Aging has carefully considered the requested 1.8% cut to the FY11 budget, totaling \$4,416. After lengthy discussion they have voted to cut \$3,704, which is all but \$712 of the request. Cuts will be made to the Professional Services line budget 5219 by \$2,704, and the Special Events budget line 5219B. The cut to Professional Services will impact their home health aide services, and they will not be able to respond as quickly to requests. The state currently has a waiting list for home health aide services, and the Senior Center provides back-up, short-term homemaking for those on the waiting list or for those with short-term illnesses. The homemaker hours will be reduced from 18 per week to 10 per week. The human impact of this cut will be an inability to respond as quickly to requests for services, and maybe some clients can go to every-other week services, or once-a-month services. This may necessitate the development of a priority system in order to answer needs. Homemakers do light housekeeping, change sheets, clean bathrooms, do personal laundry, and provide a regular contact for seniors. Services that can no longer be provided by the Senior Center will not be provided, as they provide fill-in services when other sources of service are not available. If the state waiting list continues with homecare, they expect to be asked more often to help out with short-term projects. The homemaker only gets paid when she works, and so far this year she has not worked as many hours as budgeted. There are currently 33 seniors served by the state program, with 3 on the waiting list.

The remaining \$1,000 cut will be taken from Special Events, which pays for large functions such as the St. Patrick's Day meal. The Senior Center has begun offering community dinners on a more regular basis and so the larger events are not as needed, and the cut will not have as much of an impact.

The Senior Center busses have been in use for four years, and Ms. DeManche has met with the Capital Planning Committee to make them aware of the future need for replacement busses. The bus service is the most visible part of the services offered to the community. The demand for these busses has continued to grow, and there are some days when the busses are used to the maximum.

Mr. Brown commended the Council on their frugality. Ms. DeManche noted that Frank Cornine has done an amazing job on maintaining the building. They are currently having some issues with sidewalks lifting, which will be repaired. They have had an energy audit, and new lights have been installed. The issues with the HVAC are being addressed.

Ms. DeManche invited the public to attend a screening of the documentary film "I Remember Better When I Paint", sponsored by the Rotary Club and the Council on Aging. This film by Eric Ellena and Berna Huebner is the first international documentary about the positive impact of art and other creative

therapies on people with Alzheimer's. The screening will be held on Tuesday, April 13, 7 p.m., at the Westborough High School Auditorium. Ms. Abladian thanked the School Department for their help in sponsoring this event.

Police Department

Chief Gordon appeared before the committee to present the Police Department budget. Chief Gordon noted that the level funded budget originally requested included only step increases for staff. 1.8% of this budget totaled \$44,348. This will necessitate the cut of one dispatcher position which was funded last year through a grant from the state, resulting in the layoff of one employee. The current daytime secretary/dispatcher will be assigned to strictly desk duty Monday through Friday. The duties currently assigned to the secretary/dispatcher will be divided up between all of the clerical staff. Chief Gordon also cut \$1,000 from out-of-state travel, and reduced the training budget by \$2,006. Everything else in the budget is level funded. Chief Gordon also noted that last year they only purchased one cruiser, so this year he will be requesting the purchase of three cruisers. The FY11 budget request was prepared without a new contract for Superior Officers and Patrolmen. The current contract expires June 30, 2010. Chief Gordon does not expect large increases in the new contract.

Mr. Arnold asked about the effects of the delay in the Public Safety Building. Chief Gordon noted that they have put off repairs to the building for several years. Each year the state inspects the station, and the cell block always has issues. He reported that a few months ago someone tried to commit suicide in a cell. The dispatcher monitoring the cell block noticed a problem and sent an officer. The attempt was unsuccessful and this particular problem has been rectified, but many problems remain. The Department is looking at possible space to expand the cell block in the current site, including the gym. A feasibility study is needed to identify the changes that will need to be made in order to continue to use the current facility.

Mr. Johnson noted that the first requested budget is lower than last year's budget. Chief Gordon explained that one new hire has a BA rather than a MA, so the cost is lower. Chief Gordon stated that the impact of the decrease in training funds will be that he will have to prioritize who gets what training. Mr. Linnane noted that deficiencies in the building were pointed out at inspection eight years ago, and Chief Gordon agreed. The use of the Forbes Building gymnasium has been discussed previously, and is a sensitive issue as the facility is used continuously by the Recreation Department. Ms. Casemyr asked about the budget impact of the State Ethics Training, and Chief Gordon noted no financial impact.

Mr. Brown asked if the Department has adequate facilities for confinement of a juvenile separately from adults. Chief Gordon replied that they do not have the capacity to hold a juvenile, a male, and a female prisoner at the same time. If that event, he would seek to transfer a detainee to another Town. Mr. Brown asked about the Quinn Bill. The state has cut funding to reimburse the Towns for this cost. Chief Gordon replied that this is currently being negotiated with the unions. The full reimbursement from the state has been \$140,000, and they are expecting only 8% of this. There are currently grievances filed about this issue, scheduled for arbitration in April. The unions believe the town should pick up what the state does not. Many Massachusetts towns have had to address this issue.

Chief Gordon distributed a list of current mileage of Police Department vehicles, and information about the requested cruisers.

Interview:

Ms. Lown noted there are two candidates, and she expects the committee to vote on the candidates at the meeting scheduled for March 11. Each candidate was given time to make a presentation, and was then questioned by the committee.

Diane Croft:

Ms. Croft has lived in town for 12 years and has three children, two in college and one in high school. She works in the Westborough School District as an elementary library paraprofessional, and is applying for this position due to a cut in her hours last year. She is looking to become more involved in the town, and this position would give her more information about town functions. Ms. Croft outlined her skills and answered questions from committee members.

Discussion of minutes – Meetings No. 14 and 15, FY2010, February 22 and March 1, 2010.

Mr. Brown asked for a correction to the previously approved minutes of Meeting No. 14, February 22, 2010. Mr. Brown moved to accept the minutes with one deletion. The vote to approve the minutes was unanimous, 7 in favor with 7 being present.

Mr. Johnson requested one change to the minutes of meeting No. 15, FY2010, March 1, 2010. Mr. Johnson moved to approve the minutes as amended. The vote to approve the minutes was 6 in favor and 1 abstention (Casemyr), with 7 being present.

Liaison Updates:

Mr. Johnson reported on his meeting, along with Mr. Linnane, with John Walden of the DPW, and distributed information on the impact of the 1.8% cut, the tracking of snow budgets, and a list of equipment owned.

Ms. Casemyr reported that Assabet Regional Technical School and MIS/GIS Department have been scheduled to present budgets.

Mr. Linnane reported that Building Department has been scheduled to present budget. Mr. Linnane also reported on a meeting held with a town resident concerning Warren Street and Jack Straw Brook remediation. He reported that the meeting was productive, and that meetings will be held with each resident affected by the project. Mr. Linnane reported that the Engineering Department is somewhat backed up, and Mr. Walden is looking for ways to correct this.

Mr. Brown has requested information from the Personnel Board.

Mr. Anderson, town resident, appeared before the committee to thank Mr. Linnane for his help facilitating his meeting with Derek Saari, Conservation Officer, and Carl Balduf, Town Engineer, concerning the Jack Straw Brook project, which will have a significant impact on his property. Mr. Linnane noted that some possible changes to the project may have an impact on the schedule, requiring some remediation to be done on a temporary basis. Mr. Johnson reported that the existing culvert underneath Warren Street has deteriorated further after one of the recent storms. The DPW was able to fix this, but it does point out that short-term remediation may be needed. The DPW has been monitoring this closely.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members.

Ms. Lown noted information from the Personnel Board, and the Snow and Ice Budget distributed to committee members. Ms. Lown also noted that Mr. Malloy and Ms. Bilodeau will be meeting with the Personnel Board on 3/10.

Ms. Lown asked if there were any follow-up questions for the Administrative Assistant candidates, and stated that many of her questions were answered by the candidates during their presentation. Ms. Lown asked if the committee wanted a writing sample from candidates. After discussion, the committee did not feel a writing sample would be necessary and no questions will be submitted for follow-up. The committee will discuss the candidates at next meeting.

Mr. Arnold noted he will not be attending 3/18. Mr. Arnold read a quote which he feels is germane to the discussion of what is core government: "While some advocates may insist that the programs they care most about constitute government's 'core' mission, it is simply not credible to claim that 100% of government deserves that designation." Eric Kriss, Secretary of Administration and Finance, January 30, 2003.

Mr. Meachen asked if there is any news on union contracts. Ms. Lown reported that the unions are meeting and voting, and there should be more news by 3/15. Ms. Lown also expects more information on the insurance budget by 3/31.

Mr. Brown noted that in the most recent review of the town meals tax, it seems that the revenue estimates from the state were low, and he wonders if this possible tax will be reconsidered at some point. Ms. Lown noted that the Article failed to pass at Special Town Meeting by only a few votes. She expects it will be raised and debated again.

Ms. Casemyr reported on the Gov2.0 conference she attended last Saturday, which was focused on use of social media tools to engage citizens in the process of government. She noted a lively discussion of how the town can use social media tools while maintaining compliance with open meeting laws. There have been some policies created on the use of social media tools by town governments which she will obtain and distribute. Mr. Meachen also attended a conference where the MBTA's program "The Bus" was discussed.

Adjournment

Ms. Casemyr moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 p.m.