

Members Present: Ed Behn, Chair, Peter Allen, John E. Arnold, Lisa Blazejewski, Jim Tepper, Sharon Kaiser, Hank Rauch, Kathy Rosenblum Senie. Absent: Gary Wells.

At 7:00 p.m. Mr. Behn called the meeting to order in Room 23 of the Forbes Building.

Call to Order/Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Approval of Minutes

Meeting No. 14, January 6, 2014

Ms. Blazejewski and Mr. Tepper requested corrections to the minutes. Mr. Behn decided to postpone voting on approval of the minutes until the next meeting.

Review of FY'15 Budget with the Town Manager

Town Manager, Jim Malloy, appeared before the Committee to discuss the FY'15 budget. Board of Selectmen Chair, Ian Johnson, was also in attendance. Mr. Behn reviewed the budget and identified where AFC members had questions for Mr. Malloy.

Town Accountant: A change to Salaries & Wages is due to a STEP increase.

Assessors: There may be a decrease to Salaries & Wages. Mr. Malloy mentioned they are working on reconfiguring staff between the Assessors' office and the Town Clerk's office.

Legal: Mr. Malloy said he increased the amount Town Counsel initially submitted for this line item. He wants to be more cautious. They've had some recent large bills for Special Counsel due to the Solar Farm and acquisition of State Hospital land.

Communications: The decrease is for savings on telephone plans that the Town was able to obtain.

Central Purchasing: Mr. Malloy explained that an increase came in at the last minute due to the expiration of a warranty on one of the copiers and the need for an upgrade.

Town Clerk: There will be a change to this line item due to pending staffing changes between the Town Clerk's office and Assessors' office.

Conservation Commission: This department is in the process of hiring a new Administrative Assistant.

Insurance: Mr. Malloy mentioned that they are still working on this item but he thinks the number he recommended is the maximum number. They are still working on negotiating retiree benefits and health insurance plan changes that would result in a savings. Mr. Malloy is recommending any savings be applied to OPEB, with the intent of putting this same amount away every year. Mr. Tepper pointed out that the current level that is being funded isn't going to get the Town fully funded and we need to plan for down the road. Mr. Malloy agreed and said that they are working on other changes to health insurance options, which he believes will result in more savings that can be applied to OPEB. Currently \$650,000 is in the budget, but Mr. Malloy would like to see \$1 million applied to OPEB each year.

Fire: Mr. Malloy said they are still in the process of negotiating contracts.

Assabet: They cannot release their budget until the Governor releases the state budget, then they will figure out what each town is assessed.

Snow & Ice: There was discussion regarding increased cost for sand and salt, and general agreement that the budget should accurately reflect projected costs. It was pointed out that the Town is always overrunning this budget and then transferring funds from the AFC reserve fund. Mr. Malloy said he would send Mr. Behn what he recommends for an increase.

Street Lights: Increase due to cost of electricity running higher.

Landfill: There was a question over what the Town is subsidizing after taking out dump sticker fees. Mr. Malloy mentioned that the Board of Health is considering raising sticker fees.

Health Department: Increase is due to the hiring of a new part time health inspector.

Council on Aging: Mr. Malloy let the Committee know that the Council on Aging had asked for additional staff that he did not approve. Mr. Tepper wondered if the requests were justified based on the numbers. Further discussion will be reserved for when the Council on Aging meets with the AFC.

Veteran's Services: Mr. Malloy was asked how the new district system is working and he thinks very well. He is happy with the services being offered and has seen the number of Veterans receiving benefits increase. Each town pays for their own Veterans and then the town receives partial reimbursement by the state. Administrative costs are split between Westborough, Grafton, Shrewsbury, and Northborough. The increase reflected in the budget accounts for lag time between when benefits are paid and reimbursement. Mr. Malloy also pointed out that more Veterans are receiving benefits due to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Recreation: The decrease in Salaries & Wages is due to Frank and Karen DeSiata's retirement. A replacement has been hired and there was a change to the Administrative Assistant. There may be some overlap as training takes place.

Historical Commission: Mr. Malloy is proposing a reduction to the Historical Commission's secretary. He feels the role of the Historic Commission should be geared toward applications and paperwork for work needed on historic buildings, and the Historical Society should be collecting artifacts and displaying them. Mr. Malloy said he will speak with Hazel Nourse prior to her meeting with the AFC.

Warrant: Mr. Malloy was asked about the Warrant and what the AFC should expect to see for Articles. He mentioned that there are capital expenditures, planning articles, and a couple of DPW articles. Mr. Malloy spoke about the need for updating and rehabilitating the Town's pump stations. They are currently doing an analysis of which station needs to be updated first and then will stagger upgrades to motors and making them more efficient. He also spoke about handicap parking and resolving conflicts between state and town regulations. Mr. Malloy is still working on the Charrette for the State Hospital land and coming up with a date. He pointed out his request for creating a fund for the future purchase of a new fire truck. AFC members asked if there was anything controversial. Mr. Malloy said there are some zoning articles that could create discussion - specifically regarding changing the open space requirement in industrial zones and a traffic study for accessing major routes.

School Budget:

Mr. Behn met with Irene Oliver, Director of Finance & Administration, and she will get Mr. Behn information on revolving funds and grants. The School Department will be meeting with the AFC in the next few weeks. Committee members should get specific questions to Ms. Rosenblum Senie before the meeting. It was mentioned that some revolving funds are restricted as to what the money goes toward and some are unrestricted. AFC members questioned how the School Department decides where the overflow is applied and who gets what. Mr. Behn mentioned that salary negotiations are in process and could affect the budget. Mr. Behn looked at any large changes and found about 20 items. He would like the School Department to do a narrative on why there are these substantial changes.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Allen reported on the Municipal Building Committee. He mentioned that the MBC meets the first and third Wednesday of the month. Construction on the new Fire Station is proceeding smoothly. Steel is going up and the MBC is happy with the General Contractor, G & R Construction. The move from the old station to the new is scheduled for the end of the year. Demolition of the old station is included in the contract and that site will become parking to the new station once it's leveled. Renovations to the Town Hall are scheduled to start at the beginning of February. The General Contractor, R.A.C. Builders, will use the Town Hall as their office and will begin work on the inside of the building first and then move outdoors when the weather gets warmer.

Mr. Allen also reported on the Economic Development Committee. They meet on the first Tuesday of every month from 8:00-9:30 a.m. They are about to hire their part timer that was approved at the Special Town Meeting in October. The new employee will report to Town Manager, Jim Malloy, and will be an Ambassador for the Town. This person will reach out to local employers to see about any expansion and growth plans, and will also manage the outreach process to new employers. This position is funded at 15 hours per week and their salary is coming from income the Town receives from the digital billboards. In addition, the Town receives free advertising on the billboards and can provide public service announcements to the community.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

There were no comments or concerns by Committee members at this time.

Adjournment

Mr. Arnold made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 p.m. Vote to adjourn was 7 in favor, with 7 being present.

Document List

Net Metering Credit Budget Impact

Town of Westborough – FY'15 Council on Aging

Town of Westborough – FY'15 Historical Commission

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Thomas

AFC Administrative Assistant