

Members Present: John E. Arnold, Chair, Ed Behn, Bill Linnane, Jo Lown, Jim Tepper, Kathy Rosenblum Senie, Lisa Blazejewski. Absent: J. J. Malone, Pete Allen.

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

Call to Order/Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Approval of Minutes

Meeting No. 19, January 30, 2012 -deferred to a future meeting.

Preparation for FY2013 Annual Town Meeting

MIS/GIS

Mark Stockman appeared before the Committee to present this budget. Mr. Behn noted that the increase in this budget was due mostly to software licenses and the document management system. There was also an adjustment to salary/wages because of the off-hours network work which requires extra compensation. Mr. Stockman explained that technology is constantly changing and his department is feeling the pressure from budget restraints. Over the last five years this department has effectively been level-funded, while software license costs continue to increase. The department has adapted by getting the most out of the existing technology, but keeping older equipment and software running efficiently requires more time from the staff. This budget includes \$3,000 for overtime (about 60 hours) for a computer and networking specialist (a union position). The other increases relate to the FY2013 part of the 5-year computer plan and the recent Permitting system items.

In answer to a question about cloud services, Mr. Stockman noted that email for the Town was essentially already in the cloud, as well as a number of other services. Regarding the 5-year computer plan, he explained that users in need of full office functionality received the new computers, while the older computers migrate to those whose needs are limited. There are staff who have both a desktop and a laptop computer, and Mr. Behn felt it would be more cost-effective for those staff to only have one computer: a laptop. Mr. Stockman noted that with the advent of tablets and smart phones, some offices may be moving away from laptops, too. His department has yet to determine how these new devices will be integrated into the workplace.

In answer to Mr. Tepper's question about a VPN (Virtual Private Network) connection for staff to access their work without needing an extra computer, Mr. Stockman noted that because of time constraints the department has not been able to set up such a connection. He added that there is a long list of projects that can't be completed with current staffing restraints. Regarding the VPN connection, Mr. Linnane suggested Mr. Stockman evaluate the use of a contractor to do this and other items that the staff of two are not able to get to. If the cost outweighs the better use of Town employees' time, it should be implemented. Mr. Stockman noted that the department does have a budget of \$10,000 for professional services, used to contract work out. Ms. Lown would like a breakdown of how many of the desktop computers being replaced are for users who also have laptops. Mr. Stockman noted the new line item 5299A of \$21,920 for licensing and support for the Building Department permitting applications which were approved at last Town Meeting, as well as for the document management system.

Building Department (budget/draft warrant articles 27 & 28)

Tin Htway, Building Commissioner, appeared before the Committee to present this budget and related bylaw articles. Mr. Htway noted that this year his department has exceeded its budget for supplies and has had to borrow from other budget lines. The Building Department generates revenues of a little over \$500,000, expending around \$300,000.

Regarding the new software the department had acquired (i.e., the permitting software mentioned earlier by Mr. Stockman), Mr. Htway explained that the department plans to go “live” by the end of this calendar year. Progress is slow because of limited human resources, partly due to the demands made on staff by the agreement with Ashland. Mr. Htway added that no further payments were to be made to the software vendor until the department is further along in the process.

Mr. Htway noted that the Health Department module had been included in the current package, and that additional costs would be involved should other departments come on board. The Committee would like to see a plan or schedule for the inclusion of other departments, and what the costs would be going forward. Mr. Stockman clarified that the documentation management system aspect of the software is up and running, just not the permitting side. He will provide details to the Committee about what has been paid to the vendor, and how the budget reflects what still needs to be paid, and in which fiscal year.

Mr. Htway explained that Town Manager Jim Malloy was in the process of re-working the Town’s agreement with the town of Ashland. Mr. Htway’s assistant will no longer be performing local building inspections for Ashland, and as a result, Mr. Htway will be freed up to work on implementing the software package.

Mr. Tepper noted the 400% increase for training (from \$800 to \$3500). Mr. Htway felt that staff have only done the minimum training and have not really been in full compliance of what is expected and needed for a Building Department in a town of Westborough’s size. Every year, in addition to certification, staff need to be trained in new and/or updated building codes. Mr. Tepper would like to see a trend of fee income and expenses for the last 2-3 fiscal years. Mr. Linnane pointed out that training is necessary to keep up with changes in the state building code, and added that Westborough’s Building Department is now well respected by local contractors. Mr. Htway explained that when the Building Department receives nationally-recognized accreditation, loss-mitigation claims are reduced by the insurance company, which can reduce the insurance rate for residential and commercial properties in Town as well as the Town’s property insurance rate. Mr. Arnold would like details on this.

Building Department Warrant Article

Articles 27 and 28 (Draft Warrant #6). Zoning Bylaw Amendment. Mr. Htway explained that the amendments would establish non-criminal fines for zoning violations, providing for two tiers of fines: one general and one specifically for signage violations. Presently there is no set fee structure and the Town’s only recourse is to take violators to court. Mr. Htway noted that it is easier for the Town to apply a fine than to go to court and incur costs. This would also make Westborough consistent with other towns. Mr. Behn felt language could perhaps be included stating warnings would be given before imposing fines. Mr. Htway noted that most violations are commercial, not residential. He added that the amendment simply makes it easier for his department to enforce the bylaws created by the Town. Ms. Lown felt it would be helpful to provide a list to residents of which home improvements required a building permit as well as a list of common violations, in view of fines being authorized for non-compliance.

Fire Department/Ambulance

Nick Perron, Fire Chief, appeared before the Committee to present this budget and related articles. Mr. Perron explained that his budget went up by 1.1%. The Salaries/Wages increase was due to step raises for existing staff (no new positions have been added). Expenses went up \$845 due to the increase in Central Massachusetts Emergency Medical Systems dues, and fuel. In answer to Mr. Tepper’s question about why the budget allowed for 52.2 weeks/year, Mr. Perron explained that his staff work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, which works out this year at 52.2 weeks—a figure which comes from the Accounting Department. Regarding trends, Mr. Perron noted that this year the department responded to 2,987 calls, last year 2,669, in 2009 2,879 calls, in 2008 3,173 calls (the all-time high). The department has applied for federal grant money to offset the costs of the October storm damage.

Fire Department Warrant Articles

Article 9a. Hurst Tool Purchase (\$69,500). Mr. Perron noted that the current “jaws of life” equipment the department uses is 15 years old, is very heavy, and is not as powerful as new units. The new unit will be half the weight, will only require one person rather than two to operate, and will be powerful enough to cut through the new alloys present-day vehicles are composed of. This purchase includes a whole system: the power unit which runs the cutters, spreaders, and hydraulic hoses.

Article 9b. Replacement Ambulance (\$190,000). Mr. Perron noted that \$90,000 of this total was to come from the Ambulance Fund. The old ambulance is 8 years old, with 120,000 miles. There was some discussion of how the revenue from the ambulance service is applied to the Ambulance Fund. Mr. Perron added that the old ambulance would be traded in (at a value of around \$5-10,000), and all useable equipment (stretcher, radio, computer system) would be transferred to the new vehicle.

Health Department/Landfill Contract Liaison report

The Committee will revisit this at a future meeting.

Areas/Topics of focus during upcoming AFC meetings

Mr. Arnold will defer to Monday any discussion about Reserve Fund language. Mr. Malloy had indicated via email that last year was the only time the transfer language had been included. Mr. Arnold encouraged the Committee to consider how important it is to them to request the amendment in light of Mr. Malloy’s comments.

Schedule of meetings planned through March 2012

Mr. Arnold reminded the Committee that the Library Trustees are attending the meeting on Monday. He noted that since no departments are scheduled for Thursday, February 9, it would be a good opportunity for open discussions.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Arnold noted that the Committee has been provided with an updated recap sheet.

Ms. Blazejewski met with the Historical Commission tonight and will write up a summary of that meeting for the Committee.

Mr. Tepper noted that the Personnel Board and the Country Club are already scheduled.

Adjournment

Mr. Behn moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m. Vote to adjourn was 7 in favor, with 7 being present.

Document List

2012 ATM Fire Dept Liaison Report & Attachments.
2012 ATM Warrant, version 6.
AFC Dept Meetings Budgets ATM fy2013, version 11.
Building Department Budget Background Information worksheet.
Building Department Liaison worksheet.
Fleet Schedule.
FY13 Budget Document, 2-2-12.
General Bylaw Changes proposed 2012 ATM.
Town Charter—Proposed 2012 Changes.
Warrant Article Summary ATM FY2013, version 6.